

# [***RFK Jr. Launches Independent Presidential Bid Challenging Biden And Trump***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69C4-H9X1-DXVP-50MW-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Sara Dorn, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** RFK Jr. a Kennedy family scion and anti-vaccine activist declared his independence from the Democratic Party and all other political parties in a speech from Philadelphia Monday.

**Body**

**Topline**

Robert F. Kennedy announced Monday he will run for president as a third-party candidate next year, bucking generations of tradition in the Kennedy political dynasty s allegiance to the Democratic Party and posing a challenge to the Trump and Biden campaigns.

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Then Democratic presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. speaks at a Hispanic Heritage Month event at Wilshire Ebell Theater on September 15, 2023, in Los Angeles.

Mario Tama/Getty Images

</figcaption></figure>

**Key Facts**

Kennedy Jr. told supporters in Philadelphia Monday he was dropping his bid for the Democratic nomination and will instead run as an independent.

Kennedy Jr. an environmental lawyer known forspreading anti-vaccine claims, son of the assassinated Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and nephew to assassinated former President John F. Kennedy said he did not make the decision lightly and that it s very painful for [him] to let go of the Democratic Party, listing off his family s long history in Democratic ***politics***.

Kennedy Jr. was widely expected to make the switch after his campaign teased an announcement in press releases in the lead-up to Monday s speech.

Since announcing his campaign in April, Kennedy Jr. has criticized both parties, claiming their leaders are corrupt and, in what has become depressingly familiar rhetoric, accusing the Democratic National Committee of rigging the primary election by declining to host debates and making changes to the election calendar.

While his candidacy is widely viewed as a long shot, his polling figures are historically high for a third-party candidate, and he could siphon votes from both party s nominees.

**Crucial Quote**

I m here to join you in making a new Declaration of Independence for our nation, he said Monday, listing off a host of outside powers he wants ***politics*** to detach from, including big ag, big tech, military contractors and their lobbyists . . . the mercenary media and the two political parties.

**Big Number**

14%. That s the share of voters who say they would back Kennedy Jr. in a hypothetical general election matchup with former President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden, according to a recentReuters/Ipsos pollthat found Biden had support of 31% of voters and Trump received 35%. Whilesome surveys showKennedy Jr. s net favorability rating is higher among Republicans than Democrats, the Reuters/Ipsos poll found his third-party bid could hurt Biden more without him on the ballot, both Trump and Biden received 35% of support.

**Contra**

Some internal Trump campaign polls suggest Kennedy could pull more votes from Trump than Biden, SemaforreportedFriday.

**Key Background**

Kennedy Jr. has spent years espousingconspiracy theoriesabout vaccines and Covid-19 shared by those on the far right, attracting supportive statements from some prominent Republicans and party mega donors, while members of his family have often publicly disavowed his controversial views. He has suggested that prescription drugs are linked to mass shootings, referred to Covid-19 as a bioweapons problem and has promoted the unfounded claim that the CIA was involved in the assassination of his uncle. His prominence among fringe groups surged during the Covid-19 pandemic as he publicly questioned the merits of the coronavirus vaccines and his non-profit Children s Health Defensefiled lawsuitsacross the country challenging vaccine mandates. He wasbriefly bannedfrom Instagram for violating its Covid-19 misinformation policies. Kennedy Jr. will be at least one of four candidates on the general election ballot in some states. Left-wing academic scholarCornel Westalso announced last week he was running as an independent, dropping his Green Party bid.

**Tangent**

Kennedy Jr. s wife, actress Cheryl Hines, spoke ahead of his announcement Monday, thanking supporters and recalling how Kennedy Jr. represented a man who successfully sued a weed-killer manufacturer, Monsanto, arguing it likely caused his cancer. Hines has previouslydisavowedsome of her husband s controversial statements, including his comparison of Covid-19 mandates to Nazi Germany in January last year.

**Further Reading**

Cornel West Drops Green Party Bid Will Run For President As Left-Wing Independent (Forbes)

Here s Why Trump s Team Appears Worried About RFK Jr. s Presidential Bid(Forbes)

RFK Jr. s Family Denounces Claim That Jews, Chinese Are Immune To Covid: Here Are All The Other Conspiracies He Promotes(Forbes)

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