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# Joe Biden deserves better. Who will tell him not to run in 2024?

*4-minute read*

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As the number of news accounts, editorial page commentaries and cable television roundtables grow steadily examining whether President Biden is mentally and physically capable of withstanding a re-election campaign or serving another four years, pressure will build and it will only be a matter of time before the most difficult of conversations will occur.

With an astonishing 73% of respondents in a Wall Street Journal poll in agreement that the president at age 81 is too old to competently serve as chief executive, the age issue has become a dominant matter of debate.

Other national news organizations polling has produced similar results — including from a majority of self-identified Democrats — and their cumulative impact has given the party establishment pause.

His physical impairments are increasingly apparent — a shuffling gait, stumbles on stairs and falls — and his cognitive strength has visibly waned under a series of forgetfulness, rambling and barely coherent remarks and embellished, fanciful tales of past personal experiences.

The time is approaching for those around him — family, close friends, political associates — to summon the courage and compassion to talk frankly and honestly with him about withdrawing as a candidate.

His public approval rating is mired at a worrisome 40% and 60% believe the nation is on the wrong track.

According to the Real Clear Politics polling averages, the numbers are equally dismal on issues of concern: 38 to 58 approve or disapprove on handling of the economy; 33-60 on immigration, 33-62 on inflation and 35-57 on crime.

Even as former president Donald Trump — the leading candidate for the Republican presidential nomination — faces months if not years of criminal trials on four separate indictments, Biden has been unable to put any distance between them, remaining in a statistical dead heat.

According to a CNN poll, he fares just as poorly in hypothetical matchups with the other Republican candidates, either trailing by one to three points or tied even though they appear to have little chance of securing the nomination.

Granted, polls in September of 2023 are not overly reliable predictors of an outcome in November 2024, but the persistent poor approvals on issues and candidate matchups suggest a serious popular discontent with the Biden Administration and a steep hill to scale to overcome it.

The Administration's emphasis on Bidenomics — its clumsily named recovery and job creation program — has failed to impress and, for many, is at odds with the economic realities experienced in daily life.

The sense and depth of unhappiness embedded in the national psyche has produced an increasing belief that Biden's age — he'd be 82 on inauguration day and 86 if he serves a full second term — will undermine his ability to deal with the country's problems.

Political life — elected, appointed or activist — can be exciting, exhilarating and satisfying, providing a sense of accomplishment and public acclaim.

It can also be a cold, cruel and unforgiving world of derision and ridicule, much of it angry, vindictive and deeply hurtful.

His campaign team has struggled to deal with the relentless demands of the re-election effort, crafting a lighter schedule before friendly audiences — especially organized labor groups — avoiding freewheeling exchanges with the media and eliminating any chances for ad hoc or off the cuff comments.

The strategy risks drawing further attention to their protective efforts and raises questions about the president's general health and acuity and whether he's able to cope with the 15 months remaining before election day.

His vacations have come under scrutiny as well with critics charging he has spent an excessive amount of time away from office, suggesting he requires the additional downtime to restore his stamina.

The frequent necessity for his staff to clarify, explain or provide context for his verbal miscues has drawn snickers and the derisive catcall “clean up in aisle seven.”

The president is still paying the price for the epic failure of his visit to fire ravaged Maui in Hawaii where he compared the devastation and tragic loss of life to a minor fire that damaged a portion of the kitchen of his Delaware home.

He lamented he nearly lost his home, his wife, his cat and his vintage Corvette and thus could understand the plight of Maui residents who escaped with nothing but the clothes they were wearing.

**Americans are concerned:** Biden is acting old. The good news? We're talking about it.

It is impractical for the president to forego campaigning altogether and much of the burden for carrying the Administration message will be shouldered by cabinet officers, members of Congress and surrogates.

His party organization support remains solid and he leads his primary opponents Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Marianne Williamson by more than 50 points.

The demands of campaigning and the pressures of dealing with the presidency itself are compounded by the growing questions and allegations of wrongdoing surrounding the business dealings of his son, Hunter.

Never far from mind are the political ramifications of a withdrawal. Attention would immediately turn to the logical replacement Vice President Kamala Harris but misgivings about her qualifications to assume the presidency are wide and deep.

The Democratic Party establishment and those who genuinely care about Biden owe it to him to engage in the extraordinarily difficult conversation, to be brutally frank if necessary, and reach a conclusion about his future before it is too late.

He has served his country for nearly 50 years, as a U.S. Senator, vice president and president. Agree with him or not, support his candidacy or not, his commitment to public service is clear.

His close friends and political associates owe him support and consideration, even if the circumstances are painful.

He deserves better than to be subjected to physical harm or personal ridicule by continuing his quest for re-election merely to satisfy the demands of anyone who would place their political status and personal well-being above his.

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