

THE YAWN-INDUCING ELECTION OF 2024

Carl Golden, February 1, 2024



In nine months, Americans will select a president, choosing between two candidates despite numerous poll findings that a majority of voters prefer neither one.

All suspense has been drained from the traditional primary process as Democrats unite behind President Joe Biden while former president Donald Trump has chased his competition out of the field and all-but locked down the nomination after only two January contests. (Nikki Haley notwithstanding).

Super Tuesday no longer matters and there will be no breathless reporting of the latest delegate count, no gigantic colorful maps of the country towering over television studio news desks while opinions are delivered by pundits with the appropriate solemnity and insightful assurances.

The uncertainty rather involves whether the president is physically and cognitively capable of the demands and pressures of a national campaign or whether Trump will watch election night returns on a television screen in the common room of a Federal prison somewhere in the Midwest.

The contest pits what a majority of Americans believe is a failed presidency whose public approval on crucial issues – the economy, inflation, immigration, foreign policy – remains mired in the 30 percent range against a former president facing four indictments and trials and whose public utterances suggest someone bent on seeking revenge by any means on those he considers wronged him.

The Biden campaign brain trust has embraced a strategy of convincing voters Trump is unfit by demeanor and intellect to serve as president and represents an existential threat to democracy.

Comparisons to fascism and repeated references to MAGA extremists dominate Biden campaign rhetoric along with dark warnings Trump would govern as an authoritarian trampling on the Constitution and destroying individual freedoms.

Trump partisans point to the economic havoc and individual financial hardships created by Biden's policies, out of control inflation and encouraging illegal immigration at the southern border that has flooded the country with more than seven million migrants and resulted in a humanitarian and fiscal crisis.

And, while Trump's legal entanglements have provided grist for the Democratic attack mill – particularly his involvement in the Jan. 6, 2001, assault on the U.S. Capitol – the business activities of the president's son Hunter and allegations by Republicans the president was aware of them is a continuing political headache.

While Trump's grip on his base remains tight, the Biden campaign has been subjected endlessly to public hand-wringing, recommendations for a strategy and messaging change and – in some instances – calls for him to abandon his quest and turn to a more youthful candidate with less political baggage.

His approval standings are the most dismal for an incumbent since Jimmy Carter in 1980 and he's trailed Trump consistently by two points more or less in poll after poll.

His political and policy vulnerability is exacerbated by occasional instances of his infirmity in public settings – forgetting names and events, leaving sentences unsaid and trailing off into near incoherence, occasional bewilderment and a tendency to relate fanciful tales of his past.

Even though the age difference between the two is minimal – Biden was born a year after World War II began and Trump a year after it ended – Biden's age has been more greatly scrutinized.

Despite the relatively short time left and the logistical nightmare it could entail, it remains a possibility that a health issue could emerge to convince Biden to stand down or that a felony conviction of

Trump would significantly erode his support, particularly among undecided voters.

Biden is gambling that while the public may be discontented with him, they despise and fear Trump. Trump is gambling that anger and resentment toward Biden will overcome misgivings about his impulsive and aggressive payback nature.

It's America's choice now.

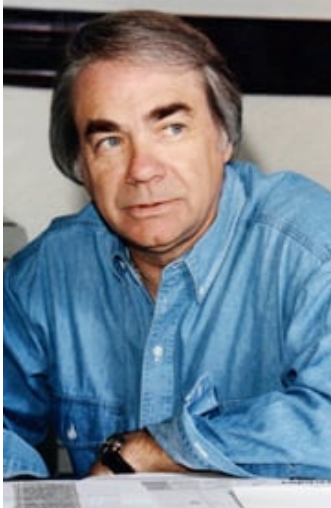
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