

# [***"Media Buzz" Discusses The Hush Money Trial; Scarlet Johansson Calls Out A Big Tech For Allegedly Faking Her Voice; Howard Kurtz And Political Panel Discuss Hunter Biden Case; North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum (R) Weighs In On The Hush Money Trial; British Human Rights Lawyer Amal Clooney Advises ICC To Seek The Arrest Of Both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu And Hamas Leader Yahya Sinwar.***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C42-2FN1-JCS1-61JY-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

HOWARD KURTZ, FOX ANCHOR: I'm not going to bore you with the jury instructions, it's a bunch of lawyers arguing over words like willful, unlawful, and intent, important, sure, yet kind of like Bill Clinton once testifying, it depends on what the meaning of is, is. But there were huge headlines for two crucial developments before both sides in the hush money trial rested their case without testimony from Donald Trump and the defense calling just one major witness.

Despite the litany of lies by Michael Cohen, lying to Congress, lying to investigators, lying to the press, all that was expected, the bombshell was this. The former fixer said under cross-examination that he was supposed to pay $50,000 to a contractor called Red Finch hired to soften the impact of negative polls for Trump. Cohen testified that he gave the company's boss $20,000 in cash in a brown paper bag, not too suspicious, right? And kept the other $30,000.

"You stole from the Trump organization, right?" A Trump lawyer asked. Yes, Sir, Cohen replied. Even liberal commentators called this a devastating blow to Cohen's credibility, making him look like a greedy crook who'd loot money even from his ex-boss. The defense witness was Robert Costello, who represented Cohen for a few months.

He says Cohen told him the former president knew nothing about the hush money reimbursement. And when Costello suggested Cohen might make a deal with federal prosecutors by bringing truthful information about the President, he says Cohen replied, I swear to God, Bob, "I don't have anything on Donald Trump." An obvious lie if he said that.

But Costello so angered Judge Juan Merchan by muttering things like ridiculous and staring at the judge that he said, "You don't give me side eye and you don't roll your eyes." Merchan was so upset that he cleared the courtroom, a bit of a debacle for the defense. Closing arguments are Tuesday with the media fixated on this question -- what was the crime here and did D.A. Alvin Bragg come close to proving it?

I'm Howard Kurtz and this is "Media Buzz". I had my interview with North Dakota governor and V.P. contender Doug Burgum. The commentators could not be further apart on the hush money trial.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JESSE WATTERS, "JESSE WATTERS PRIMETIME" HOST: You look at Fox, it says, oh, well, Michael Cohen is a liar and Michael Cohen is a thief. And then you turn on MSNBC and they say, well, lying makes you more believable and it's not stealing. You're just rebalancing the bonus that you thought you were owed.

UNKNOWN: I think that Merchan has actually been bending over backwards, to be fair to the defense. The defense cannot stand him.

SEAN HANNITY, "HANNITY" HOST: Unfortunately for Bragg, his star witness has been a complete, unmitigated disaster. Cohen even admitted to having a financial interest in the case. Can't make that up either.

JOY REID, "THE REIDOUT" HOST: The case against Donald Trump doesn't rest on the testimony just of Michael Cohen. Nearly everything Cohen has testified to has already been corroborated by evidence entered into the record by other witnesses, documents, emails, text messages and audio recordings.

LAURA INGRAHAM, "THE INGRAHAM ANGLE" HOST: Michael Cohen, the liar, the tax evader and the thief has zero cred. Second, there was no other crime. Paying hush money isn't a campaign contribution.

NORMAN EISEN, CNN LEGAL ANALYST: Michael Cohen kept his cool for an entire week. Bob Costello, a longtime respected attorney, blew up the entire corporate.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Donald Trump spoke to reporters every day and took some flack for these comments about the judge.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT (R) AND CURRENT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE (R): And so does Merchan -- loves me. The judge hates Donald Trump. Just take a look. Take a look at him. Take a look at where he comes from. He can't stand Donald Trump.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Joining us now to analyze this coverage, Mary Katharine Ham, an "OutKick" columnist and co-host of the podcast "Getting Hammered". And Charleston, South Carolina, Kevin Walling, a self-described Biden Democrat.

Judge Merchan, by the way, came to the U.S. from Colombia when he was six. So, Mary Katharine, how badly was Michael Cohen eviscerated by admitting that he stole this money from the Trump organization, $30,000, to the point where, as I said, even left-leaning commentators were saying this looks awful?

MARY KATHARINE HAM, "GETTING HAMMERED" COLUMNIST: Yeah, I think it's a problem when you're at tens of thousands of dollars that you have stolen. And as I believe Elie Honig noted, that came out of the pot that Trump's supposed to have known about.

KURTZ: Yeah.

HAM: Right. So, if Trump has knowledge of this and this man is stealing from him, surely, like that would mean something in practice? Look, I think he's shot his own credibility many times over. And the important part about evaluating, I think, coverage of this trial is the people who are evaluating the trial from inside the room, can you trust them to evaluate trustworthiness?

How in the bag are they for wanting Trump to be convicted? And frankly, with a lot of media, that is the issue.

Because a lot of issues for the past, since Trump came into the scene, is if you're against Trump, then you are automatically trustworthy. And that is not the way it should operate, whether you're Michael Avenatti or Clapper or Brennan or Cohen. You should be evaluated based on your behavior in that instance.

KURTZ: Well, I wish there were cameras so we can make our own judgments rather than having to rely on these media reports. Kevin, was this a failure by the prosecution, which did bring up the stealing, I guess is the only operative verb here, from the Trump organization, but in such a low- key way that it didn't make any news? And do you see this particular theft as being in a different category than all the other lies that we sort of knew about going in and that he has long admitted to?

KEVIN WALLING, DEMOCRATIC STRATEGIST: Yeah, Howie, I mean, there's no defending Michael Cohen or his character whatsoever, whether you're a Democrat or Republican on this issue. You know, I think interestingly enough, you saw testimony from Cohen on the stand from the defense where, and we've got to look at this through the eyes of those 18 Americans, 12 of whom will make the decision likely this week.

You know, he almost, by admitting to that and being calm and collected, you know, almost formed, you know, not in alliance with the jury, but seemed more sympathetic, I think, to some of the individuals on that jury. Because again, we have to look at this through the lens of the jury --

KURTZ: Yes.

WALLING: -- by admitting to all this, by saying very calmly, yes, I did all this. Yes, I felt I was owed this. Yes, I was upset about my bonus. It almost makes someone who has zero character like Michael Cohen, almost, you know, a more understandable character on the stand.

KURTZ: You know, when the D.A.'s office tried to give Cohen spin, he said, well, I engaged in a little self-help, like it was therapy. That cracked me up.

HAM: I wish I could do the same, but, you know, I would get prosecuted for it, which is, which is another point about, well, this is another point, right? Is that I'm not sure how sympathetic it makes you, because those people on the jury would likely have to pay a price for that with the legal system, whereas Michael Cohen has given, been given special treatment here.

KURTZ: So, Mary Katharine, on the Robert Costello and clearing the courtroom, and he kind of came in with a big chip on his shoulder. I don't think you can argue it was great for the defense, but I was really struck by the fact that Judge Merchan considered not allowing him to testify at all.

It's the only major witness called by the defense after Stormy Daniels and Hope Hicks and David Pecker and all the others, but I think they've concluded that that might be something that you could lose on appeal if you don't let somebody like that come out.

HAM: Yeah, I don't think that's a great look for the judge. I understand the judge wants control of his courtroom. He doesn't want to be disrespected there. I think even if you think that the judge is against you, which I think Merchan has shaded in the direction of the defense a couple times on this trial, you still sort of keep a lid on it. There's a lot of drama kings in this case.

KURTZ: Really?

HAM: And I believe Trump and Merchan might be two of them.

KURTZ: So, Kevin Costello claims that Trump told him, excuse me, that Cohen said that Trump told him that he didn't know anything about any hush money reimbursement, which of course is linked to the key of the case. And so on that, it's Michael Cohen, admitted liar, convicted perjurer's word against that of Robert Costello.

WALLING: Exactly right, Howie. And again, it's up to the jury to decide who do they find more credible at in this situation. I think we've seen, you know, everyone changed their story as part of this from the former president on down. Of course, Stormy Daniels signed that affidavit that this never happened. You had Michael Cohen denying shortly after his office was righted to Costello that the former president didn't know anything about this.

Everyone has changed their story as part of this. And again, it's going to be up to these 12 members of the jury to decide of all these liars in this case, who is the least likely to be lying when it comes to this situation.

KURTZ: Who is the biggest lying liar in a sea of lying.

WALLING: Exactly. So, I think most pundits went into this thinking anti- Trump Manhattan jury, slam dunk convention.

WALLING: Right.

KURTZ: But now I think maybe they're not so sure that, you know, now that we've actually had to try it. And as Kevin points out, it's up to these 12 jurors.

HAMM: Well, the prosecution has to do the work, right? And I think when they got into the courtroom, and perhaps there's some hubris here because it is a Manhattan jury, that they didn't have to present all of that, that they were just going to kind of do like this guy's icky, the judge kind of likes us. Let's talk about how icky is and let Stormy Daniels talk about it. And then this jury will decide that he's icky and that's the end of the day.

But that might not actually work. I also think there's a real problem when you get to appeal on the fact that like, do we have an announcement yet on what the secondary crime is or the original crime that he's supposed to be doing the falsify?

KURTZ: It has to do with violating New York state election law about which we've heard nothing that I can remember during this trial.

HAM: I feel like you need to present that part. And if I were on the jury, I'm not sympathetic to Donald Trump in general, but I would be sympathetic in this case.

KURTZ: Is icky a legal term or is it something you just?

HAM: Yeah, well, I think I am not a lawyer. I'm not trained for that. But to me, that was most of the case.

KURTZ: So, but for me now, where people are still debating what is the crime and it has to connect it to some other crime. And it was a stretch in the beginning for Bragg to bring this and elevate it to a felony, Kevin. It's kind of easy to imagine one or two jurors not going along with conviction. And then you've got a mistrial and Donald Trump would declare victory. And I think even the press would say that, you know, he beat the charges.

WALLING: Yeah, Howie, we see parallels to this back from when he was acquitted during the impeachment hearings? His poll numbers actually went up when the Senate dismissed those charges from the House in both situations. But listen, I, you know, again, to your point, these decisions have to be unanimous. You could have one or two holdouts, two of these jurors we know are lawyers steeped in the law.

So, again, it's going to be any question about what that room actually looks like at the outset of this panel. You said how critically important are the jury instructions that the judge gives in terms of connecting those dots, likely laying out what the charges are when it violate in terms of law violations. So, that's going to be critically important too from the judge.

KURTZ: Absolutely critically important. And there's been a lot of time fighting over it. So, is this yet another situation, Mary Katherine, where going back to the Russia investigation and the two impeachments and January 6th where the media build-up is, this time Trump's going to be held accountable. This time he's going to get it. And that may not be true in the end. I mean, there are a lot of people who think that this argument that he's being selectively persecuted is helping Donald Trump.

HAM: Coyote and Roadrunner, man, almost every time I do think they have him on some of the facts of the documents case, right? But I do -- every time you try something that is trumped up, forgive the -- pun unintended, is trumped up. You lose people's trust about whether the thing you're talking about is real.

And I think that plays a tremendous role with the voting public. Even those who are reluctantly voted for Trump in the past, they go, I don't know, this just seems like they're throwing spaghetti at the wall here and seeing what sticks. And in the Alvin Bragg case, I think that is the fact that they are they are doing what Trump is saying they are doing. And people react to that.

KURTZ: Yeah, well, he has used the courthouse appearances. He comes out, he talks about issues of the day, not just the trial. And but that, of course, gets a lot of attention, as did his visit to the South Bronx. I just think that it probably ends up on appeal anyway.

And it's true, the classified documents case may well be certainly about a more important matter than, you know, what happened in 2006 with Stormy Daniels. But the judge there, Trump appointee, has just been delaying and delaying. And that's not going to happen before the election.

KURTZ: All right, let me get a break ahead. The Hunter Biden trial could turn ugly. But when we come back, Scarlett Johansson calls out big tech for faking her voice.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: In the decade-old film "Her", Scarlett Johansson plays an amorphous character that Joaquin Phoenix falls in love with.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SCARLETT JOHANSSON, "HER" ACTRESS (voice-over): I can feel the fear that you carry around. I wish they could help you let go of it because I don't think you'd feel so alone anymore.

JOAQUIN PHOENIX, "HER" ACTOR: You're beautiful. (END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: So, it made sense that OpenAI chief Sam Altman would ask her to license her voice for the company's new digital assistant. Johansson said no twice. But OpenAI went ahead with a voice that sounds just like Scarlett.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BOT: Once upon a time in a world not too different from ours, there was a robot named Byte. Byte was a curious robot, always exploring --

UNKNOWN: -- started the story. But I want a little bit more emotion in your voice, a little bit more drama.

BOT: Got it. Let's add some drama. Once upon a time in a world not too different from ours, there was a robot named Byte.

UNKNOWN: No, no.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Mary Katharine, OpenAI is now withdrawing that Scarlett-like voice after she hired a lawyer. But isn't it creepy that just two days after she said no again, the OpenAI says, oh, this other voice artist had nothing to do with the famous actress. Why would anybody think that?

HAM: We all know what's going on here. It is creepy and or icky, whichever term you want to use. And have you heard the phrase like, are we living in a simulation? In these modern times, some people wonder that. This is a reference to a 10-year-old movie, which is very good, by the way, about this relationship between an A.I. sort of character and a man that is very believable and very real.

And now it feels like, are we living in a simulation? Is this what we're doing? But I think she's right to speak out and protect herself. And this is something that as media consumers, we're all going to have to get more careful about evaluating these things, which is very tough.

KURTZ: Yeah.

HAM: And this is this is kind of where we're headed. But it's going to be mean more work for you guys. Sorry about that.

KURTZ: Yeah. In the era of deep fakes and so forth. But when they posted this other actress, they used the word, "her", kind of signaling, well, it's kind of Scarlett. So, Kevin, here is a Scarlett statement. "I was shocked, angered and in disbelief that all of them pursue a voice that sounded so eerily similar to mine that my closest friends and news outlets could not tell the difference."

WALLING: Well, Howard, again, this is -- we go back to the strikes. Remember not too long ago with the Hollywood writers and actors and actresses, this was one of the main concerns was the advancements of A.I., not just in terms of script writing, but also movie producing actors in terms of the likeness, sounds, voices. So, this is playing out in real time. And I think Scarlett Johansson is now going to become the cover girl for this kind of fight against, you know, copyright infringement, likeness, adaption and things like that.

KURTZ: Well, good for her for standing up for herself. It can't be an easy thing to do. And the company has retreated to, well, we didn't tell her in advance, but this other voice and we're sorry about that.

HAM: We also all know about it now, which is behooving them quite a bit.

WALLING: That's true.

KURTZ: Yeah, it's really personalized the story. And the deeper issue here, Mary Katherine, is that there are rules and regulations for this sort of thing, such as copyrights, such as creators consent. And open AI is basically saying we're powerful. Screw that. We can do whatever we want.

HAM: No, I'm really sympathetic to performers on this. And as somebody whose voice is recorded for many hours, you know, maybe something's coming for me. But like people should protect themselves on this front. It's really tricky for -- for lawmakers to write laws about new technology. So, I'm wary of that because they're not always super smart about how they do it and it impedes innovation. But people need to protect themselves and also be aware of what they're consuming.

KURTZ: Can you copyright your voice? It's an interesting thing. I never thought of it.

HAM: Let me write that down.

KURTZ: Write that down. Call the lawyer. Okay, so, Kevin, "The Atlantic" says that the goal of A.I., and, you know, every week it seems to advance more and more, is to alter the course of human history forever and create a utopia. And then -- it's in parentheses -- or take over the planet and end life on Earth. And the Scarlet scandal, I think, and one of the reasons I wanted to do this is it kind of captures the sky high stakes here.

WALLING: It really does. And it puts a face behind this issue. I think, you know, so much of the media coverage is death and destruction, A.I. terminators taking things over, becoming self-aware and not a lot of attention and focus on the real life causes of A.I. right? We're going to have a huge issue when it comes to automation and jobs over the next five, 10, 15 years in terms of what the workforce in this country looks like.

I think actually Fox does a really good job of shining a light on A.I., especially not just in this conversation right here, but on Fox Digital in terms of working through the different ramifications that don't just sensationalize, okay, this is end of the world stuff with terminators taking over, but actually what are the real life consequences of jobs that are, you know, going to become obsolete when these computers and platforms take over?

KURTZ: Yeah, well, I'm rooting against the end of the world scenario. I'm reminded now that a political operative in New Hampshire just pleaded guilty to faking Joe Biden's voice for robocalls. So, this obviously is going to go into the world of ***politics***, business, you name it.

HAM: Yeah. I mean, again, I want to be optimistic about technology, but cautiously optimistic because I think there are many ways that A.I. can be super helpful to your human brain, right? But how do we keep that from stunting us and or tricking us and or destroying us as a civilization?

KURTZ: Right. Or wiping out a lot of people's jobs, which may be part of the scenario here, as well. Mary Katharine Ham, Kevin Walling, thanks so much for an interesting discussion. Doug Burgum, the governor, is straight ahead. But up next, prosecutors threatened to confront Hunter Biden at next week's trial with witnesses and texts about his drug addiction.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: Hunter Biden's criminal trial on gun charges, which starts next week, could turn really ugly. "The Washington Post" signing filings by the special counsel say Hunter could face testimony from his ex-wife and his brother, Bo's widow, Hallie. They developed a romantic relationship to prove that he lied in saying he wasn't using illegal drugs when he bought the gun.

There will be texts such as this one from Hallie Biden, "I am not doing this. You have to get sober for your five kids and me, bottom line, or you lose everyone slowly." And prosecutors will show drug images from his infamous laptop. Joining us now, Robby Soave, senior editor at "Reason" magazine and in Phoenix, Lucy Caldwell, an advisor to Renew America.

Robby, why is the special counsel in advance putting out all this humiliating and personal stuff to prove that Hunter Biden was a drug addict when he bought that gun legally?

ROBBY SOAVE, "REASON" SENIOR EDITOR: And they want to dispute the term "addict" whether that applies to Hunter Biden. I don't know if you saw that. His attorneys are going to say that, well, he just got done with a stint at rehab, so how can he qualify as an addict? I think the most interesting thing is that the defense is still trying to say that some of the -- we don't know if the stuff from the laptop is really real still, even though all of America knows this is accurate, that everyone who said this is Russian misinformation has been proven wrong.

KURTZ: Yeah. Right.

SOAVE: And the prosecutors just want to use it to show that, you know, these were texts between him and other people, but they're still going to that well.

KURTZ: Well, the curse to me, Lucy, that the question is whether or not they want to pressure Hunter into a plea. Hunter doesn't contest all this. It's in his memoirs as he was looking crack 24-7, but he's got to be worried about a trial right now embarrassing his father.

LUCY CALDWELL, POLITICAL STRATEGIST: I actually don't think that this trial would be that embarrassing or the whole thing is that embarrassing because the question is what is the impact? And yes, we can stipulate to a whole bunch of things about Hunter Biden. He is a person who was born into immense privilege.

He is a person who has acted inappropriately and has behaved in a way that most of us could not, would not, should not. He is a person who is an addict. He is a person with messy relationships, but who really cares? The people who are Biden supporters are not going to be moved off of Biden because of this. And people who are hardcore MAGA supporters, Trump supporters -- this is all confirmatory. So, I don't see the timing of the trial having much of an impact.

KURTZ: Well, I would just say that, on the "who really cares" part, I mean, the President's son is -- has two trials coming up, both criminal, after that plea deal fell apart. And I do think there's an effort. Both sides might have an incentive. Let's put it this way to settle this, which one undoubtedly includes some jail time for the President's son. Or let me turn to Donald Trump because in a fundraising email, he put out -- we can put that graphic up.

"Biden's DOJ was authorized to shoot me. Joe Biden was locked and loaded and ready to take me out and put my family in danger. That's a fundraising letter, says he barely escaped death. But Robby, the FBI says this is standard language by the agents being able to use force when warranted meeting in self-defense. So, does this go too far?

SOAVE: Yeah. I mean, we've got to tell the truth. It is common practice. Also, they knew that Trump was not there at Mar-a-Lago.

KURTZ: -And deliberately time the raid.

SOAVE: Right.

KURTZ: So, if you were trying to quote, "get him" --

SOAVE: So, they were clearly not --

KURTZ: You wouldn't do go that day.

SOAVE: So, they were clearly not doing it. This comes up a lot of times when something happens with Trump that has to do with civil liberties. And a lot of people like myself who are in favor of more robust protections for civil liberties will say, well, if you don't like what they're doing to Trump, fine, but they do this to every single American that they raid their home.

This is standard operating procedure. You can say that's wrong. And that's bad. It should not be the protocol. But I do think Trump's defenders would have more credibility if they admitted that like, okay, this is the system complain about the system. It's not particularly aimed at Trump in this case.

KURTZ: Right. It did have a court-approved warrant. And Lucy, Jack Smith has now filed a motion asking an additional gag be put on the former president by saying that the FBI is complicit in a plot to assassinate him. Smith says this is exposing agents to violence and harassment. And by the way, Fox's Jacqui Heinrich reports at the same language about, you know, lethal force if needed, is in Biden's search warrant for classified documents.

CALDWELL: Yeah, we need to be able to have election seasons and campaign seasons where we don't erode American faith and institutions. It's okay to have a healthy dose of skepticism against institutions, especially government institutions.

That's good. We should be more circumspect about what power we give government. But a former sitting president pursuing and promoting the idea that we should act as though the current president sent and sicked FBI agents on him to shoot and kill him. That is very, very dangerous.

KURTZ: Right. But, you know, it only takes a couple of crazy people. So, I hope this all settles down. Next on "Media Buzz", former presidential candidate Doug Burgum on the Trump trial and his relationship with Donald Trump.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: I sat down here in Washington with a man who's been very much in the news lately, Doug Burgum, the governor of North Dakota and one-time presidential candidate.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

KURTZ: Doug Burgum, welcome.

GOV. DOUG BURGUM (R-ND): Howie, great to be with you. Thanks.

KURTZ: Governor, why do you think the hush money trial with all its lurid testimony has not hurt Donald Trump, so far?

BURGUM: Well, first of all, I'd like to call it the business -- alleged business filing error case, because that's really what the core of it is. And I think it's failed to get any traction because I think Americans see right through it. Americans have already acquitted Donald Trump. I think they realize that when you've got five weeks and you can't even prove or even articulate what crime has been committed.

So, I had a chance a week ago Tuesday to be in the courthouse with the President and observe for a whole day, not just get the filter of what --

KURTZ: Yeah.

BURGUM: -- the media might be telling you. And what I observed there, what I watched, that was the day that Michael Cohen went from wrapping up his the prosecution's leading set of yes or no questions to watching him get destroyed by the prosecution. And it may have been the day that he also then now is a serial perjurer, perjured himself again on that day, getting caught up in all the lies that he's had.

And then the next day on Wednesday, going back to North Dakota and I'm, you know, watching the media coverage. And it was like, I think that they were at a different trial than I was at. And so, it's like --

KURTZ: On that point, do you think most of the media are rooting for conviction?

BURGUM: Well, I think that certain business models in media today are geared around their audiences and those audiences are, absolutely. And I think the Biden administration has got their whole campaign is -- is hoping for that. I mean, that's their whole strategy is to be able to put a label on the former President that they think might be helpful. But I said Americans aren't buying.

It's actually backfired because President Trump, who's the master of -- of earned media, I mean, getting free press and getting attention and having all eyes on him. I mean, he's masterfully used this to help expose the weakness in a broad set of these the lawfare that's going against him.

KURTZ: You have said that Joe Biden won the 2020 election. So, you differ a little bit with the former president on that. But do you think the 2024 outcome will be contested as well? Well, Howie, this is interesting, because in my lifetime, I think we know 1960 was a contested election right there in Cook County in Chicago. And then more recent history for even the young people may not know. But in 2000, we had the hanging chads in Florida.

KURTZ: I remember vividly.

BURGUM: In 2016, we had the Russiagate and Hillary Clinton and everybody claiming that the election had been stolen. KURTZ: And although she did concede the election eventually.

BURGUM: Yes.

KURTZ: The next day.

BURGUM: But I think we've got a, you know, again, for people that want to refresh themselves. I mean, go watch the 2008 movie "Recount", you know, where Kevin Spacey plays Ron Klain, where they were, you know, launched that movie in '08 ahead of when Obama was running. So, it's been a stronghold of the Democrats to be concerned about election integrity. I think we all should -- Democrats, Republicans, independents.

KURTZ: Governor, the press has been pretty nice to you. "Wall Street Journal" headline rich, loyal and good looking. Why, let alone Doug Burgum is in Trump's V.P. mix. I'm not going to contest the good looking part, but I think that the definition of fake news.

KURTZ: But there's a ritual to this. You say you and Trump haven't discussed the possibility of you being the running mate. And that's true. You also say you haven't thought about it, which I imagine can't be true because if you were to be picked and you and the ticket were to win, you'd be a heartbeat away from the presidency. Surely, this has crushed your mind.

BURGUM: Well, I think the -- the key here is to understand that what really matters is that President Trump wins the election. He's got so many good choices that he could make and only he knows what choice he's going to make and he'll make that choice at the right time. But when you take a look at, you know, he's winning across all demographics. He's beating Biden in all the swing states.

KURTZ: Well, Friday's "New York Times", for what it's worth, lists you as one of the five top contenders. Now, you visited Mar-a-Lago several times, including for Easter brunch. I imagine you're not just sitting around shooting the breeze. And Trump has said he'd like you in his administration in some capacity. Are you open to that?

BURGUM: Well, again, when I ran for President and when I ran for governor, it was never about being part of any administration or a cabinet thing, a private sector guy, right up till the day before I was sworn in as governor in 2016. And private sector's got a ton of appeal. But I'm -- I'm -- just want to again want to make sure that we're doing the most we can to help move this country forward. And I -- and that's that is singularly about getting President Trump back in the White House.

KURTZ: Well, if I were handicapping it, I'd say, look, you're not yet a household name. You come from a state with three electoral votes that hasn't voted for a Democrat president in 50 years. On the other hand, this is a decision to be made by one person. Hypothetically, of course, Governor, how would you feel about debating Kamala Harris?

BURGUM: Well, I think that any one of the candidates who's being considered for VP would think that would be a dream come true. But as a --

KURTZ: I'm asking you.

BURGUM: Yeah. But as I tell you, well, I mean, there'd be three questions you could just start off and start. You'd start with, hey, you know, how's -- how's the borders are going with our open border? Number two is, you know, supporting all of this activity. And it's not just tax and spend borrowing, borrowing from China and other places and spending trillions of dollars, which is choking every American family and every small business, I mean, on the economy, would love to talk to her.

I don't think there's a -- not sure another question you could ask is she ever created a private sector job in her life? I mean, because I worry that the whole Biden administration doesn't understand the economy. So, those are, you know, two topics.

And the third one is right now, the last, you know, month or so, where I really feel that Biden Harris administration's been negotiating for Hamas. I mean, they're actually instead of we used to say we don't negotiate with terrorists when they're putting a red line in the sand for Israel and saying, if you don't do this, I mean, they're that's that they're taking the same position that Hamas would want to take.

KURTZ: Wait a second, wait a second. I mean, President Biden has largely supported Israel. Now, certainly there's been controversy about trying to be a restraining force on this invasion of Rafah and holding back the 2000 bombs. But I mean, to say that he's supporting Hamas when the ICC came out and said Bibi Netanyahu is a war criminal, the President stood with Israel.

BURGUM: Yes. And under President Trump, Iran was on its knees, financially. The failed sanctions of the Biden administration has allowed that country to go from literally being broke to now having hundreds of billions of dollars, all from --from their oil sales, which they're using to fund Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis.

I mean, so we're --we're basically funding two sides of the war. Biden's energy policy is funding our enemies. And then we fight in Congress over how much we should fund our side and some of the positions that they're taking to try to restrict Israel's ability to conduct that war.

I just feel like, again, they're -- they're on the other guy's side. I mean, how about -- how about no more aid to Hamas, no more peered, unload aid until you release the hostages? That would be negotiating for Americans that are held captive now for over 230 days. You know, that would be something where I'd feel like he's negotiating for our side.

KURTZ: Just briefly, are you enjoying all the attention?

BURGUM: Well, I don't know. I've never been someone that's sought a lot of attention. That probably shows up in the fact that so few people know who we are.

KURTZ: Doug Burgum, thanks very much for sitting down with us.

BURGUM: Thank you, Howie.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

KURTZ: After the break, more on the veep stakes and how the media are being manipulated.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: The veep stakes has become a game in which would be contenders use leaks and surrogates to convince the media they're moving up a mythical shortlist, which exists only in Donald Trump's mind and create a boom lift for themselves. Things have gotten heated on the Sunday shows, as when Shannon Bream pressed Congresswoman Elise Stefanik about once having opposed Trump.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SHANNON BREAM, "FOX NEWS SUNDAY" ANCHOR: In August 2015, she told a New York radio station that he was insulting to women.

ELISE STEFANIK (R) NEW YORK CONGRESSWOMAN: Well, Shannon, it's a disgrace that you would quote "The New York Times" with nameless faceless.

BREAM: But they're calling your friend. Is that a misquote? Did you not say that?

STEFANIK: I said the statement that the Democrats leaked out in 2016, that that was insulting.

KRISTEN WELKER, "MEET THE PRESS" ANCHOR: Will you accept the election results of 2024, no matter what happens, Senator?

MARCIO RUBIO (R) FLORIDA SENATOR: No matter what happens? No, if it's an unfair election, I think it's going to be contested by either side.

WELKER: No matter who wins.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Robby, whether it's J.D. Vance or Tim Scott or Marco Rubio and now even Ben Carson, aren't the pundits falling for these leaks as if you could measure who's going up and down this list that, you know, Trump's not going to announce this for a couple of months until the convention anyway?

SOAVE: Yeah, I mean, we need something to talk about, right? We're in that --

KURTZ: Because there's no horse race.

SOAVE: And we're -- we're in that that time where we know it's --it's Joe Biden versus Donald Trump.

KURTZ: Yeah. Right.

SOAVE: And there's nothing else political to talk about. So, obviously we're going to do the VP speculation. And, you know, Trump --Trump, I think, plays into that a little bit every now and then he'll put out a morsel like he did recently. I'm not considering Nikki Haley, although we're on good terms. Ron DeSantis is back in my good graces. I'm retiring the nickname. So, Trump loves to do this kind of thing.

KURTZ: Yeah, but I think most of these leaks, I think the Trump campaign, based on my reporting, is kind of bemused by this whole thing. And as long as these people are fighting for airtime to defend him, no problem.

But, Lucy, after I wrote a column about this, which was picked up by Drudge, Friday's "New York Times", again, Trump's V.P. pageant has an unexpectedly strong contender, Tom Cotton. Now, he may be a good choice, but who had heard Tom Cotton's name until then? Earlier, NBC, Marco Rubio is moving up the list. "Washington Post", J.D. Vance from Never Trump or the running mate contender. Are we, in fact, pumping up these stories because it is the only game in town?

CALDWELL: Well, there's a symbiosis between the media and these candidates, and I can't claim credit for this line, but someone once said to me in describing why politicians don't come out and just say, I'm not considering that. I'm not being considered for it. I'm not doing this, that or the other thing. Why don't they do that?

That would be normal that for these people, it's meet the press or mow the lawn, right? This is how they stay relevant. This is how they sell books. This is how they get increased speaker fees. This is how they get on T.V. And this is what makes their little politician narcissistic hearts go pitter patter. So, of course, they are all going to try to stay in the mix for as long as they possibly can.

KURTZ: Well, it sounds like you stole that line fair and square that you quoted earlier. Now, I want to come back to Nikki Haley because it was kind of the ultimate absurdity because "Axios" reported that Nikki Haley was being considered and Trump knocked that down the next day. And actually, she's not being considered.

So, it shows you something about these stories and where they come from. Now, Nikki Haley, Robby, says she'll vote for Trump. She'd not endorse him. And the liberal channels are going, hey -- are saying, she called him unhinged and now she's caved. What do you make of that?

SOAVE: It's -- it's the media, you know, is obsessed with this idea. Why won't you continue to denounce Trump? Look, she was running against him and everybody who ran against Joe Biden for the nomination of the Democratic side denounced him. Kamala Harris had some really mean things about Joe Biden and then became his V.P.

This is how it -- how it goes. Nikki Haley wants to continue to have a future in the Republican Party. She could have a future after Donald Trump, eventually exit the stage at some point. To do that, she has to remain in good standing with Republican voters. So, of course, she was going to ultimately vote for him. I don't know that there's -- is there a difference between voting for him but not officially endorsing him? That's not going to matter.

KURTZ: Lucy --

KURTZ: She wants to stay in the party. So, you have to -- you have to vote for Trump. You do.

KURTZ: Right. If you want to have a future. But it is true that people who said terrible things line up. And, but she -- she said that Trump should reach out to her supporters, Lucy, and that he's imperfect. But Biden is disastrous. And that's usually the way it goes. I'm going to vote for Trump because the former years of Joe Biden is going to be terrible.

CALDWELL: Yeah, I don't think that this is like the situation of other races or other candidates. I mean, Nikki Haley said that when she was talking about Joe Biden mocking combat veterans, she said that, you know, he -- he should not be President of the United States and also maybe should not have a driver's license.

Doug Burgum, whom you just interviewed, has said comparably startling things that are not like the normal course of things. I think that Nikki Haley did that sort of one, two step of saying, yes, I'm voting for him, but he should reach out to my voters because she herself is looking to be an influential force in this election. She's also clearly getting the same advice that we're hearing right now of, you know, if you want to have a future in the Republican Party, you've got to do this. I think it's a miscalculation.

KURTZ: Well, Trump said this was a nasty campaign, but I'm sure she'll be on the team in some form. And of course, this gives us all something to talk about. Still to come, George Clooney's wife says Bibi Netanyahu is a war criminal sparking a major backlash in media and political circles.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: Amal Clooney, the British human rights lawyer and wife of George Clooney, advised the International Criminal Court to seek the arrest of both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar. That's right. She equated the head of a terrorist group that launched a barbaric massacre against the Israelis on October 7th with the elected leader of the world's only Jewish state.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, U.S. PRESIDENT: Let me be clear, we reject the ICC's application for arrest warrants against Israeli media. Whatever these warrants may imply, there is no equivalence between Israel and Hamas.

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU, ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER: This is like creating a moral equivalence after September 11th between President Bush and Osama Bin Laden or during World War Two between FDR and Hitler. What a travesty of justice.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Lucy, Amal Clooney has become the face of this outrageous ICC action, as if there's an equivalence between Hamas terrorists who deliberately kill civilians and the Israelis who, with mixed results, at least try to minimize civilian casualties.

CALDWELL: Well, Amal Clooney gets an outsized amount of press coverage because of her husband, obviously. She herself did have a very impressive career. She is a person who's a very significant figure in the human rights community. But of course, we're paying attention to her in this context because she is married to a celebrity. And so she gets a certain kind of attention that she would not otherwise.

KURTZ: Robby, she is Uber liberal and I think came through. The irony here is that George Clooney, overshadowed for the moment perhaps, is a major Biden supporter who's hosting a fundraiser next month and is going to be making digital ads for the campaign. And his wife is saying that the President is supporting a war criminal in Bibi Netanyahu.

SOAVE: It shows you the difficult position Joe Biden is in with some members of his base. Obviously, the main reason his re-election is in jeopardy is because of the economy and questions about his age and competence. That's the big reason. But there are progressive young left people, some specific minority communities.

I'm from Michigan, where there's a large Arab American community, and it's an important state for him, who are very frustrated with his handling of this conflict. Even as most of us would say, it's probably within the realm of normal because I don't agree with the goals of Hamas or the terrorists at all. The idea that Israel is equivalent with them.

I mean, the ICC saying Hamas should be brought to justice, as well. Well, that is what Israel is trying to do. They're trying to bring Hamas to justice for what it's done. So, it doesn't make any sense. But there are significant numbers of people on the left. There are progressives in the Biden camp who do not agree with him over this. And it's going to hurt him on Election Day.

KURTZ: Yeah, Joe Biden's getting it from both sides. And at a press conference with the President of Kenya, Lucy, he was annoyed because the reporter had already asked a question, then asked a second question about Israel. And he gave a kind of a terse answer. What about the value of repetition? I mean, I think Joe Biden should stand up and defend his handling of Israel, of which there are many critics.

CALDWELL: Well, that's right. And of course, it is the case that the -- the loud, progressive wing of the Democratic Party turns out to be a pretty small faction that just gets really, really outsized media coverage. There's been interesting coverage of that aspect of this. And so the Biden campaign and figuring out which guideposts to follow is an important thing.

I do want to say one thing about Amal Clooney and George Clooney. Married people don't necessarily have the same views on everything. I don't have the same views as my husband. So, the fact that they may be at odds on this, not that newsworthy. And she's not even an American citizen. So, she's not going to be a Biden voter, he is. They may have a disagreement here.

KURTZ: All right, fair enough. You know, there was an orchestrated move by Norway, Spain and Ireland to recognize a Palestinian state, which is a fiction at this point, even if you believe in the two state solution. And I think it suggests that Israel is losing a lot of international support because of the rising death toll in Gaza.

And but apparently, Hamas is stealing some of the food aid. So, it's a mess. But I did want to get to -- you say she's getting this attention because of George Clooney. She's apparently pretty well known in this field. Thank you both. Robby Soave, Lucy Caldwell.

That's it for this edition of "Media Buzz". I'm Howard Kurtz. Remember, we will recognize people who made the ultimate sacrifice tomorrow with Memorial Day. You can subscribe to my daily podcast, "Media Buzzmeter" as I riff on the day's top stories, sometimes funny stuff, sometimes bizarre stuff, as well. We're back here next Sunday, 11 Eastern. I think you know the time by now. So, I'll just say, see you then.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

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