

Q&A on President Biden's Decision to End His Re-election Bid

Top Line

- On Sunday, July 21, 2024, President Biden [announced](#) he would stand down as the Democratic Party candidate for the 2024 Presidential election and will address the nation later this week. Biden officially [endorsed](#) Vice President Harris as the new nominee half an hour after his original announcement.
- Presidential elections are often decided by three things: the national issues prioritized by voters; the candidates and their personality; and black swan events. This is a historically unexpected event.
- While the economy, inflation, immigration, democracy, reproductive rights, and crime will remain the most important issues on voters' minds heading into November, changing the Democratic presidential nominee this close to the national convention could have enormous consequences for victory or defeat in the fall. It could also impact the control of the House and Senate.
- Much will depend on how the new candidate is selected, how they perform on the campaign trail, who they pick for their vice president and what future role President Biden plays in the campaign.
- While there will be new staffers joining a new candidate, many of the key staffers and officials within the Biden orbit will likely continue to play a role for the new candidate to maintain stability.

What does my business/organization need to know and do?

- Review any updated policy position of the nominee with a lens toward what may impact your business or industry.
- Remain focused on building relationships on both sides of the aisle in Washington over the next several months and game plan for multiple governing scenarios in 2025.
- Regardless of whom is sitting in the White House come next January, there is going to be significant change in Washington, D.C., due to the retirement of several senior Members of Congress in both parties.
- Remember the margins will be razor thin for control of both the House and Senate, so governing will remain a challenge.
- Preparing now for any potential outcomes is essential.

What happens next?

- Democrats need to quickly decide who is going to lead the ticket.
- They could quickly coalesce around Vice President Harris following Biden's endorsement or opt to throw open the entire process and settle on a candidate at the Democratic National Convention next month in Chicago.

- This is an unprecedented development in modern campaign times and there will be significant swirl among the media and Washington, D.C., elites. You may need to brief your leadership team and board on the implications of a new candidate on your business operations.

If Harris emerges as the person to lead the Democratic ticket, who does she pick as her Vice President?

- If Harris has a clear path to the nomination, she potentially could pick someone to balance the ticket, both politically and demographically, and select a Governor or Senator from the Midwest to help in key battleground states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin and blunt the Trump-Vance ticket's outreach to blue collar voters.
- Names being floated as a potential running mate include Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, and Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear. Other names include Georgia Senator Raphael Warnock and North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper.
- If Harris is the nominee, she will bring a new dynamic to the race. While women's reproductive health is already an issue for Democrats, it would likely be even more front and center. She also may be able to speak differently about crime given her record as the Attorney General of California and from her time on the Senate Judiciary Committee.

What happens with Biden's campaign money?

- If Harris replaces Biden as the Democrats' nominee, it will seamlessly flow to her since she was already part of his campaign.
- If it's not Harris, it gets more complicated. Before Biden could transfer any of the money he has raised to the new nominee of the Democratic Party, he would have to pay all his bills and refund all contributions designated for the general election.

What does this mean for the Trump campaign?

- The Trump campaign will try to exploit the upheaval within the Democratic Party any way it can. They will let the media cycle spin around the chaos of the Democratic Party.
- We have seen Trump start to define Vice President Harris on his own terms, including giving her a nickname which implies he sees her as a credible rival.
- The campaign - and former president - has stayed at arm's length as the Democratic Party remains divided after Biden's poor debate performance. Now that Biden has exited the race, expect to see the Trump campaign aggressively engage to define the Democratic candidate and her/his shortcomings.

- The issues will likely remain the same for the campaign, but the tone may change as the new nominee comes into focus and the election moves to the fall.

What does this mean for down-ticket races?

- It's all speculation at this point.
- Some believe it could energize the Democratic base. However, someone at the top of the ticket with little name recognition could help Republican down-ticket candidates.
- It should be noted that voters in many swing states have already shown a willingness to separate local candidates from the presidential ticket.

How will this impact polling?

- APCO cautions business and others to not draw any immediate conclusions, and to carefully assess external and internal messaging to stakeholders.
- This scenario has never happened in the modern media environment and there are no data metrics that can reliably predict the reaction of voters.
- There will be a lot of opinions and data that is not dependable or accurate; until the dust can settle, any rash action may result in the wrong decision.
- It is important to remember that the U.S. doesn't have a national election, and our process is state based. National poll results are interesting and directional but aren't an accurate or complete picture. Recall that former President Trump lost the national popular vote but won in the Electoral College.

How can APCO help?

- With so much on the line - and the potential scenarios in flux - a comprehensive grasp of electoral processes and timelines, coupled with a strategic engagement plan, is essential for navigating these upcoming political shifts.
- Now is the time to meet with APCO's government relations and issues and crisis management colleagues to prepare your strategy and begin executing against it. We can help you develop a range of scenario plans and briefing memos to best suit your business needs as the situation evolves.

###