

Why are no Democrats contesting Biden's candidacy?

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Polls indicate that a majority of Americans are not in favor of Biden seeking reelection. Given his age and declining favorability, there appears to be an ideal opening for a younger candidate to step into his shoes. So why is the Democratic Party confronted with a leadership vacuum?



President Biden and Donald Trump both clinched their respective party nominations on Tuesday, March 12. | © Kevin Luke

Ahead of the upcoming presidential election in the [United States](#) in November, President Joe Biden and Donald Trump are both facing age-related concerns, alongside legal issues for Trump and a notable dip in approval ratings for Biden. But despite these challenges, there has been a resurgence between the two rivals in the primaries which [leaves many voters feeling uninspired](#).

[President Biden](#), with a low approval rating of 39% and increasing age-related incidences, is losing the confidence of the electorate, allowing Trump to take the lead in the polls. Nevertheless, he has managed to secure hundreds of delegates at primaries, revealing that his party is committed to supporting his candidacy.

Having won the four states of New York, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and contentious Wisconsin on March 12, Super Tuesday, one of the most important dates on the political calendar, both candidates amassed enough delegates to clinch their prospective nominations remarkably early in the electoral process.

Democrats have sought to play it safe in their quest to defeat Trump for a second time.

A complicated nomination process

In an interview with Newsendip, Democratic Political Strategist Na'ilah Amaru emphasized that it is common for members of his party to support him due to his incumbency status, especially if they feel he is doing a good job.

But despite what the party or voters might want, the fact remains that it would be logistically impossible to push forward another candidate at this stage.

President Biden has won enough delegates to clinch the Democratic nomination, and only he can decide if he drops out. Given his conviction that he represents the Democrats' [best chance to defeat Trump](#), the likelihood of him voluntarily stepping down is very slim, and having won over 3,300 delegates so far, he has little reason to believe otherwise.

The primary process itself has many obstacles that would be insurmountable for new candidates. The deadlines to be placed on the ballot in two states have already passed, and the process requires paperwork, a hefty fee, and hundreds or even thousands of signatures.

By the end of March, Biden's re-election campaign had raised 128.7 million dollars, outraising Trump so far, which analysts view as evidence of support from within his party.

Amaru also explained that if Biden were to step down, "it would be absolute chaos at the democratic national convention" in August, as hopeful candidates would try to make their case to secure the remaining 4,000 delegates who would no longer be pledged to Biden. However, Amaru stressed that this scenario was very unlikely.

The power of incumbency

So the complicated process of the primaries has deterred prospective candidates from competing against Biden. But had another candidate come forward earlier, their prospects would not have been much brighter.

History has shown that running against an incumbent president is an impossible task. No sitting president has lost his party's nomination to a primary challenger, and attempting to do so usually has messy outcomes for the party. In 1980, Ted Kennedy's heated challenge to Jimmy Carter in the primaries contributed to the Democratic party [losing the election](#).

Running against an incumbent president would also split and weaken the party. "The Democratic Party prioritizes unity," Amaru explains. Other potential candidates therefore "choose not to challenge Biden in order to maintain party cohesion and focus on supporting his agenda," she added, reflecting on the importance of policy alignment.

Rising stars are therefore eyeing the 2028 elections to maximize their chances of winning candidacy. According to Amaru, there is always an agenda behind publicly backing someone; it's "easier to work within the administration or position themselves in other leadership roles."

Democratic party members, including Pete Buttigieg, Gavin Newsom, Josh Shapiro, and Gretchen Whitmer, have all demonstrated their loyalty to Biden.

Gavin Newsom, in particular, is taking this election as an opportunity to gain publicity as a loyal supporter of Biden, making high-profile sweeps at Ron DeSantis in Biden's place, reminding the governor of Florida that he was "down 41 points in his own home state" when he appeared in a [televised debate](#), thus making himself known amongst Democratic voters in preparation for 2028.

The impact of hyperpolarization

Although Biden's approval rating is low, it is important to contextualize it in a period of hyperpolarization, which affects campaigns on both sides.

Amaru, who served as a policy advisor to former Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed and legislative aide to U.S. Congressman John Lewis, explains that candidates have to make a strategic decision to focus on where on the political spectrum their voter base is. Although the fringes of both parties are often amplified, the majority of America lies in the political center.

Thus, a distinct political calculus persists. Isabella Brown, manager at Qualify Candidates, an organization helping candidates in local elections, suggests that Biden, as a more moderate Democrat with extensive experience, has a broad appeal to voter groups, and is therefore more likely to provide stability for the party.

In this political climate, Amaru claims that there is a "perception that the only type of person who can beat an old white man is another old white man," although she argues that, based on her experience working with grassroots organizations and as executive director of the New York City Council's Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus, this is not true.

Amaru underscored that the absence of strong leadership contenders highlights a systemic failure within both parties to build a bench of succession. The recurrence of the same candidates from four years ago underscores the inadequacy of building on fresh talent from "lower levels."

Post-election, Amaru will be observing the Democratic Party's forthcoming action to "build a political bench that is much more reflective of American society."