

# [***Biden basks in the glow of UAW endorsement as he battles Trump for union worker votes***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B7F-DC11-JBSS-S00R-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Washington (CNN) &#8212; [*President Joe Biden*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/joe-biden) on Thursday sought to capitalize on last week's high-profile endorsement from the United Auto Workers, heading to Michigan to meet with members of the union as he battles [*Donald Trump*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/president-donald-trump-45) for their votes.

Biden narrowly won Michigan in 2020, and the state - along with other union-heavy Midwestern states - is expected to be critical for his reelection bid. Trump, his likely 2024 opponent, is also trying to court union voters and met with Teamsters union leaders and workers in Washington on Wednesday as he tries to make inroads with what Democrats view as a vital voting bloc. The Teamsters previously endorsed candidates other than Trump in 2016 and 2020.

A [*CNN poll*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/01/politics/cnn-poll-trump-biden-election-2024/index.html) on Thursday showed Trump narrowly leading Biden in a hypothetical general election rematch.

Speaking to about 100 UAW members phone banking ahead of the state's primary on February 27, Biden on Thursday repeatedly thanked the union for its endorsement while crediting organized labor for the US having the "strongest economy in the whole damn world."

"Wall Street didn't build the middle class," Biden told the union workers. "Labor built the middle class, and the middle class built the country."

Biden's warm reception stood in stark contrast to campaign stops over the last month, where demonstrators protesting the administration's support for Israel in Gaza have interrupted the president on multiple stops, including remarks in South Carolina and Virginia.

His campaign said Biden also planned to meet a worker the president met on the picket line during the union's strike last fall, and a mother and her two adult children - all three UAW members - as the campaign seeks to highlight multi-generational union families that can be hit particularly hard by plant closures and strikes.

Biden has touted himself as the most pro-union president in history and last week's endorsement appeared to give him a boost.

Union leadership is firmly behind the president. In a fiery speech while delivering the group's endorsement, UAW President Shawn Fain said Biden was the clear choice in a matchup with Trump. Biden last year became the first sitting president to join an active picket line.

"Joe Biden bet on the American worker while Donald Trump blamed the American workers," Fain said. "We need to know who's going to sit in the most powerful seat in the world and help us win as a united working class. So if our endorsement must be earned, Joe Biden has earned it."

Biden said he "kept my commitment to be the most pro-union president ever."

"I'm proud you have my back. Let me just say I'm honored to have your back, and you have mine," the president said after receiving the UAW's endorsement last week.

The backing from union leadership may not convince all of the rank-and-file to vote for the president in November. Biden won the endorsement of the UAW in the 2020 campaign, even though many rank-and-file members supported Trump. Trump has made appealing to union voters a key part of his political strategy, in no small part by targeting disaffected voters in parts of the Midwest who believe the Democratic Party has left them behind.

Since the group publicly backed Biden, Trump has hit back, slamming Fain as a "dope" and vowing that he could revive the automobile industry in the United States.

The union vote is no longer reliably Democratic - and Trump's efforts to court the union vote [*seem to have been working, especially among non-college-educated union workers.*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/31/politics/union-voters-election-trump-biden/index.html)

Still, the UAW's endorsement last week could be important for Biden's chances in the union-heavy state.

The president's visit to Michigan also served as a reminder of a growing [*political concern:*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/27/politics/bidens-gaza-problem/index.html) erosion of support for the president among Arab-Americans. The Israel-Hamas war has led to thousands of civilian deaths and a widespread humanitarian crisis in Gaza, angering Arab-Americans and prompting many to call on Biden to support a ceasefire in Gaza.

Biden's likelihood to repeat his 2020 victory in Michigan has been [*thrown into doubt*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/27/politics/bidens-gaza-problem/index.html) because of his continued support for Israel's campaign. Some Michigan lawmakers who backed Biden's 2020 bid have been less enthusiastic as he gears up for the 2024 race.

Biden's campaign has been struggling to find Arab American leaders who are even willing to meet with campaign officials. Multiple local leaders in Michigan [*declined invitations to meet with Biden campaign manager*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/27/politics/bidens-gaza-problem/index.html) Julie Chavez Rodriguez, with Dearborn Mayor Abdullah Hammoud telling CNN that he declined the meeting because "this is not a time for electoral ***politics***" and that a conversation about change would be "with policymakers. Not campaign staff."

Chavez Rodriguez attended two meetings with local Arab and Palestinian-American leaders Friday morning, as well as other meetings with Hispanic and Black local elected officials and leaders in the afternoon.

Democratic Rep. Rashida Tlaib, who has been an outspoken critic of Biden's handling of the Israel-Hamas war, met with Chavez Rodriguez in Michigan on Friday, two sources familiar with the meeting said.

Michigan is both home to one of the largest concentrations of Arab-Americans in the country and a critical electoral battleground. More than 310,000 people of Middle Eastern or North African descent live in Michigan, [*according to the 2020 census*](https://cms.cnn.com/_pages/cls228a88000tabp822ki4wbb.html?edit=true#paragraph~cls22qylv000d3b5ve6nq73xg~text), the state ranking behind only California in the number of MENA residents.

Biden's struggles with key sections of his coalition due to his support for Israel have become obvious in recent weeks, as several of his public events have been interrupted by people calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, including Biden's remarks last week after receiving the UAW endorsement. The UAW has called for a ceasefire.

In a move that could make headway with some of Biden's critics on Israel, the president on Thursday signed an executive order [*placing sanctions on four Israeli settlers*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/01/politics/west-bank-settlers-executive-order/index.html) who have participated in violence in the West Bank.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said ahead of the president's Michigan stop that senior administration officials will visit Michigan soon "to hear directly from community leaders on a range of issues that are important to them and their families, including the conflict in Israel and Gaza."

By Michael Williams, MJ Lee and Kevin Liptak, CNN

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