

# Is Fox News Inadvertently Responsible for the ‘Trump Bump’ in Polls?



by Roger L. Simon

Axios is reporting a “[Trump Bump](#)” in the polls for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination.

Indeed, this seems to be true since the 45th president has jumped up significantly in four of the most recent polls against his putatively most important opponent, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has yet to declare his candidacy but is widely expected to do so.

The polls were Emerson, which found Donald Trump with a 30-point advantage over DeSantis (formerly 26); YouGov, with

Trump ahead by 8 (up from 4); Echelon Insights, with 45 in the lead by 15 (from a mere 2); and Fox News' first presidential primary poll, with Trump also up by 15.

Not even mentioned is the Harvard/Harris survey of just a few days earlier, which showed Trump up by 23.

Whatever skepticism we may have about polls—and, yes, it's still very early—taken together, that's impressive.

What is the reason for this sudden rise?

Axios's Josh Kraushaar gives two explanations.

One is Trump's visit to the train derailment site at East Palestine ahead of President Joe Biden and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. (Kraushaar felt constrained to add that this was only a display of empathy "by Trump standards.")

His second explanation was that Trump had stepped out of his "mega-rally comfort zone" for smaller campaign stops, such as a visit to a McDonald's. You can decide for yourselves about the significance of that one.

I think, however, Axios missed something bigger. Fox News and, with it, The New York Post (also, The Wall Street Journal, which was never really with him in the first place) have turned against Trump.

This would seem to be a bad thing on its face, but actually may have caused a kind of "reverse English" reaction, alienating much of the network's base while simultaneously creating sympathy for the former president.

Most viewers, most humans really, like "fair"—not in the Obama sense but in the genuine sense. Fox is now perceived by many as being unfair to Trump. Hence, the "reverse English." (Fox, though still leading, has a declining viewership, as does the rest of cable news.)

As I note in the title, this positive result for Trump is most likely inadvertent. Rupert Murdoch—chair of Fox Corp. and executive chairman of the rest of his putatively conservative News Corp. empire—clearly didn't want to help him.

Murdoch has gone so far as to claim—under oath for a lawsuit—that his network's hosts knowingly endorsed Trump's "election lies" to please their viewers.

I don't know the extent to which this is accurate, but it seems nonetheless obvious that their boss, for a while now, has ordered a change. And if the audience, or part of it, isn't aware of this, Trump has made them so through his relatively newfound public displeasure with Fox.

At the same time, his poll numbers have risen. Coincidence?

It's possible, nonetheless, that Murdoch, a hugely wealthy man of proven media sophistication, knew all along that he might be helping Trump rather than hurting him by downgrading him on his outlets— and simply didn't care. It's hard to say.

Murdoch also may be under the influence of his reportedly more liberal family, as well as his board of directors member, former U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan, who is so anti-Trump he told [WISN](#) that he won't attend the Republican National Convention if the former president wins the party's nomination.

All this, although Republican National Committee Chair Ronna McDaniel has just announced that candidates must sign a party loyalty pledge in order to participate in the debates, the first of which will, ironically, take place in Ryan's home state of Wisconsin in Madison.

Ryan doesn't think Trump can win—Murdoch evidently agrees—despite several recent polls showing him defeating Biden.

They must be better prognosticators than I am.

But whatever the case, especially this early in the game, the role of the more important, center-right media (such as Fox and the one you are now reading) in the Republican primary should not be, as much as possible, taking sides, but presenting the views of the candidates as clearly as they can for the electorate.

In other words, let the people decide—as exotic an idea as that sounds. (Of course, it's not!)

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