

Who's Too Old to Be President?



by Roger L. Simon

During the first big interview of her presidential run, Nikki Haley had no response when asked by Sean Hannity how she differed from Donald Trump in even one area of policy.

It was an unimpressive performance, considering how long the former South Carolina governor and UN ambassador must have been mulling her White House ambitions.

Nevertheless, the 51-year-old Haley did come up with one, if self-serving, semi-original proposal.

The candidate—who takes every opportunity to characterize herself as somehow “new” or “next generation”—thinks anyone over 75 competing for the presidency should be required to undergo a mental competency test.

I could take this personally, since I'm over her chosen number—to be clear: If nominated, I will not run; if elected, I will not serve—but it's probably a good idea.

In this instance, the specific individual she had in mind is rather obvious, since Donald Trump has already taken such a test and passed.

Joe Biden hasn't taken any kind of cognitive test recently, to the public's knowledge anyway. We can assume if he had and had done well, we would have heard about it, no doubt ad infinitum from the usual media suspects.

(Literally as I was writing, the results of the president's annual checkup were being released, again without such a test. His halting speech was ascribed to "reflux.")

Trump is able to speak in public for hours, going on and off teleprompter at will. Biden can barely handle a minute or two of impromptu questioning before becoming incoherent or fleeing. Reading from a teleprompter can also be a chore.

The more disturbing question is, are the voters themselves interested in the mental competence of their political leaders?

Maybe. Maybe not. Polling is showing many or even a majority of Democrats aren't too happy with Biden and would prefer he be replaced as their candidate for 2024. But what's the real reason for this?

If we're to judge from the sad personal story of John Fetterman—who has, not surprisingly, been hospitalized for depression after only weeks in the Senate—voters don't care a whit about mental competency. Fetterman was a stroke victim and sounded like one throughout his campaign, on the rare occasions he said anything.

No honest person could possibly have thought he was fit for

office. In fact, his candidacy had more than a whiff of sadism about it with party leaders and even family encouraging such a challenged person to do something they never should have. What do they think now that he's in the hospital?

I hesitate to write this, but the same can be said of those who pushed Biden into the presidency. We have all witnessed the lost president being led around by his wife.

Nevertheless, for the Democrats, at least, party affiliation is everything. I suspect it's also true for Republicans, as the George Santos case would indicate; but Santos's duplicities were barely known during his campaign compared to Fetterman's health and psychological problems that were well publicized.

But back to the question of mental competency tests. It's well known that humans vary tremendously as they age. Sophocles is said to have written that masterpiece "Oedipus at Colonus" at age 90. Marc Chagall became the first living artist to be exhibited at the Louvre at the same age. A man named Teiichi Igarashi climbed Mt. Fuji at 99.

On the other hand, I witnessed the mind of my truly brilliant friend—the multiple award-winning author Ross MacDonald (Kenneth Millar)—completely disappear through Alzheimer's to the extent he couldn't recognize even his wife in his fifties. Ronald Reagan, as we know, increasingly had problems toward the end of his life.

That's why the mental competency of our presidents and presidential candidates should be continually monitored, and 75 is as good a year as any to start. (I see that CNN's [Don Lemon disagrees](#), which makes it all the more necessary.) It should be done at least every other year because ... things happen.

At this moment, many of us suspect that Biden isn't, as they say, really calling the shots. And yet he was the one who was

elected by the people (or may have been—that's another discussion). Unelected—or once elected—people could well be running the show. That's not how it's supposed to work in a constitutional republic or any form of democratic or republican government, for that matter—for good reason.

This is especially true now with the most unelected people of all—our secretive intelligence agencies and their allies—watching us, increasingly in control of our lives. More than ever, we need elected leaders with their faculties intact to confront them.

As for Donald Trump—should he, as seems likely, be nominated by his party again—he too should be tested once more, though I strongly suspect, if my inbox is any indication, he would pass with the proverbial flying colors.

Many of us get non-stop emails from him multiple times a day with various statements he makes on the issues and citations of articles he has liked. The man is a workhorse.

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