

# [***Conspiracy theories swirl around Taylor Swift. These Republican voters say they don't care***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B8Y-MFH1-JC5B-G3TS-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Associated Press

February 8, 2024 Thursday 1:47 PM GMT

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**Section:** SPORTS NEWS; ENTERTAINMENT NEWS; POLITICAL NEWS

**Length:** 934 words

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**Dateline:** WASHINGTON

**Body**

WASHINGTON — To hear some conservatives on cable news or on social media tell it, [*Taylor Swift*](https://apnews.com/hub/taylor-swift) is [*part of an elaborate plot*](https://apnews.com/article/super-bowl-taylor-swift-travis-kelce-conspiracy-theories-838ce3087c795cb45468d08ebbb27059) to help Democrats win the November election.

“I wonder who’s going to win the Super Bowl next month," wrote former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy in January after the Kansas City Chiefs made the game with a [*strong performance from tight end Travis Kelce*](https://apnews.com/article/travis-kelce-nfl-record-postseason-receptions-2d1bde50cb0535dc031e76f59f0000ec), Swift's partner. “And I wonder if there’s a major presidential endorsement coming from an artificially culturally propped-up couple this fall."

Many voters just see that talk as noise to tune out.

Ryan Allstun was wearing a Green Bay Packers hoodie at a recent rally in Lancaster, South Carolina, for GOP presidential candidate Nikki Haley. Allstun said he supports [*former President Donald Trump*](https://apnews.com/hub/donald-trump) and wants famous people to keep their ***politics*** private. But Allstun doesn’t look to celebrities such as Swift and Kelce for endorsements.

“Couldn’t care less,” he said. “To each their own.”

Many people at recent Republican political events were far more ambivalent about the pop star than some personalities who suggest the media coverage of Swift and Kelce's relationship is a pretext to boost a potential future endorsement of Democratic President Joe Biden. Some have gone so far as to suggest — some tongue in cheek, others perhaps not — that the U.S. government is running a covert operation involving Swift.

Some Republican strategists think the focus on Swift could hurt the party.

“People just want to like Taylor Swift. They want to be able to watch football and listen to her music and not consider the political implications,” said Matt Gorman, vice president at Targeted Victory, a Republican political consulting firm. “I beg people who care about this to go outside and touch grass. Most everyday people don’t have the time or energy to care.”

Susan Cummins, a Haley supporter who moved to the Charleston, South Carolina, area from New Jersey about two years ago, said her social media feeds have been flooded with coverage of the couple. She considers Swift a “good performer,” but Cummins isn’t a huge fan. She follows the Philadelphia Eagles but doesn’t watch much football.

Cummins is familiar with the conspiracy theory and finds it “really far-fetched” that everything would be “rigged.”

“It just seems over the top to me that there would be all these forces that would do something like this,” Cummins said.

Conspiracy theories [*gain the widest attention*](https://apnews.com/article/conspiracy-theory-misinformation-trump-qanon-facebook-twitter-39505e8c05b55f91856d809ab6e553a8) when they target the most well-known figures and institutions. The latest right-wing conspiracy theories blend Swift with claims about the most watched sporting event in the U.S. and a pivotal presidential election, making any intersection of the events ripe for conspiracy theories.

“The good news is people don’t believe in conspiracy theories more than they have in the past. The bad news is that they believe them more than we paid attention to or cared about,” said Joseph Uscinski, a political science professor at the University of Miami who studies conspiracy theories.

“If the right Pied Piper comes along then folks can be mobilized, sometimes with very devastating consequences,” Uscinski said.

Mellissa Best, a Trump supporter from Florence, South Carolina, wasn’t aware of the theories about Swift. But Best said she wouldn’t be surprised if powerful people tried to leverage Swift’s influence to improve Biden’s popularity among young people. Best said that if she had young children, she wouldn’t want them attending Swift’s concerts.

“I believe these leftists will do anything to stay in power,” she said. “It wouldn’t surprise me.”

While Republicans and Democrats believe in conspiracy theories about equally, said Uscinski, Trump “flipped the game on its head” in 2016 and brought conspiratorial thinking to the forefront of conservative ***politics***, making cases such as those against Swift more common because of new incentives in ***politics***.

Swift endorsed Biden in 2020. She also backed former Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen, a Democrat, in his 2018 run for Senate, which he lost to Sen. Marsha Blackburn, a Republican.

While many of the same political rules apply to a Swift endorsement, one new challenge for Republicans in dismissing the drama is the reality that celebrity culture is now considered a mainstay of American ***politics***.

“Since 2016, for obvious reasons, it’s become difficult for Republicans to credibly make a case that celebrities should stay out of ***politics***,” said David Jackson, a political scientist at Bowling Green State University who studies political endorsements. Jackson said Trump “created a new pathway to the presidency, from celebrity culture right to the Oval Office.”

The conspiracy theories have become an issue in the campaign as well, with Republican lawmakers dismissing the claims about Swift but also the significance of any potential endorsement for the 2024 election.

“Taylor Swift has made a career off of writing songs about picking the wrong man, so I don’t think we should take advice from her now,” said Karoline Leavitt, a spokesperson for Trump’s 2024 campaign, in an interview with Fox News host Sean Hannity. Leavitt added that Democrats' eagerness for a Swift endorsement shows they are “panicking about the prospect of Biden being evicted from the White House.”

Haley told a recent audience that she didn't understand “what the obsession is.”

“Taylor Swift is allowed to have a boyfriend. Taylor Swift is a good artist. I’ve taken my daughter to Taylor Swift concerts before. To have a conspiracy theory of all of this is bizarre,” she said.

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Pollard reported from Columbia, South Carolina.

**Load-Date:** February 8, 2024

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