

WORLD

Biden drops out of presidential race, endorsing Kamala Harris



U.S. President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris at the White House in Washington on July 4. | ERIC LEE / THE NEW YORK TIMES

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Joe Biden is out.

In a stunning announcement Sunday, the 81-year-old U.S. leader said he was dropping out of the 2024 presidential race, as concerns that he could not defeat Republican rival Donald Trump came to a head.

Biden endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris, 59, to replace him as the Democratic candidate, just 3½ months before the Nov. 5 election.

“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,” Biden said on his X social media account.

Biden made the announcement [as he was recovering from COVID-19](#) at his home in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

“Democrats — it’s time to come together and beat Trump. Let’s do this,” he said on X after offering his “full support and endorsement” for Harris to be the nominee.

In a separate statement, Biden said it was “in the best interest” of his party and the nation to withdraw from the race, adding that he would address the country later in the week to explain his decision.

Harris, in a post on X, said she was honored to have Biden’s endorsement and intends to “earn and win this nomination.”

“I will do everything in my power to unite the Democratic Party,” Harris added.

If formally chosen as the party’s nominee, Harris would be the first Black woman and first Asian American to lead a major party ticket in U.S. history.

Trump — who was riding a wave of momentum following his coronation at the Republican National Convention last week — just days after surviving an assassination attempt — [welcomed the news](#).

“He was annihilated in an Earth Shattering Debate, and now the Corrupt and Radical Democrats are throwing him overboard,” Trump wrote of Biden on his Truth Social media platform. “He was not fit to serve from the very beginning, but the people around him lied to America about his Complete and Total Mental, Physical, and Cognitive Demise. Whoever the Left puts up now will just be more of the same.”

Trump’s running mate, [Ohio Sen. J.D. Vance](#), put Harris squarely within the GOP’s sights, alleging that the vice president had “lied for nearly four years about Biden’s mental capacity.”

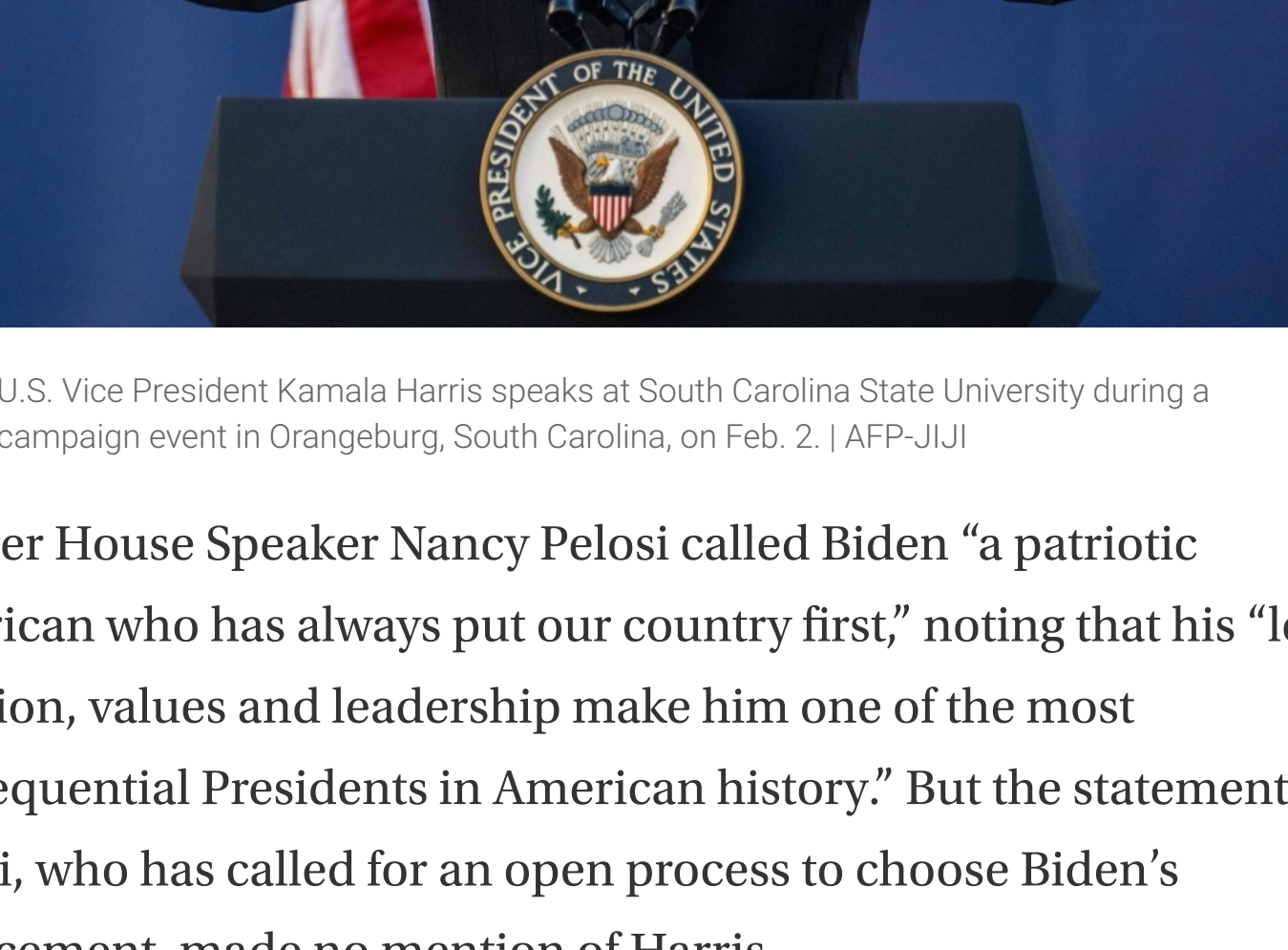
“President Trump and I are ready to save America, whoever’s at the top of the Democrat ticket,” he wrote on X. “Bring it on.”

But placing Harris at the top of the ticket could still present a challenge for Democrats, with polling data showing that she trailed Trump in a hypothetical matchup.

Across an average of recent polls, Trump was ahead by nearly 2 percentage points — 48.2% to 46.3% — though that would be an improvement over a Trump-Biden race, in which Trump led by 3 percentage points.

Still, momentum was clearly on Harris’ side late Sunday, with the Democratic fundraising group ActBlue announcing that the vice president had raised \$46.7 million in just hours, making the haul “the biggest fundraising day of the 2024 cycle.”

Harris moved quickly Sunday to sew up support for her bid — though some party heavyweights remained mum on whether or not they would back her. In just a month, the party will hold its national convention in Chicago, where members need to formally nominate their presidential candidate.



U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris speaks at South Carolina State University during a campaign event in Orangeburg, South Carolina, on Feb. 2. | AFP-JUJI

Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called Biden “a patriotic American who has always put our country first,” noting that his “legacy of vision, values and leadership make him one of the most consequential Presidents in American history.” But the statement by Pelosi, who has called for an open process to choose Biden’s replacement, made no mention of Harris.

Former President Barack Obama called Biden “a patriot of the highest order,” adding that he had “every right to run for re-election and finish the job he started” in a statement on his official Medium account.

“Joe understands better than anyone the stakes in this election,” Obama wrote. But he, too, did not mention Harris, warning instead of “uncharted waters in the days ahead” as the party works to settle on a nominee.

Other high profile Democrats did immediately throw their support behind the vice president, including former President Bill Clinton and his wife, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

“We join millions of Americans in thanking President Biden for all he has accomplished,” the pair said in an official statement released on X. “We are honored to join the President in endorsing Vice President Harris and will do whatever we can to support her.”

California Gov. Gavin Newsom, seen as a future Democratic presidential candidate, also threw his weight behind Harris, while Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro — a leading contender for a vice presidential slot if Harris is officially nominated — also offered his backing.

While Pelosi and some others are urging an open process, and indications are that party leaders will establish one, questions remain over whether any of the other leading contenders will step forward to challenge Harris.

“There is no evidence that anyone will, and they have good reasons not to do so,” William Galston, an expert on U.S. politics at the Brookings Institution, [wrote in an analysis on the think tank’s website](#). “Contesting her nomination would antagonize her supporters, diminishing challengers’ support in future presidential races.”

In Tokyo on Monday morning, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters that the government would be closely monitoring events in the U.S. following the announcement.

“It goes without saying that the U.S.-Japan alliance is the cornerstone of our country’s diplomatic and security policies, so I would like to closely watch future developments,” Kishida said.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said during a morning news conference later Monday that U.S. government policies are a matter of significant concern for Japan.

“Regardless of the outcome of the U.S. presidential election, what is important is to respond to various situations that may arise and to make necessary policy adjustments with the U.S. government,” he said.

Biden has overseen dramatic shifts in the U.S.-Japan alliance, as both countries look to counter an increasingly assertive China. But while Biden was seen as a safe pair of hands, Trump’s candidacy has unnerved at least some in Tokyo, amid concerns over what observers say is a transactional approach to the alliance.

“I expect the Japanese reaction will be that this could only elevate even further the probability of a **Trump 2.0 presidency**,” said Chris Hughes, a professor of international politics and Japanese studies at the University of Warwick.

“Biden has been a reassuring figure for Japanese policymakers,” he said, citing the president’s emphasis on rebuilding trust with allies and working with international institutions.

Ryusei Iizuka, communications chair for Democrats Abroad Japan, an official country committee for Democrats living in Japan, said the organization is backing Harris’ bid for the White House.

“It is time now for Democrats everywhere to give their all to make sure President Biden’s sacrifice will not have been in vain,” Iizuka said.



U.S. President Joe Biden boards Air Force One in Madison, Wisconsin, on July 5. On Sunday, Biden announced that he is dropping out of the 2024 presidential race. | AFP-JUJI

Pressure began building on Biden — the oldest person ever to have occupied the Oval Office — to cede his position at the top of the ticket after a poor debate performance against Trump stoked concerns about his age. The decision to quit made him the first presidential candidate to bow out during an election year since March 1968, when Democratic President Lyndon B. Johnson announced he would not run for re-election as he grappled with growing divisions in the country over the Vietnam War.

Biden had earlier remained defiant in the face of pressure to bow out of the 2024 race, saying he was “all in” as recently as Wednesday. Campaign officials had also publicly insisted Biden was staying in the race, even as speculation rose to a crescendo following the end of the Republican National Convention, where Trump was formally named that party’s nominee.

But, after party bigwigs — including Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer — reportedly urged him to drop out of the race, it appeared that Biden’s fate had been sealed.

The top Democrats in Congress, Schumer and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, both reportedly met with Biden in recent days to warn that his candidacy had threatened his party’s prospects in November’s election.

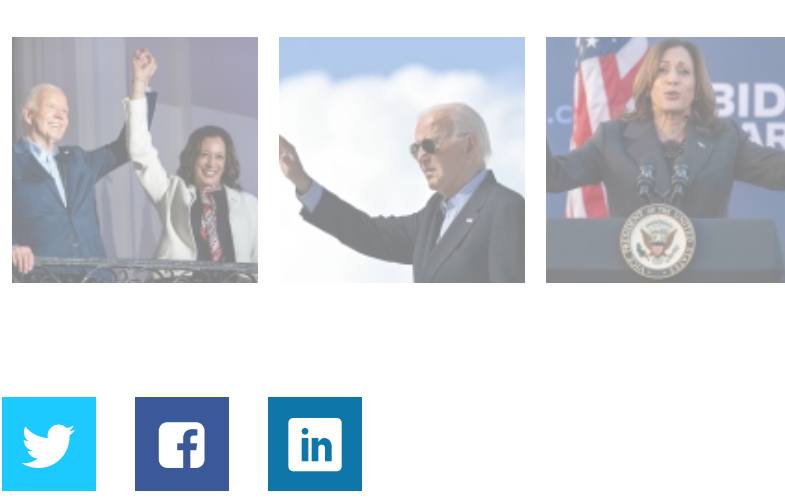
Despite the mounting speculation in recent days, Biden shocked his staff with his plans to step aside, Reuters reported, citing an unnamed source. As of Saturday night, the message was “proceed with everything, full speed ahead,” the source said.

Republicans, meanwhile, have found themselves newly unified after Trump, 78, survived an assassination attempt on July 13.

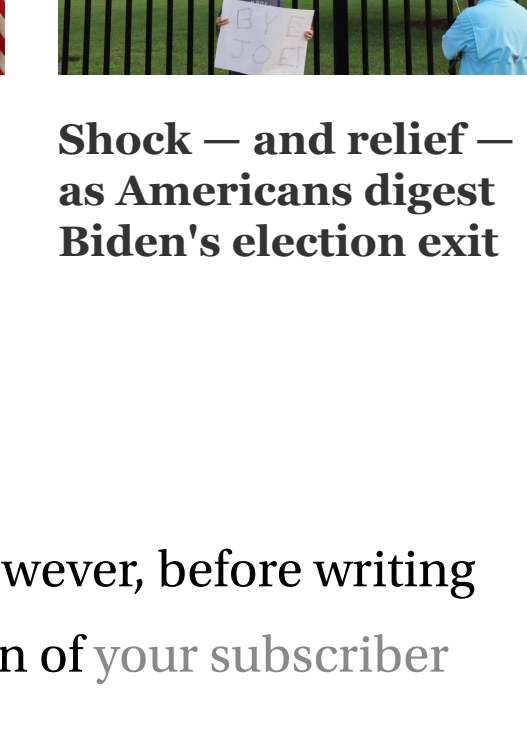
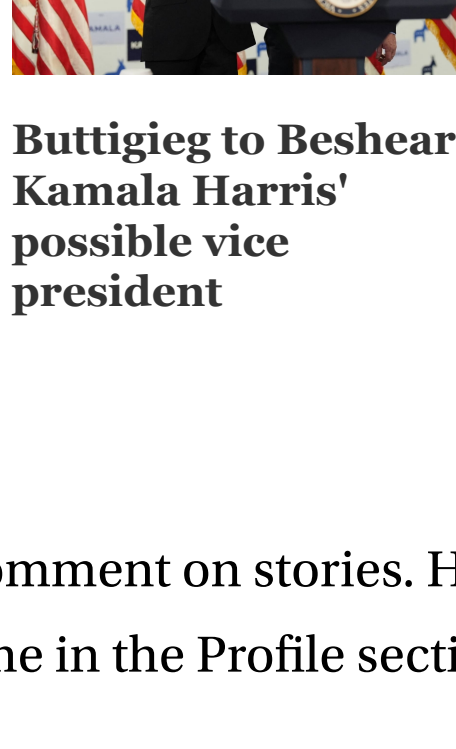
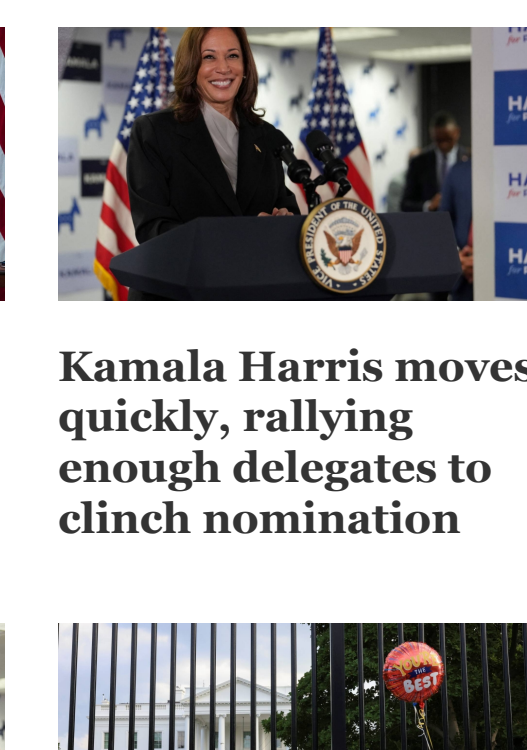
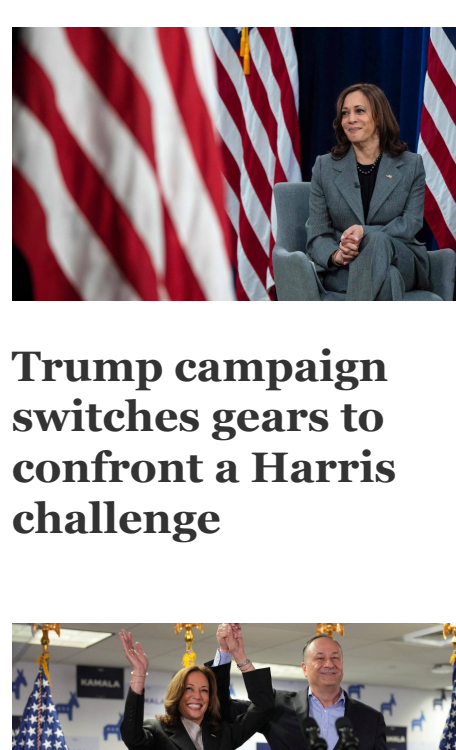
Whether Trump can withstand the shift in momentum will now likely depend on how Harris, if she becomes the nominee, plays her hand.

“Overall, she must convince undecided Americans that she has the clarity, knowledge, and gravitas needed to be an effective president — in foreign policy and defense as well as domestic policy,” according to Galston. “If the people don’t feel comfortable imagining her in the Oval Office, they won’t vote for her, and Donald Trump will surf a working-class populist wave back to the White House.”

KEYWORDS
U.S., JOE BIDEN, DONALD TRUMP, 2024 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, DEMOCRATS, REPUBLICANS, KAMALA HARRIS



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