

# [***DANIEL MCCARTHY: Trump Hunts Close To Home For A Fiercely Loyal VP***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BN0-KST1-DXXD-7003-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

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It's the new season of “The Apprentice,” only this time Donald Trump isn't looking for the next business whiz, he's in the market for a running mate.

He has his eyes on several possibilities close to home - his original and adopted home states of New York and Florida, that is.

Lee Zeldin, the former congressman whose campaign for governor of New York two years ago helped Republicans around the state overperform expectations, is one vice presidential contender who hasn't received as much attention from the national media as he's getting from Trump advisers.

Florida Rep. Byron Donalds is in the same category.

There's been more open buzz about New York Rep. Elise Stefanik, and many grassroots conservatives dream of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis making the ticket - a possibility that well-informed sources say hasn't been ruled out, despite lingering tensions between the governor and Trump over DeSantis' bid for the presidential nomination.

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio's name has also come up in recent press speculation - though my sources discount his chances.

Why are so many New York and Florida prospects on Trump's list?

Neither state is up for grabs in November.

No Republican has come within 15 points of winning New York in a presidential election since 1988.

Florida is much more competitive, and after North Carolina it was the state Trump won in 2020 by the smallest margin - less than 4 points.

Yet any scenario in which Joe Biden can win Florida in 2024 is one in which he almost certainly won't need it, as he'll also have prevailed in the more closely contested battlegrounds that put him over the top in 2020.

By the time Florida comes into play, the Republican ticket will be facing not only defeat but a crushing humiliation.

Trump, however, only looks on the bright side - which is both the secret of his success and the source of some of his biggest troubles.

It was inconceivable to him that he could lose in 2020.

Even after he won in 2016, Trump believed the magnitude of his victory was much greater than official numbers gave him credit for.

He bounced back from a series of bankruptcies in his business career the same way he's hoping to bounce back from a presidential defeat - through the power of positive thinking on a scale that mere mortals find delusional.

Does he really think he can win New York?

Or is it that the best way to achieve success is to aim too high rather than settling for what merely appears realistic?

There's a method to what others see as madness, at least where these VP calculations are concerned.

Conventional thinking in both parties obsesses over identity ***politics***, which factors into the New York and Florida talent search.

But Trump also wants a partner fiercely loyal to him - which is why if he wants a black running mate, he might prefer Byron Donalds, one of his staunchest defenders in Congress, to Sen. Tim Scott, whose all-in enthusiasm for Trump is a recent development.

Zeldin and Stefanik have likewise impressed Trump with their outspokenness on his behalf.

Both have an identity-***politics*** angle; Stefanik might help with women, while Zeldin would give Trump a Jewish running mate at a time when the Democrats' coalition is cracking along Israel-Palestine fault lines.

But Zeldin also demonstrated with his gubernatorial campaign what a disciplined GOP effort can accomplish in a blue state short of actually winning it.

A Trump-Zeldin ticket might not win New York or other Democrat strongholds, but it would maximize the Republican vote in those places, improving the party's odds in down-ballot races with control of Congress hanging in the balance.

Trump takes personal pride in being a New Yorker: ambitions of winning his native state, however implausible, may keep his morale up in the midst of an arduous national campaign.

Morale is also the consideration - for the whole party - with Ron DeSantis.

The governor excites conservatives who are willing but not eager to vote for Trump.

Eight years ago, Trump picked Mike Pence as a running mate who'd reassure conventional conservatives.

Now Pence won't so much as endorse Trump, and while the former VP has no following himself, there is a spectrum of Reagan Republicans, Christian conservatives and policy-minded right-wingers who harbor doubts about Trump.

DeSantis could do for them what Pence did in 2016, and perhaps, given his youth and policy successes, a lot more.

But if Trump chooses anyone from Florida, he or his running mate would have to pick a new state of residence: the Constitution penalizes tickets with presidential and VP candidates who hail from the same state.

Trump has residences in several places, including his native state - which means there's more than one way the GOP could wind up with a New York-Florida ticket this November.

Daniel McCarthy is the editor of Modern Age: A Conservative Review. To read more by Daniel McCarthy, visit [*www.creators.com*](http://www.creators.com).

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**Graphic**

DES MOINES, IOWA - JANUARY 10: Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump participates in a Fox News Town Hall on January 10, 2024 in Des Moines, Iowa. Trump declined to participate in a debate featuring fellow Republican presidential candidates former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis also taking place this evening. (Photo by Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

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