

# [***With abortion on the ballot, Biden and Democrats give Florida another look***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BPH-9PY1-JBSS-S03C-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Democrats just can't quit Florida.

A pair of [*state Supreme Court rulings*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/01/politics/florida-six-week-abortion-ban/index.html) on Monday - one paving the way for a six-week abortion ban in Florida, the other giving Floridians a chance in November to enshrine abortion access in the state's constitution - has delivered a burst of Democratic optimism that this once-purple battleground could flip blue again.

"Make no mistake: Florida is not an easy state to win, but it is a winnable one for [*President Biden*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/joe-biden)," Julie Chavez Rodriguez, the Democrat's campaign manager, said in a statement shortly after the state's high court ensured abortion ***politics*** would be a focal point in Florida through the election.

The renewed enthusiasm is easy to understand. Referendums protecting abortion access are on a winning streak nationwide, including in states far more red than Florida. For a Democratic Party with few opportunities to go on the offensive, Florida's 30 Electoral College votes and storied history as a swing state become even more tantalizing with a galvanizing issue like abortion on the ballot. Floridians will also decide this fall whether to legalize recreational marijuana, the state Supreme Court ruled Monday, another potential turnout booster.

Alex Sink, a Democratic candidate for Florida governor in 2010 who has spent the last 15 years recruiting women to run for office, said if her party can't win an election with Trump, abortion and marijuana on the ballot, it will end the debate on whether the Sunshine State is still a battleground.

"That's the God's honest truth," Sink said. "If that happens, you would have to say it's more of a red state."

Longtime Democratic operatives in the state caution that the headwinds President Joe Biden and his party face here are considerable and have only gotten worse since [*Donald Trump*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/president-donald-trump-45) won the state by more than 3 points four years ago. Outside of Barack Obama's 2008 and 2012 victories, Democrats have struggled to find success in Florida while Republicans are on a roll. The GOP now controls every statewide Cabinet office in Florida, its two US Senate seats and both state legislative chambers. Their registered voters outnumber Democrats by more than 850,000 - a reversal from the Obama years. It was only two years ago that Gov. Ron DeSantis won reelection by 19 points.

All of that makes Florida a risky and expensive bet for Democrats.

"It's not a magic wand," Matt Isbell, a top Democratic data consultant, said about the abortion and marijuana referendums.

It wouldn't be the first time Democrats looked to a savior to fix years of damage from devastating narrow losses, poor leadership, fundraising woes and subpar candidates. In 2016, Trump won Florida despite a medical marijuana initiative on the ballot that Democrats hoped would aid their performance. He won it again in 2020 even as voters approved a minimum-wage hike championed by progressives and after billionaire Michael Bloomberg promised a massive injection of his wealth to make Florida blue again.

One longtime Democratic fundraiser, who asked not to be named to speak freely about the party, called the abortion amendment "another shortcut to increase turnout without doing the blocking and tackling that you need to be doing as a party."

Chavez Rodriguez said in a call Tuesday that the Biden campaign is "clear-eyed about how hard it will be to win Florida," but insisted that Trump "does not have it in the bag."

Adding to the intrigue is Trump's own status as a Florida resident, meaning he will have an opportunity to directly weigh in on the abortion referendum in November. In a statement to CNN, Trump campaign adviser Brian Hughes did not say how the former president might vote this fall, instead noting that Trump "supports preserving life but has also made clear that he supports states' rights because he supports the voters' right to make decisions for themselves." Another senior adviser declined to predict how Trump might vote.

Trump has told his allies that he believes abortion is a "political loser" and has rebuffed pressure from several advisers and leading anti-abortion allies to embrace a national ban during the primary. He previously called Florida's six-week ban - signed into law by DeSantis, a top GOP primary rival - "a terrible mistake."

Speaking to religious broadcasters and Christians at an event in Nashville in February, he said that when it comes to the issue of abortion, "you have to get people elected."

But in recent weeks, Trump has indicated support for a federal abortion ban, saying in [*a March radio interview*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/19/politics/trump-thinking-in-terms-of-15-week-federal-abortion-ban/index.html) that "people are agreeing on 15" weeks.

"I'm thinking in terms of that, and it'll come out to something that's very reasonable," the former president said.

Asked about Florida's six-week ban in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Tuesday, [*Trump said*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/primary-elections-trump-rally-04-02-24/h_827242e627e6c596df34c30530df1f8c), "We'll be making a statement next week on abortion."

Biden's campaign has long viewed abortion as a galvanizing issue for moderate voters, pointing to Democratic successes in the 2022 midterms and other off-year elections since Roe v. Wade was overturned in June 2022.

And it's putting resources behind that strategy, including [*launching a new ad*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/primary-elections-trump-rally-04-02-24/h_88567af9ec4e114625ca97fd6ff68be6) Tuesday in key states - including Florida - highlighting Trump's record on reproductive rights in his own words.

Notably, though, Floridians will encounter that ad only online for now while voters in other battleground states will see it on their televisions - an early indicator of the Biden campaign's spending priorities. Several Florida Democratic operatives pointed out to CNN that the Biden campaign, the national Democratic Party and their allies have not made the kind of investments that indicate they intend to mount a serious challenge in the Sunshine State.

Chavez Rodriguez said the campaign is "gonna make sure that Donald Trump has to compete in the state of Florida."

The Democratic fundraiser said they would be surprised if the Biden campaign dedicated resources to Florida.

"I think it's a play to keep Trump busy," the fundraiser said.

Florida Democratic Party Chair Nikki Fried insisted to CNN that the Biden campaign's interest in her state "is not smoke and mirrors."

Evan Power, chairman of the Republican Party of Florida, dismissed the political fallout from the abortion referendum as a nonfactor and encouraged the Trump campaign to spend its money elsewhere.

"There is nothing more common than Democrats claiming they have some magical way to win Florida and they always come up short," Power said. "It's just another pipe dream."

By Steve Contorno, Alayna Treene and Betsy Klein, CNN

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