

UNITED STATES

Biden's exit puts Harris "gamble" under scrutiny

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On the hot Sunday afternoon of July 21, as Americans were finishing lunch, came the flash news that President Joe Biden would no longer remain in the race for a second term as President of the United States. In his statement President Biden endorsed his Vice President Kamala Harris to take his place.

President Biden could not have done otherwise in choosing Harris given that not only

does she share in the accomplishments of the presidential team, but she also embodies characteristics of the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) culture embraced by Democrats: she is a woman, a mixed minority (black, Indian, and Caribbean white), and of a younger generation.

With a little more than 100 days before election day, the political arena will be a challenging one for the Democratic Party which has many well-known personalities full of power, influence, and ambition, all eager for a shot at the White House. The question is: will they all rally to support Harris or will they try to find a way to project themselves into the race? Like Harris, who is 59, all of them are also in their 50s. This is worth pointing out given the focus on age in this presidential campaign.

The most frequently mentioned names are Governor Gavin Newsome of California (who has pursued such radical policies that over 1.5 million people have moved out of the state), Governor Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, Governor JB Pritzker of Illinois, and Michelle Obama, the former first lady. Hillary Clinton's name has also come up but at age 76 she is an outlier. California, Michigan, and Illinois are all powerful, populous Democratic states.

The Democratic Party now has to figure out what to do with the delegates who were chosen in the state primaries with the overwhelming majority resulting for Biden: 3,886 out of 3,949. However, it is believed that the votes are destined for Biden-Harris. But this remains to be confirmed given that each of the 50 states has its own election rules. The Democrats should sort it all out before or at their convention in Chicago, August 19-22.

If Harris is challenged there may be an "open convention" where delegates, nearly all pledged to Biden, will have to decide who to vote for. A majority vote will be needed. Not to be forgotten are the millions of dollars that have been raised specifically for the Biden campaign and the additional millions available from the Democratic National Committee. How these are to be utilized remains to be seen.

If Vice President Harris succeeds as the nominee, how will she handle the campaigning? She is a former district attorney and attorney general of California and may use her prosecutorial skills to go after her Republican opponent Donald Trump who has several legal cases pending against him. However, in 2016 Trump won the election by defeating another woman, Hillary Clinton.

Donald Trump, having miraculously survived a suspicious assassination attempt on July 13 that needs to be thoroughly investigated, has not toned down his campaign fervor. But the experience has given him a different perspective on life. As he said to a

closed group meeting a few days after that attempt, "God was with me" then added: "You appreciate God even more."

At the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, July 15-18, Trump nominated 39-year-old Ohio Senator JD Vance as his running mate, an articulate former Marine who now awaits who the Democrats will nominate as his opponent. Age-wise he balances the ticket headed by 78-year-old Trump. Despite his age, Trump still exudes vim and vigor while demonstrating a bandaged right ear from the shot fired at him a few days before. At the Convention he delivered the longest acceptance speech in American history late in the evening on July 18.

While age has been an important focal point in the current presidential race, the quality of aging, not the age itself, is what matters. Biden who is 81, demonstrated senescence for a long time which his family, colleagues, advisers, and supporters refused to recognize openly until after the disastrous debate with Trump at the end of June.

While Trump continues to espouse his more traditional American-Republican values and policies as he campaigns throughout the United States, the Democrats will have to defend the Biden-Harris record beset by an invasion of illegal immigrants, high prices especially for energy and food, the dreadful pullout from Afghanistan leaving behind not only American citizens but over \$80 billion worth of military equipment, while fully liberalizing abortion.

Indeed, abortion tops the list of the Democratic Party's agenda. Democrats continue to rile against the Supreme Court for having reversed the non-existent reproductive rights in Roe v Wade. President Biden sent the childless Vice President Harris to "Fight for Reproductive Freedom" and campaign through several states to "defend a woman's right to choose." In March she visited a Planned Parenthood facility in Minnesota but apparently not to witness an abortion. As soon as Biden endorsed Harris, Planned Parenthood immediately rejoiced and stated their support for Harris.

In the hours after the Biden statement, Harris issued a statement of her own not only praising Biden but indicating she wanted to "earn and win" her candidacy. She will need other endorsements. Within a short time, she did receive the endorsement of former President Bill Clinton and Hillary too.

Some of the other presidential contenders, who may or may not challenge Harris, could end up being picked for the vice presidency.

President Biden said he would deliver another address to the American public, perhaps later in the week to offer more details. Meanwhile, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Republican Mike Johnson, has called for Biden to resign now given his

impaired cognitive ability and capacity to function effectively as President of the United States. Indeed, Biden must have embarrassed the United States and diminished the office of the American presidency many times in private meetings with foreign government leaders and endangered the security of the country.

However, Harris, given her position as Vice President with the strong endorsement of the resigning President, if she does indeed succeed in being the Democratic Party nominee, will her possible victory further weaken the United States as a world leader? There is no clear indication that Harris can deal with the major economic, social, and strategic problems facing the United States.

While she excelled in touring the country touting reproductive rights she failed, even ignored, her given responsibility of securing the southern border from the millions entering illegally. Moreover, since the Biden-Harris team came to power in 2021, war has broken out in Central Europe and the Middle East; Afghanistan has rolled back human rights especially women's education; China has enhanced its belt and road initiatives, made threats against Taiwan, and continues its quest for global supremacy. What response Harris would offer to these challenges is now unclear.

American voters will face a very decisive election on November 5th, in the hope that it can celebrate its 250th Independence Day in 2026 with the country still cherishing the democratic values, ideals and aspirations of the founding fathers.

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