

# [***Noem's book rollout has put the governor in an unwanted spotlight. But she had already fallen off Trump's VP shortlist***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BY6-X251-DY7V-G1B7-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; For South Dakota Gov. [*Kristi Noem*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/26/politics/kristi-noem-south-dakota-book-killing-dog/index.html), much of the 2024 campaign cycle has turned out to be a case study in what not to do to rise into potential vice presidential contention.

That includes the latest hiccup, with the second-term South Dakota governor - once considered a top potential running mate who has since fallen off former President Donald Trump's shortlist, according to multiple Republicans with knowledge of that list - finding herself in an unwanted spotlight over questions about actions she describes in her upcoming book: "No Going Back: The Truth on What's Wrong with ***Politics*** and How We Move America Forward."

Noem's crisis hasn't affected her standing on Trump's vice presidential candidate shortlist - sources said she had fallen off that list long before that - but it has confirmed to skeptics in Trump's orbit that she shouldn't be in consideration and won't be anytime soon.

[*Noem's book launch*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/26/politics/kristi-noem-south-dakota-book-killing-dog/index.html) has become a problem for her for multiple reasons. First, there was Noem's description of her decision to kill a 14-month-old wirehair pointer, named Cricket, who was not displaying the signs of an ideal hunting dog. The governor wrote that the dog was "untrainable," according to excerpts first reported by [*The Guardian*](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2024/apr/26/trump-kristi-noem-shot-dog-and-goat-book). She also described shooting a goat in the book.

Noem has argued that those anecdotes were meant to show how capable she is of doing some of the more gruesome jobs in life when necessary.

But the Cricket episode in particular instead resulted in days of Noem having to publicly defend the decision to put the dog down. A bipartisan group of members of Congress set up a Congressional Dog Lovers Caucus in a not so subtle dig to the South Dakota governor.

Some Republicans came to her defense, like South Dakota Rep. Dusty Johnson, who acknowledged, "Life is a little different in rural America."

But South Dakota Sen. Mike Rounds struck a different tone: "I don't see how it helps," he said Tuesday.

Noem has repeatedly defended her actions this week. Appearing on Fox News Wednesday, Noem explained it was a "very aggressive dog" that "massacred" a local family's chickens and attacked her, which ultimately led her to shoot the dog in a gravel pit. She argued it was the responsible decision to protect her children and those around her business.

"Dogs that have this kind of a problem, that have been to training for months and still kill for fun, they are extremely dangerous and a responsible owner does what they need to do and what the law will allow," Noem said.

As many questioned why she volunteered this story in her book, Noem said it demonstrates how she doesn't run from the truth.

"What the point of the story is, is that most politicians, they will run from the truth," Noem said. "They will shy away and hide from making tough decisions. I don't do either of those."

Trump himself has privately criticized Noem about the story, a person with direct knowledge of the comments told CNN. The former president, however, appeared more dismayed that she chose to disclose the anecdote and at her faltering attempts to do damage control, than the story itself, they said.

On Thursday, the situation got worse for Noem when [*The Dakota Scout*](https://www.thedakotascout.com/p/gov-kristi-noems-account-of-meeting), an independent newspaper, reported that Noem suggested in her book that, as a member of the US House Armed Services Committee, she had met North Korean Dictator Kim Jong Un. Noem, according to that excerpt, also said that she was set to meet with French President Emmanuel Macron as governor before cancelling. In both cases, the Scout reported, records indicated that Noem did not meet with Kim or have a meeting scheduled with Macron.

In another excerpt [*obtained by Politico*](https://www.politico.com/f/?id=0000018f-3ca2-d351-ab8f-fcb29e160000), Noem described a 2021 phone call she says occurred with former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley that she took as Haley trying to intimidate Noem from the national spotlight. That excerpt was first reported by Politico on Friday. A Haley spokeswoman though said that Haley called Noem in 2020, not 2021.

In response, Ian Fury, Noem's spokesperson, released a statement that these were small errors and would be changed.

"It was brought to our attention that the upcoming book 'No Going Back' has two small errors. This has been communicated to the ghostwriter and editor. Kim Jong Un was included in a list of world leaders and shouldn't have been," Fury said in a statement to CNN on Friday. "The Governor spoke with Nikki Haley in 2020 and met with her in 2021. The book has not been released yet, and all future editions will be corrected."

Republicans have been befuddled how the book was published with these errors.

"You would hope that these sort of anecdotes would be vetted prior to the release of a book, that would typically happen in most high profile book launches, and obviously there's some orchestrated events going on here. She has several interviews set up," Jesse Hunt, a Republican strategist and former communications director for the Republican Governors Association, said. "Clearly this was thought out. The advisers that she had involved didn't see it as having any problematic narratives."

Noem's standing

While at one point considered a top contender for vice president, advisers to Trump have said for weeks that Noem no longer held that standing, even before she revealed she shot her dog and before she posted a bizarre infomercial for a Texas dental practice. However, she was included on the short list that the campaign compiled for vetting, with her advisers noting that no one should be entirely ruled out given Trump's often spontaneous decision making. Despite this caveat, at least two advisers said she was currently not in the running.

For Noem, the increasing scrutiny about her book is the latest bump in an ongoing list of her attempts to raise her profile on the national stage.

On paper, Noem had all the markings of a strong contender to be Trump's running mate. For the operatives that fixate on simplistic criteria in picking a running mate, the argument behind Noem is she's an anti-abortion Republican who started out in humble means and rose to the governor's mansion. Noem has also displayed comfort in front of large crowds or a camera.

As governor of South Dakota during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, she resisted lockdowns. While speaking at a National Rifle Association event, she said that her two-year-old grandchild has multiple guns.

Noem also has been deferential to Trump and the Trump movement going back to before she was elected to her current job in 2018. She was one of the earliest governors to endorse the former president in the 2024 cycle.

But her term as governor has been rocky. She's received national criticism for her opposition to any Covid-19 lockdown measures - but not by hardcore Trump loyalists. Her office has seen significant staff turnover, with seasoned operatives leaving and Noem bringing in more controversial ones - like former Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski. Noem has faced ethics complaints in South Dakota for inappropriately using her office to help her daughter with a real estate appraiser's license. And more recently, she was banned from some tribal lands in her home state over comments the governor made about tribal leaders focusing more on benefiting from drug cartels than their children.

Throughout it all, Noem has sought to boost her national profile. Early in the 2024 cycle, she set up a federal political action committee - a time honored move that future candidates for high office make. Noem has also had her political operation air ads on national television to highlight her state's economy. In March, Noem opted to star in a near five-minute informercial for a dental practice based in Texas.

At one point, some of these moves seemed to be working. But that was long before the public learned about Cricket or the unnamed goat.

"He soured on her long before this," a person close to Trump, who has spoken with the former president about his potential vice presidential contenders, told CNN.

"He has questioned some of her choices. But where they may have been lingering questions over whether she could find herself back on the list, this story has killed that. It is totally disqualifying," they added, referencing the story about how she killed her 14-month-old dog.

Trump has often mentioned Noem in both private and public as a loyal supporter. The former president was particularly pleased after her August 2023 television appearance affirming her decision that she would not be running for president in 2024.

Noem is still set to appear at a big fundraiser at Mar-a-Lago this weekend, alongside other potential vice presidential picks for Trump. She's also [*set to appear*](https://secure.winred.com/california-republican-party/kristi-noem-convention-tickets) at the California GOP convention later this May.

That's a schedule a top-tier Republican would have if they were in strong contention to be Trump's running mate. But the last few weeks and months have cast strong doubt among Republicans about Noem's viability, and the fallout from the anecdote in her book continues: A fundraising event with the Jefferson County Republicans in Denver was canceled on Saturday over safety concerns.

"In the past few days, numerous threats and/or death threats have been made to our organization, the hotel, and to the Governor and her staff. After a conversation with the Governor's office late Wednesday, we mutually decided that safety was the most important concern for everyone involved," Nancy Pallozzi, the chair of the Jefferson County Republican Party, said in a statement.

CNN has reached out to Noem's office for comment on the cancellation.

"You need to be skilled at defending Trump and the campaign but she's having trouble defending herself in her own book," said Matt Gorman, a veteran Republican strategist.

Still, Gorman stressed that it's important for Noem to attend the Mar-a-Lago spring retreat.

"I think it's important to go because one thing that's important to remember is if you don't like the current headline, make a new one. So going to Mar-a-Lago, if I were giving her team advice, it'd be be very visible. The worst thing you can do is hideout and let the headlines overtake you. You want to create headlines as much as you can, create your own news, your own content."

This story has been updated with additional developments.

By Daniel Strauss, Alayna Treene, Kristen Holmes and Kit Maher, CNN

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