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What Does President Biden's Withdrawal Mean?

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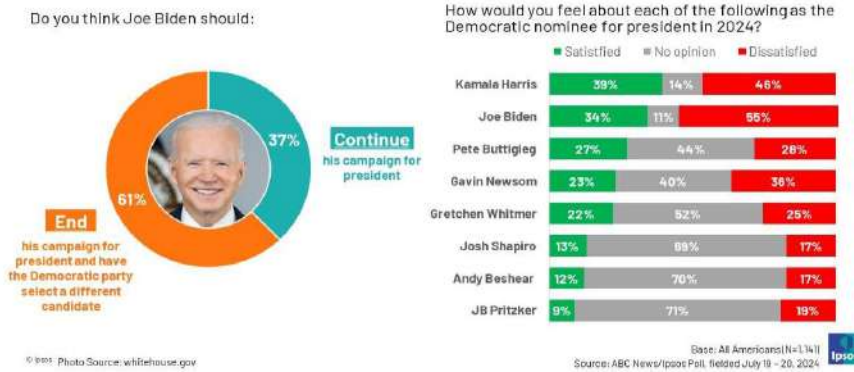




What Does President Biden’s Withdrawal Mean?

After weeks of speculation, President Joe Biden officially dropped out of the 2024 US presidential race, citing the move as “in the best interest of my party and the country,” in his statement on [X](#). Although he insisted for weeks that he will not withdraw his campaign, President Biden’s decision comes after increasing pressure from Democrats following concerns about his advanced age and mental acuity in recent media and campaign trail appearances. [Over thirty members](#) of Congress have called for Biden to end his bid, as have former elected officials, and an [ABC News/Ipsos poll](#) found that over 60% of Democrats believed he should end his campaign. President Biden’s decision to abandon his campaign has domestic and international implications.

Most want Biden to end his campaign for president, but few agree on who the Democratic nominee should be



Source: [ABC News/Ipsos poll](#)

Domestic Responses

Domestically, the announcement changed Democrats’ plans for November. While the current president reiterated that he would continue to serve the remaining of his term, he endorsed Vice-President Kamala Harris to take his place at the top of their party’s nominations. Calling her “an extraordinary partner in all this work,” President Biden gave Harris his endorsement, writing on [X](#): “My fellow Democrats, I have decided not to accept the nomination and to focus all my energies on my duties as president for the remainder of my term. My very first decision as the party nominee in 2020 was to pick Kamala Harris as my Vice President. And it’s been the best decision I’ve made. Today I want to offer my full support and endorsement for Kamala to be the nominee of our party this year. Democrats — it’s time to come together and beat Trump. Let’s do this.”

Many Democrats were quick to show their support for Harris, including Nancy Pelosi, the former US House speaker, US President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who was the Democratic nominee in 2016, several governors, including California Governor Gavin Newsom, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, and Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, Pete Buttigieg, the transport secretary and 2020 Democratic rival, Senator Elizabeth Warren, who also fought for the Democratic nomination in 2020, and [others](#). This united front among Democrats serves as a reassurance of the party’s stability in the face of Biden’s withdrawal.



Vice-President Kamala Harris secured the support of enough Democratic delegates to become her party’s nominee against Former President Donald Trump with just over 100 days until Election Day. According to an [Associated Press Survey](#), Harris now appears to have the backing of more than the 1,976 delegates she will need to claim the nomination. No other candidate was mentioned in the AP tally. Harris will not be the official Democratic nominee until the Democratic National Convention scheduled to be held August 19-22 in Chicago, or a virtual roll call to formalize the nomination before the convention.



Source: [AP Democratic Delegate Survey](#)

Following the withdrawal announcement, Republicans were quick to call for President Biden’s resignation, explaining that since he cannot continue his campaign, he cannot govern. For instance, United States Representative Elise Stefanik wrote on [X](#): “If Joe Biden can’t run for re-election, he is unable and unfit to serve as President of the United States. He must immediately resign.” Similarly, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Mike Johnson echoed this statement, [stating](#): “If Joe Biden is not fit to run for president, he is not fit to serve as president. He must resign the office immediately. November 5 cannot arrive soon enough.” One can only expect additional pressure from Republicans towards Biden resigning.

International Responses

Just as President Biden’s decision caused shifts in both Democrats’ and Republicans’ plans for November, it also added more uncertainty globally. On the one hand, many Western leaders paid tribute to President Biden, including Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. On the other hand, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov [stated](#) that “the election is still four months away. And it’s a long time, during which a lot can change. We need to pay attention, follow what will happen and go about our business.”

Gulf leaders have not issued official statements, keeping in line with their traditional approach of not interfering or being involved in outside domestic policies. While the outcome of the US elections holds repercussions for US Middle East and Gulf policy as well as US-GCC relations, the GCC states have always underlined their readiness to work with any US administration that is chosen without being involved in any domestic US politics.



While Vice-President [Harris is](#) expected to follow President Biden's foreign policy on a couple of issues, such as on Iran, she could have a stricter stance with Israel over their war in Gaza if she ends up taking the oath in January. This shift in foreign policy could have significant implications for US international relations, particularly in the Middle East.

On Iran, like President Biden, Harris had supported the 2015 nuclear deal between the US and Iran. During her presidential campaign in 2019, she criticized Former President Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear deal, [calling](#) it "beyond reckless." Instead, she [stated that](#) she would "plan to rejoin the JCPOA so long as Iran also returned to verifiable compliance" and "seek negotiations with Iran to extend and supplement some of the nuclear deal's existing provisions, and work with our partners to counter Iran's destabilizing behavior in the region, including with regard to its ballistic missile program." Harris also [co-introduced](#) the No War Against Iran Act in January 2020 when she was a senator.

On the Gulf, Harris's main dialogue has been with the UAE, visiting twice, where she led the US delegation at the COP28 climate conference in Dubai in December 2023 and in 2022 after the death of President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan. On Saudi Arabia, similar to President Biden in his first campaign, where he called for a "recalibration" of the relationship with Saudi Arabia, Harris [stated](#) that the US needs to "fundamentally reevaluate our relationship with Saudi Arabia, using our leverage to stand up for American values and interests." However, Harris [explained](#) that the "United States and Saudi Arabia still have mutual areas of interest, such as counterterrorism, where the Saudis have been strong partners. And we should continue to coordinate on that front."

Regarding the war in Gaza, unlike President Biden's unwavering support for Israel in both military aid and official statements despite the tens of thousands of Palestinian casualties, Harris has expressed more public sympathy for Palestine without breaking from President Biden's approach. On March 4, 2024, she was one of the earliest high-profile leaders in the Biden Administration to call for an "immediate truce." She also stated that "too many innocent Palestinians have been killed" and "people in Gaza are starving. The conditions are inhumane. And our common humanity compels us to act," as well as [criticized](#) Israel directly over the situation, stating "the Israeli government must do more to significantly increase the flow of aid." Harris has also supported a two-state solution, opposed annexation, and condemned West Bank settler violence various times.

Her position on the Gaza war will be crucial during her campaign in trying to win back Arab Americans. Previously, President Biden continued to lose support among Arab Americans. A report by the [Arab American Institute](#) indicates that only 17% of Arab Americans would vote again for Biden in 2024, in marked contrast to the 59% who voted for him in 2020, and that his approval rating among Arab Americans also plummeted from 74% in 2020 to 29% in the 2023 poll. The report attributes the dramatic decline in support to "his handling of Israel's continued devastation of Gaza." It will be interesting to see how her campaign plays out.

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