

# [***Biden leans on his Democratic predecessors as Trump remains isolated from other Republican leaders***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BN6-55B1-JC5B-G0K7-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

WASHINGTON — When [*President Joe Biden*](https://apnews.com/hub/joe-biden) needs advice, there are two people he can turn to who know what it’s like to sit in his chair. Sometimes he will invite Barack Obama over to the White House for a meal or he will get on the phone with Bill Clinton.

The three men share decades of history at the pinnacle of American and Democratic leadership, making them an unusual trio in presidential history. Although there has sometimes been friction as their ambitions and agendas have diverged, they have spent years building toward a similar vision for the country.

On Thursday, their partnership will be on display in what has been described as a one-of-a-kind fundraising extravaganza in New York City to help Biden build on his [*already significant cash advantage*](https://apnews.com/article/election-2024-biden-campaign-fundraising-b108bb7e26ec765917ec2f6d6a04bcda) in this year’s presidential election. It's a dramatic show of force intended to rally the Democratic Party faithful to secure a second term for Biden despite his stubbornly [*low poll numbers*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-poll-survey-economy-trump-election-dca1b60f6749d5eb50bc0e7600814855) and [*doubts due to his age*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-age-poll-trump-2024-620e0a5cfa0039a6448f607c17c7f23e) (81).

“There is everything to be gained by Joe Biden standing next to Bill Clinton and Barack Obama,” said Leon Panetta, who worked in the administrations of both former presidents. “That picture is worth a hell of a lot in ***politics*** today.”

The display of solidarity is a sharp contrast to Donald Trump’s isolation from other Republican leaders.

Although Trump has solidified his grip on his party on the way to becoming [*the presumptive nominee*](https://apnews.com/article/presumptive-nominee-biden-trump-6b2a3beb31896894ded9e96aa30cfcec#:~:text=What%20does%20that%20mean%3F,-FILE%20%2D%20In%20this&text=COLUMBIA%2C%20S.C.,considered%20their%20parties'%20presumptive%20nominees.), not even his own former vice president, [*Mike Pence*](https://apnews.com/article/pence-trump-endorsement-c05ffad1e20381fed3cfc87b7071ba4c), is willing to endorse Trump's bid for another White House term. The only other living Republican president, George W. Bush, is not a supporter, either.

It's a far different situation with Biden, Obama and Clinton. When they haven't been campaigning against each other, they've been working together.

At one point, all three of them were on a collision course during the Democratic presidential primary in 2008. Biden and Obama sought the nomination, as did Clinton's wife, Hillary. Obama came out on top, and chose Biden as his vice president and Hillary Clinton as his secretary of state.

As Obama's two terms were ending and the 2016 election was approaching, he nudged Hillary Clinton to the forefront as his preferred successor and dissuaded Biden from running after Biden's elder son died of cancer. Clinton lost to Trump, who lost to Biden in 2020. Obama privately helped clear a path for Biden to the Democratic nomination that year.

There have been notable splits between the presidents on key issues. Biden was unsuccessful in persuading Obama not to send more troops to Afghanistan in 2009. U.S. forces remained in the country until 2021, when Biden withdrew them during his first year in office.

The three presidents have often focused on the same goals in a sort of legislative relay race. Clinton failed to significantly expand health care access during his presidency, which ran from 1993 to 2001. Obama picked up the baton when he took office in 2009 and signed the Affordable Care Act into law in 2010.

Biden called the law a “big ... deal" — inserting an infamous expletive in the middle of that thought — and built on it when he began his own term in 2021. He signed legislation that included financial incentives for states to expand Medicaid, prompting North Carolina [*to take the belated step last year*](https://apnews.com/article/north-carolina-medicaid-expansion-health-care-5c97a73a2d09b77ee9e499928590674a), more than a decade after the Affordable Care Act made it possible.

Between Clinton, Obama and Biden, "they’ve seen the sweep of Democratic history together in ways that not everybody has,” said Gene Sperling, a longtime economic adviser.

Sperling is among the administration officials who have served all three presidents. Another member of those ranks is John Podesta, currently a global climate envoy for Biden who was Clinton’s chief of staff and an environmental adviser to Obama.

Podesta said all three have tried to improve the lives of working Americans.

“Each one of them, when they close the door on the Oval Office, that’s what mattered to them the most,” he said.

But their styles aren't the same. While Obama was more reserved, Biden and Clinton draw energy from chatting up people on rope lines and forging deep personal relationships.

“Their relaxation is ***politics***,” Podesta said.

Panetta suggested that Biden, broadly unpopular in public polling, should try to pick up a few tips from his Democratic predecessors, both of whom served two terms.

“The fundamental reason they got reelected is that they were able to connect with the American people,” he said. “Joe Biden clearly needs to do that.”

The only living Democratic president who will not be in New York for the fundraiser is 99-year-old Jimmy Carter. A spokeswoman for Carter confirmed that he remains in home hospice care and is not making any public statements.

Carter's relationship with Biden goes back several decades. When Carter was running for president in 1976 as a little-known former governor of Georgia, Biden took a political risk by becoming the first sitting senator to endorse him.

Fundraisers, even with presidents, are [*usually small affairs.*](https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-fundraiser-explainer-2024-los-angeles-05c6322953201c86d9ed764d5d37c182) Dozens or sometimes hundreds of people gather in a wealthy person's living room or backyard to hear a speech from the candidate and maybe ask a few questions.

This one is in a different league. Thousands of people are expected at Radio City Music Hall to watch Stephen Colbert, the late-night talk show host, moderate a conversation with the three presidents. Celebrity guests — Cynthia Erivo, Mindy Kaling, Queen Latifah, Lizzo, Lea Michele and Ben Platt — will provide more star power.

The cheapest tickets are $225, making it more accessible than most fundraisers. But that's only the starting point. A photo with all three presidents is $100,000. Access to more intimate receptions will cost $250,000 or $500,000.

Campaign officials have not said how much they expect the event to raise. But they said a fundraiser featuring Biden and Obama in December raised nearly $3 million.

Trump, meanwhile, is also expected to be in the area Thursday, attending the [*Long Island wake of a New York City police officer*](https://apnews.com/article/police-officer-killed-nypd-queens-f39e97096760106567d3a9e139ef2335) who was shot and killed during a traffic stop in Queens.

The Trump campaign, which has struggled to keep pace with Biden's fundraising, scoffed at Thursday’s event, dismissing it as a sign the president needs to "trot out some retreads like Clinton and Obama,” in the words of spokesman Steven Cheung.

Eric Schultz, a senior adviser to Obama, said the former president “will do all he can” to support Biden and “he looks forward to helping Democrats up and down the ballot make the case to voters this fall.”

"Our strategy will be based on driving impact, especially where and when his voice can help move the needle," Schultz said.

The relationship between Obama and Biden has been personal as well as political. Obama offered to help Biden pay the family's medical bills when Biden's son Beau was struggling with cancer. After Beau's death in 2015, Obama gave a eulogy at the funeral, where he described his vice president as “my brother.”

“They’re like family to each other," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said recently.

\_\_\_ Associated Press writer Bill Barrow in Atlanta contributed to this report.

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