

Election 2024: Halftime Report



by Roger L. Simon

It's hard to say when halftime actually is for Election 2024—when did this all start?—but I'm going to go ahead and weigh in anyway. After all, it's football season.

At the start, it has to be said that this election has morphed into what may be the most dangerous and cataclysmic ever.

Not only have the Democrats weaponized the justice system, they have withheld Secret Service protection from their own Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

This was justified by some obscure rules they could have easily overturned.

Meanwhile, RFK Jr. has already been under threat of some kind

at Los Angeles's Ebell Theater on Sept. 14 by an armed man claiming to be a U.S. marshal.

Who or what was behind that is unclear, but the outspoken Mr. Kennedy has enemies in places both high and low, as [Conservative Treehouse](#) points out.

Whatever the case, a third Kennedy assassination would be an American disaster of untold proportions. The ramifications would be civilizational.

Get Secret Service protection for this man now!

So on to:

The Democrats

To start with, and for both sides, do we believe in polls? Well, yes and no. Unfortunately, they're all we have, other than our guts. So, we examine them but keep them in the "trust but verify" category.

Nevertheless, for both parties, the polls have been remarkably consistent for well over a year, more than I can recall they ever have been to this extent. That's something.

For the Democrats, who only have three candidates at present, the Real Clear Politics Average of polls as of Sept. 17 shows President Joe Biden at 66.7 percent, Mr. Kennedy at 11.9 percent and Oprah Winfrey's "spiritual advisor" Marianne Williamson at 8.4 percent.

The most recent polls (FOX and Harris) have Mr. Kennedy doing somewhat better at 17 percent and 15 percent, respectively, and Williamson fading. But President Biden is still trouncing them both with 71 percent in the FOX News poll.

How does that track with a CNN poll that says about 60 percent of Democrats are concerned that the president is too old to run for reelection?

It doesn't.

And now, with former President Donald Trump beginning to top President Biden head-to-head, it's obvious the Democrats' worries are growing.

Apropos, in a "Meet the Press" broadcast on Sept. 17, President Trump said he didn't think President Biden was "too old," but rather "incompetent." The former president supports intellectual competency tests for all presidential candidates.

Victor Davis Hanson, arguably the most esteemed of conservative pundits, has the chance of a President Biden nomination at 10 percent.

But who would replace him?

Mr. Kennedy isn't loved by many Democrats because he doesn't fall in line with their statist views on a variety of issues. To these people, he sounds suspiciously—oh, horrors—like Donald Trump on such matters as COVID-19 and the open border.

He has also advocated for serious reforms of the three-letter agencies, notably the CIA and FBI. His uncle once said he wished to "splinter the CIA in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds."

The Democratic Party leadership has little interest in a return to the Kennedy-era Democratic Party. They will swallow all kinds of "woke" excesses to keep their power. (Trans men in women's sports—no problem.)

So, what will the Democrats do, considering their "bench," as it's called, has been deemed weak by the punditocracy.

American politics too often operates through families. In the Democrats' case, in recent years, it has been the Clinton family, followed by the Obama family and their entourage.

The Obama family has prevailed for now by working its will

behind the scenes via the Biden presidency.

It won't easily relinquish power. I therefore stand by my prediction that Michelle Obama will end up being the Democratic Party candidate in 2024.

This will happen very late in the process to avoid potential snafus and as much conflict as possible. Rules will be circumvented to accommodate this, but that should be done rather easily, in back rooms.

The Democrats have sufficient "superdelegates" to impose literally any candidate they wish at the convention.

[Michelle's speech](#) at the U.S. Open tennis tournament was just a warm-up.

A Significant Outlier

Will President Biden choose to run in the end to avoid prosecution for the escalating malfeasances of his family business, including with foreign powers? That's hard to say, since many are (purposefully) beyond the statute of limitations. But if so, watch for deals being made behind the scenes with the Justice Department. This could get complicated.

The Republicans

According to former President Trump's team, the Republican primary is over.

"A new poll shows that 62% of Republican voters say President Donald J. Trump is their 'TOP CHOICE' for 2024," an email from his campaign on Sept. 17 reads. "That number marks the effective end of the Primary!"

Are they right?

It's pretty hard to deny it. Trump has lapped the field easily for as long as 2024 polls have been conducted. He's been doing

this against the nine opponents (actually, there are even more) currently being listed by Real Clear Politics (RCP).

In the RCP average, Trump is at 56.6 percent (a majority, obviously), Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis at 12.7 percent, entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy at 7.2 percent, former U.N. Ambassador and South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley at 5.7 percent, with the rest dwindling off into more-or-less oblivion, making one wonder why they are running at all. Who could be wasting their money on this and why?

In the most recent poll (FOX News), Mr. Ramaswamy is creeping up on Gov. DeSantis again, at 11 percent to the governor's 13 percent. Does this matter? More on that in a moment. The pertinent thing now is why the governor has done so poorly.

Giving the man his due, he's a first-rate governor of Florida. The carping that goes on—that he was too hard on Disney, which I disagree about—is largely around the edges and insignificant. Florida was the place to be during the pandemic and he deserves a good portion of the credit for that.

But he has run a distinctly second-rate presidential campaign. Part of the reason is that President Trump has bludgeoned him, most successfully by highlighting that the former president is responsible (through his endorsement) for Gov. DeSantis winning in the first place and thus is being ungrateful by running against him.

This has more than the ring of truth since the governor was well behind an execrable, and eventually criminal, Democrat candidate before President Trump jumped in to support him.

But more importantly, the Florida governor chose to run, or was advised to run, a highly conventional campaign through the usual array of high-paid strategists, political action committees, and so forth. This old-style politics was a particularly bad choice in these times when much of the GOP rank-and-file is looking for authenticity above all.

Gov. DeSantis has suffered by comparison to Mr. Ramaswamy, who is running a go-everywhere, talk-to-anyone campaign in a more contemporary style.

As for the forthcoming debates, without President Trump, it's unlikely they will be generating much in the way of audience numbers. It's also hard to see why the front-runner would want to join, given the gigantic separation between him and his competition.

That doesn't mean the debates are entirely without interest, however. They have demonstrated and will continue to demonstrate a split in the Republican Party, especially in the crucial area of foreign policy and the Ukraine war.

The most articulate representative of what we might call the Cold War wing is Ms. Haley, the former U.N. ambassador. She has built up a small head of steam by taking on Mr. Ramaswamy as the representative of those skeptical of continued spending on what he and others believe is an endless and pointless conflagration.

What is being illustrated here is the increasingly confusing, even bewildering, nature of our politics. The Democrats, once the party of peace, are now the party of war under President Biden, who seems to have ignored the corruption and promised everything but the proverbial kitchen sink to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The Republicans are a mixed bag, with some of their leadership in the cold war camp and others—President Trump, Mr. Ramaswamy, and, to some extent, Gov. DeSantis—more skeptical. The majority of the rank-and-file leans more to the latter camp.

This split will likely influence President Trump's vice presidential choice, hurting the chances of Ms. Haley and Sen. Tim Scott and helping Mr. Ramaswamy, among those on the debate stage.

However, there's no guarantee he will choose from among the debaters, even as he has said positive things about Mr. Ramaswamy.

While others have suggested that President Trump, in an attempt to bring our country together, should choose Mr. Kennedy, that's something RFK Jr. has said on numerous occasions he would abjure.

Of course, as of now, he would have to. Indicating that he would run with the former president at this juncture would be electoral suicide in a Democratic primary campaign.

Mr. Ramaswamy has also insisted that he isn't interested in a vice presidential nod.

It will be interesting to see how both feel about that next summer.

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