

# [***Howard Kurtz Discusses With Guest Panel The Trump Hush Money Trial And Calls For U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson's Impeachment; Former U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy Talks About Speakership; Israel Hits Iran With Limited Airstrikes***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BVP-DSR1-F072-X094-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

HOWARD KURTZ, FOX NEWS HOST: Kevin McCarthy, the former House Speaker, will join us in the studio in just moments. In this saturation coverage of Donald Trump's first criminal trial, it's clear that Manhattan prosecutors are trying to cram in every last salacious detail. Now, that's breaking news, portraying Trump as a playboy, because nobody on the planet had any idea, right?

Judge Juan Merchan gave the Trump side in the hush money trial a couple of minor victories. He barred Alvin Bragg's prosecutors from playing the infamous "Access Hollywood" take, but they can talk about it. And the judge won't allow accusations by women that he calls rumors.

While the focus is on Stormy Daniels, another woman who got catch-and-kill money through the National Enquirer, playboy playmate Karen McDougal, will be able to testify Trump denies both encounters. With mainly sketches from the courthouse and reports by journalists, the former president has shaped the narrative by frequently addressing the media mob.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I should be right now in Pennsylvania, in Florida, in many other states -- North Carolina, Georgia, campaigning. This is all coming from the Biden White House, because the guy can't put two sentences together.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: But the former president also discussed the indictment, which says he reimbursed his former lawyer, Michael Cohen, for the $130,000 passed to Stormy Daniels. And that could be used against him.

DONALD TRUMP, REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I was paying a lawyer and marked it down as a legal expense. Some accountant, I didn't know, marked it down as a legal expense. That's exactly what it was. And you get indicted over that?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: After one day-long session, Trump campaigned at a Harlem bodega, the scene of a terrible crime.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Alvin Bragg does nothing. He goes after guys like Trump, who did nothing wrong.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Some shows actually debated whether that should be covered. But the media were hungry for something more scintillating, and Maggie Haberman of "The New York Times" provided it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MAGGIE HABERMAN, "NEW YORK TIMES" WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT: He appeared to be asleep, and repeatedly his head would fall down.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: And that reverberated through the media echo chamber. I'm Howard Kurtz, and this is "Media Buzz". In the battle over jury selection, there's a deep ideological divide among the pundits. Show me a juror who says they can be unbiased towards Trump, and I'll show you a liar. That's why we don't have political trials in America. Fairness is impossible.

SEAN HANNITY, "HANNITY" HOST: Make no mistake, this is no ordinary trial. This is a taxpayer-funded, media-promoted, political smear campaign against Donald Trump.

JOY REID, "THE REIDOUT" HOST: He went on another posting spree on his social media grift this morning, screaming about how his trial is an assault on America.

NICOLLE WALLACE, "DEADLINE: WHITE HOUSE" ANCHOR: The crime isn't just being friends with the guy that owns the show and choir. It's the change of money. It's the fabrication of the stories.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Joining us now to analyze the coverage in Nashville, Tomi Lahren, a Fox News commentator and host of "Tomi Lahren is Fearless" on "OutKick". And in Phoenix, Lucy Caldwell, an advisor to Renew America.

Tomi, with the judge giving Manhattan prosecutors broad leeway to talk about Donald Trump's past tabloid life, and this is a trial after all about a porn star, is the media coverage going to change many people's minds about who the former president is?

TOMI LAHREN, HOST OF OUTKICK'S TOMI LAHREN IS FEARLESS": I don't think anybody is confused about Donald Trump, his history. I mean, he's a former reality star. And they really tried this already in 2016, and it failed. They thought that their big mullet was going to be that "Access Hollywood" tape, and it didn't hurt Trump.

And in fact, it maybe in some circles got people talking about Trump and made him more relatable to some groups, and that's okay. But they've been trying to put him on the line for morality. The media has done this, and they clutch their pearls about Donald Trump.

Meanwhile, they look the other way while actual crimes that are hurting actual people go right under their nose, and they don't seem to be clutching their pearls over those things. But if they're trying to make Donald Trump this bad guy, this playboy, this womanizer, it didn't work in 2016, it's not going to work in 2024. Sorry guys, try again.

KURTZ: Yeah, as I said, not exactly breaking news on that front. Lucy, the nitty-gritty details are kind of boring. Falsifying expense records to reimburse Michael Cohen for passing money to Stormy Daniels. But is hearing from the National Enquirer and the former playboy playmate and talk of the "Access Hollywood" tape, is that going to boost the coverage and the ratings just into the stratosphere?

LUCY CALDWELL, RENEW DEMOCRACY ADVISER: Well, I mean, I don't think this is a question of ratings, right? I mean, whether or not you think that this trial should have gone forward or not, whether or not you think it's boring, that's not the standard, whether it's boring or scintillating or not, for whether or not this case should have proceeded.

You know, we could have a conversation about the case on its merit. But I also just want to say that I think that, Tomi, when you say they, who is this they? There is not some massive coordinated approach on messaging among the left, coordinating with prosecutors and media. I mean, if there were, the left would be a lot more effective in its efforts, right?

So, I think that we have to be clear here about who is doing what. There is a case. There is coverage of the case. The coverage of the case may not be that interesting. It may be about whether or not he's sleeping while he's, you know, in trial. It may be about whether or not certain things are admissible. But how the coverage plays out versus how the case is proceeding, those are two different things.

KURTZ: Well, I agree with you that it ultimately comes down to the evidence and the testimony, but there is no way that this would be virtually wall-to-wall on some channels without any cameras in the courtroom if the media weren't putting up the numbers.

Tomi, the media keeps saying, oh, Trump can't campaign, he's stuck. Hasn't he been able to get his message out? We showed some clips at the top of the program. Talking to reporters from around the world, by the way, outside the courthouse, going to the bodega where the clerk killed a robber in self-defense and Alvin Bragg initially charged the clerk with murder. It seems to me the foreign president's on T.V. a lot.

LAHREN: He is an earned media mastermind. And going back again to 2016, he mastered this and a lot of other candidates have followed his lead. But he is making lemonade out of lemons. He's been put in this situation, I would argue a political persecution, but he's making the best of it.

And I think the really big point that he's making is, meanwhile you guys are going after me here in Manhattan, Alvin Bragg going after me, well I'm going to go to this bodega where people are actually being impacted by crime right in their own neighborhood.

I'm going to go there and you're going to follow me because you want the ratings, because Donald Trump is the obsession of a lifetime for the leftist mainstream media. So, he's doing everything that he can to make lemonade out of the lemons that he has been given. And I think he's doing an excellent job of this.

I would also point out the left's really interesting approach of trying to make Donald Trump seem like the sleepy Donald Trump or Donald Trump is not cognitively aware because he fell asleep. I think that's really interesting that they're trying to distract from Joe Biden.

I don't think anybody's buying it. Good job media, but I don't think that it's resonating when you've got the current guy, President Joe Biden in the office, who quite literally falls asleep. All right, so you don't think the sleepy nickname is going to stick.

And look, when the former president talked about the case and legal expenses, this is stuff that can be used in court against him. But Lucy, I want to play a soundbite to make this point. Donald Trump, after one session, came out with a thick stack of printouts of various articles. And he said, you know, virtually all legal experts agree on this. Let's roll it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: "This is Wall Street Journal" editorial. Look at this. "National Review". Another "National Review". Jonathan Turley, Greg Jarrett, Andrew McCarthy. Every one of them saying they called a zombie case, meaning it is no case.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: So, mostly right-leaning commentators. But then Nicole Wallace on MSNBC says, we're not going to play this for you. We'll let you know if he says something we think you should hear. You know, they bash him all day long on MSNBC. And then he speaks for about four or five minutes. And there's suddenly this, oh, we couldn't possibly expose our viewers to this.

CALDWELL: Well, I mean, that's an editorial decision of a network. Whether they should or shouldn't have played it, I don't know. I do know that Donald Trump is a lawyer's nightmare as a client. Having your client go out in the middle of a trial and freewheel about what is and what is not the opinion of legal scholars or experts about the case is not helpful.

But that just shows that we're really doing two things here. One, there is a trial of a person who happens to be a former president who is on trial in Manhattan. Separately, that same person is running for president again. And so he is going to, as Trump says, use the tools at his disposal, for example, media following him around to, you know, freewheel and have campaign stops along the way.

Now, I do think this is not hurting Trump in terms of being out on the campaign trail because one thing everyone knows about the guy is he doesn't even really like campaigning. He likes to have massive controlled rallies.

He does not -- he's not a person who's out in diners eating donuts with people or knocking doors. So, he's not losing his step. I don't think we need to feel too bad for Donald Trump in terms of what this trial takes away from his ability to do here.

KURTZ: He was supposed to have a rally last night, but it got rained out. But just quickly, Lucy, you say you don't have an opinion on whether or not a major network should give the former president, who was on trial, never happened before, historic and all that, four minutes to give his side if he wants to side a bunch of experts who agree with him?

CALDWELL: I don't think that one shows decision to not play a clip of Donald Trump outside doing a quick press gaggle outside of a trial in a break. I don't think that that is -- I'm not prepared to indict all of MSNBC because of one host's decision to not give him that airtime. He gets a lot of airtime on every network.

KURTZ: Okay, right. And other MSNBC shows have played some or replayed some of what the former president said. So, Tommy, are some prospective jurors, and we all learned a lot about jury selection this week, lying when they say, oh, I can be fair about Trump, and then the Trump lawyers dig into their old social media posts, and in one case, somebody wrote, lock him up, and in another case, reposted an anti-Trump video?

LAHREN: Yeah, it's wild to me that anyone could think that this trial could be, you know, any semblance of fair to the former president given the area. I mean, I think we all know that the cards are stacked against him. I would just hope that some of those people, that maybe even have some deep- seated Trump arrangement syndrome within their bones, I would hope that they would take the justice system and their duty as a juror.

I would hope that they would take that to heart and they would give this man a fair trial. I'm not going to hold my breath for that, but the fact that some of these other networks, they failed to discuss this, and we know that if the situation had been reversed, a lot of these anchors on other networks, they would be up in arms. If Joe Biden was in the same position and somebody had tweeted something about Joe Biden or lock up Hillary, we know that there would be mass hysteria over that, but given it's Donald Trump, the unfairness doesn't seem to bother them whatsoever.

KURTZ: Okay, Lucy, I got about half a minute. Judge Merchan admonished the press for giving out too much information about the prospective jurors undermining their anonymity, and I think he was right. If he put out, you know, this is what person works, they've got three kids, sometimes it's not that hard to figure out.

CALDWELL: Yeah, I mean, there's been conversation about whether or not this jury needs to be sequestered because they are being exposed in ways that are really, really unprecedented, but to the point about whether or not this jury can be impartial, yeah, I think that we should hope that people could both hold in their minds knowledge of this defendant, who is one of the most famous people in the world, and having opinions about him and being able to carry out their duty as jurors in a way that it's fair.

But if you do this both sides-ism of saying things like, don't hold your breath, you're setting yourself up for a situation where either way you're going to start casting doubt on these jurors and doing a thing that contributes to making them unsafe, especially as their private information is being exposed.

KURTZ: Okay, alright. Ahead Kevin McCarthy will be here, but when we come back, a senior NPR editor who says the network has gone off the rails into liberal activism resigns under fire for speaking out.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: NPR's award-winning senior business editor, Uri Berliner, has resigned under pressure after publicly accusing the network of going off the rails into left-wing activism. He bowed out after being suspended for five days without pay, and criticism from NPR leaders and some colleagues for making the case to Barry Weiss' Free Press that the lurch to the left began with Donald Trump's election.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UEI BERLINER, FORMER NPR SENIOR BUSINESS EDITOR: We started covering Trump in a way that, like a lot of legacy news organizations, that we were trying to damage his presidency, to even find anything we could to harm him.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: During the Russian collusion probe, Berliner said "NPR" echoed the talking points of Democratic Congressman Adam Schiff.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BERLINER: We really latched onto Adam Schiff. He was like our muse to the Trump collusion story. We had him on constantly.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: The journalists took aim at Katherine Maher, former Joe Biden campaign aide who became CEO, recently saying, "I cannot work in a newsroom where I am disparaged by a new CEO whose divisive views confirm the very problems at "NPR". Tomi, so Uri Berliner does this devastating essay and interview with "Free Press", and the company suspends him without pay, rips him, says everything's fine, no need for introspection, and he resigns.

LAHREN: I think NPR made his point perfectly. I mean, that's really the icing on the cake there. But I would say, you know, "NPR" has been woke for a long time. I don't think anybody's shocked to hear anything that he was saying about "NPR".

I think a lot of folks are shocked, though, that our tax dollars are still going to fund that organization, especially when you've got a CEO who has come out in a speech and said that the truth could possibly be a distraction, talking about white guilt and other sentiments.

I mean, I think that none of us are super surprised to hear that the person running 'NPR" would be woke, but it should be an outrage. Whether you're on the left or the right, you shouldn't be funding something that's quite obviously liberal indoctrination at its best or its worst, depending on who you are.

KURTZ: Right, because "NPR" is partially funded by the feds. But look, whether you agree, Lucy, agree with Uri Berliner or not, and he's not some right winger, wouldn't "NPR", in a PR sense, have been smarter to say, you know, he raises some good questions, we're going to have some internal discussions, rather than just circling the wagons?

CALDWELL: Well, NPR did not fire him, and he did something that was unprecedented and very abnormal, which was to go freewheeling, sort of like self-directed, go write for a different outlet, go do a media tour, trashing his employer. That is not normal. He's not a media reporter. He's not a media ombudsman. This was obviously by design.

A lot of the things he's saying about "NPR" may very well be correct, but this was not his beat. He's not a person whose beat is to cover "NPR", and certainly his beat was not to cover his own employer in a different outlet.

And, you know, as for the funding thing, I just really want to double-click on that, because, look, you can take aim at the fact that there are lots of things that are funded federally that you don't like, but if you're going to take aim at "NPR", you should take aim at VOA, you should take aim at Radio Free Europe, and you should take aim at all the other things that are funded by the federal government that are also partisan. You know, Christian-funded crisis pregnancy. Like, let's be honest here about this. And let's not just sort of pick and choose, okay?

KURTZ: Let me circle back, Tommy, to the new CEO, Katherine Maher. So, some of her old tweets. She criticized Hillary Clinton for erasing non- binary language. Why? Because she used the phrase, boys and girls. Also, the urban riots of 2020. Not defending looting, but she brought up slavery. Placing, we can put this up, placing the value of property over the value of people's lives is a moral failure. And she posted a picture of herself, if we got that, in a Joe Biden campaign cap.

LAHREN: Yeah. You have woke, and then you have the queen of woke, which is what she appears to be. And I think after the fact, too, in talking about the coverage of this, after, you know, this whole resignation, if you want to call it that, when you intimidate someone and they resign, I don't know if that's necessarily on their own or because they don't feel comfortable in the newsroom. But saying, I wish I would have had the chance to have a robust dialogue.

Well, you did have the chance, but you waited until after the fact, and now all of a sudden you're interested in diversity of opinion. But this is just a running thing with a lot of the leftist media. They want diversity of everything. In fact, they mandate diversity of everything. But thought? Not always included in that category. And it's really a shame.

KURTZ: Lucy, if you ran "NPR" and you wanted to combat at least the perception of liberal bias, even if you didn't agree with it, would you put somebody who did get out the vote for Joe Biden in charge of the company?

CALDWELL: Well, look, I think that we're conflating a lot of things because of the fact that "NPR" has a target on its back all the time because of its connection to this Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the fact that it is federally subsidized.

Lots of media companies have people at the helm who are political. Lots of media companies have a bias. Fox News. Roger Ailes was a person who was a media consultant to Republican presidents.

KURTZ: That is true.

CALDWELL: And worked for Ronald Reagan.

KURTZ: And that criticism was often raised.

CALDWELL: Yes, absolutely. Now, the --

LAHREN: Fox News has not been really subsidized.

CALDWELL: -- CEO of NPR, her ***politics*** are -- okay. Again, way to the left of mine, but that doesn't mean that it's inappropriate for her to be at the helm of a liberal news outlet.

KURTZ: All right, "The Washington Post" finally covered this after doing nothing for the week. There hasn't been a word about this on MSNBC or CNN. And "The Wall Street Journal" reports that "The New York Times" is conducting an investigation into leaks by pro-Gaza staffers about Israel coverage.

So, this is going on in lots of newsrooms. Lucy Caldwell, Tomi Lahren, thanks so much for joining us this Sunday. Up next, a media portrait. House Speaker Mike Johnson is barely hanging on to his job as he wins approval for aid to Israel and Ukraine.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: The House yesterday easily passed military aid to Israel and Ukraine, thanks largely to Mike Johnson. And the Speaker's GOP critics, led by Marjorie Taylor Greene, are extremely unhappy.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE, GEORGIA CONGRESSWOMAN (R): This is the third betrayal by Mike Johnson. And then he did this (BEEP) here on the House floor, foreign war package that does nothing for America. It's unbelievable.

MIKE JOHNSON, U.S. HOUSE SPEAKER: If we turn our backs right now, the consequences could be devastating. I understand that. It is not a perfect piece of legislation. We're not insured that in a time of divided government and in a time where there are lots of different opinions.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Joining us now, Olivia Beavers, who covers "The Hill" for "Politico". And the press pushed very hard for the House to vote on Ukraine aid as well as Israel. And in any other circumstance, perhaps we'd be praising Mike Johnson for his political courage. But didn't he fix the problem he created by keeping this off the floor for six months?

OLIVIA BEAVERS, "POLITICO" CONGRESSIONAL REPORTER: I mean, I think he certainly has faced some criticism for not moving or coming up with a plan. It's a little bit of a tough job to jump from the number seven to the number one House Republican and figure out how to lead. You're dealing with a bunch of different dynamics and demands.

And I think that he had to sort of figure out how to do these policies that he previously didn't have to lead on and also deal with members and their tempers. And at the moment, we're seeing that come to a head.

KURTZ: So, as we saw, MTG attacked him for, I don't know, eighth or tenth time, but said she wouldn't pull the trigger on her motion to vacate until after members have gone home for a week-long recess. We don't know the timing, but with two other Republicans joining Marjorie Taylor Greene, how much jeopardy is Mike Johnson in?

BEAVERS: Well, I think when she decides to make the bill privileged, basically bring it, force a vote on the floor, he's going to probably have to rely on Democrats if all three of them or even more end up deciding to vote against him. And that leads to a predicament because when you have the GOP leader receiving help, not even if he's seeking it, if he's receiving help, that will undermine him with his right flank.

And you saw that predicament being presented to former Speaker McCarthy, and he did not seek Democratic aid, and he ultimately was ousted. But now Johnson's in that exact same situation, and we're going to see if Democrats do help him. And some are starting to say they will.

KURTZ: In exchange for?

BEAVERS: That's the question. What they've --

KURTZ: Well, but the Democrats got what they wanted, which was because there's a much greater split within the GOP, at least the House GOP, over aid to Ukraine, as opposed to Israel, which passed overwhelmingly. So, this shows that it was bipartisan support all along. There is a consensus, I think you've reported on this, that Mike Johnson is a lame duck and can't win the job next January?

BEAVERS: I hear more and more from Republicans that they don't expect him to survive, especially if House Republicans lose the majority. At that point, you're going to probably see a race of several different names that we've seen before.

But if you keep the majority, that becomes a little bit less clear, depending on how many seats are won, and especially if Donald Trump sort of weighs in and says, I want to get my agenda going if he's the one who wins a presidential campaign. But there's still sort of a lot of up in the air on that.

KURTZ: Yeah, he did back Mike Johnson earlier, but then kind of got lukewarm, I think. Look, I know the press loves these Republicans-in-chaos stories, but if Johnson does lose his gavel before the next election, aren't we in for another crazy period of a House without a Speaker?

BEAVERS: Certainly, and I think the mood from Republicans is, if this happens, they are going to be so down, feeling like they don't deserve the House, is usually the sentiment that I hear. Why would voters put us back in if we can't even govern ourselves? But, you know, I think that there's also this mood where some of them will be more inclined to resign. It's a pretty kind of heavy feeling on "The Hill".

KURTZ: There's been a number of resignations.

BEAVERS: Yeah, but even more, I would assume.

KURTZ: Yeah, so there's about 117 moving parts to this, and that's why we wanted to have you on. Olivia Beavers, thanks so much --

BEAVERS: Thanks, Howie.

KURTZ: -- for joining us. Next on "Media Buzz", former Speaker Kevin McCarthy on the Trump trial, and House Republicans struggling to govern after he lost his gavel.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: Joining us now on set is Kevin McCarthy, the former Speaker of the House, welcome. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who is a key ally of yours, says our Republican majority has completely failed. If you took a snapshot right now, would you agree with that?

KEVIN MCCARTHY, FORMER SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: I think they're in disarray, but it stems from those eight working with all the Democrats. If there's no consequences --

KURTZ: The aid -- you're talking about the aid ---

MCCARTHY: The gate -- the gate aids, yeah. But they work with all the Democrats to decide who could be Speaker and since then, what has transpired? So, the conference is broken because they never dealt with those eight. And until they do, it would stay broken.

But to Marjorie's point is Marjorie didn't do what Matt Gaetz did. She didn't make this privilege. She's making it an issue for a debate. Now, I think they should keep it internal. They should have their discussion. Look, being Speaker is not easy. Otherwise, maybe I'd still be there. But yeah, so.

KURTZ: I figured that out. In fact, this seems kind of a thankless job. If you were Speaker today, would you have voted with the 101 Republicans, which was a bit less than half, who backed the desperately needed aid for Ukraine, which is running out of ammunition and suffering civilian casualties?

MCCARTHY: Well, to be fair, if I was Speaker, that's not how it would have come to the floor. But I would support Ukraine. I've always supported Ukraine. What should have happened here, you've got to think strategically. You've got to use the power of the speakership. It's the only majority. If the border is the number one issue, don't sit back. We passed H.R. two, but they, in essence, let the Senate Republicans negotiate. They're in a minority position.

KURTZ: Right.

MCCARTHY: The Speaker should negotiate directly with the President. Now, see, that's what we did on the debt ceiling. And we were able to get two trillion in cut, welfare reform, NEPA reform, 20 billion from the IRS. The Democrat leaders will never give you that unless the President.

So, after October 7th, they never should have put a pay-for on Israel money. It should have gone. It sent the wrong message to Iran and the rest of the world. But once you put that money out, you could have used Ukraine directly with the border.

And I believe those who are complaining on either side, you'd have more input on how the Ukraine money should be spent. There's people who support Ukraine but don't like what the President is doing. What's our plan for victory?

KURT: Right.

MCCARTHY: And you could patch it directly with the border. You would have won majority of H.R. 2, and you would have put those two together. And on that vote would probably be overwhelming, less Democrats voting for it.

KURTZ: Mr. Speaker, a major theme of the coverage has been Democrats bailed out Mike Johnson. And it's something you could have tried, but you didn't. And you've gotten praise for that. But doesn't that weaken a Speaker when he can't provide the votes from his own party? And was yesterday's vote a rare defeat for the MAGA movement?

MCCARTHY: Well, look, people read on to that. The challenge here is you're asking a what if. Mike hasn't done that.

But if the Democrats come in and they save you, remember, a motion to vacate could happen every day. It won't happen every day. And they'll extract something. They'll want something more. I say just govern fearlessly. Don't worry about a motion to vacate. Don't worry about what the press says. I could never win Speaker. I won 15 rounds, proven wrong.

They said we wouldn't be successful. You look at those first nine months, not just the Border Bill, the Energy Bill, the Parents' Bill of Rights -- the biggest cut ever voted in American history, more than two trillion dollars. I mean, you could go bill after week after week what we were able to accomplish when you work together, even in a small majority.

It's the same Rules Committee. It's pretty much close to the same majority. You could achieve a lot, but you have to use the majority for that benefit. If you're playing defense, you're going to be torn up inside.

KURTZ: So, Hillary Clinton on a podcast. I got to ask you about this.

MCCARTY: What?

KURTZ: Trump was just gaga over Putin because Putin does what Trump would like to do, kill his opposition, imprison his opposition, drive journalists and others into exile. I particularly don't like that last part. What do you think of the former presidential candidate's remarks?

MCCARTHY: I think she's upset that she lost, but also let's think about what she said. She said Putin drives the opponent away. What are they doing to President Trump today? They put him on trial. And let me ask everybody in America. Does anybody in America believe President Trump would be on trial today if he wasn't running for president? Nobody believes that. What did they try to do? They tried to remove him from the ballot to even have the opportunity to be voted.

KURTZ: Which was outrageous.

MCCARTHY: Now, what are they doing? They're spending all their time trying to move Kennedy from the ballot. These people talk about a democracy.

KURTZ: Danger to democracy.

MCCARTHY: They are the dangers to try to deny democracy to this country. This is really concerning to me what the Biden and the Democrats have done. I mean --

KURTZ: I want to get into the trial more in the next segment.

MCCARTHY: But has Hillary ever said she lost the 2016 election?

KURTZ: Yeah, she called Donald Trump and conceded.

MCCARTHY: But she never in press ever says that.

KURTZ: Oh, well MCCARTHY: She did call Donald Trump and conceded. All, so let's get back to what happened nearly seven months ago. Because you were ousted because you tried to work with Democrats to keep the country from defaulting and to make what spending cuts you could.

MCCARTHY: No, that's what the press, that's not why.

KURTZ: Well, okay. So, you're going to say it's all because of Matt Gaetz. What exactly did he do as far as the House investigation?

MCCARTHY: I don't want to get all this. But Matt came to me. Matt has an ethics complaint. And if you watch ABC News, apparently I'm not a liar. It's true, about -- he has a challenge with a minor and paying her money. It was asked, put into place in ethics before I ever became Speaker. He wanted me to stop the ethics challenge. I wouldn't. So, he got some other people who didn't vote for me. Eight people and partnered with all the Democrats to remove me.

KURTZ: Well, he calls you a liar. He denies having sex with a minor.

MCCARTHY: So does he deny what Mark Wayne says he said about? Does he deny the testimony that the Ethics Committee has been given about what was said? Does he deny he came up to me to try to influence me? Does he deny he told other people, even from your same network, to call me about it? I don't know if all these people are liars. I don't believe that to be true. I know what transpired. Even if you look at Byron Donaldson's latest quote this week.

KURTZ: Byron Donaldson, yeah. Lord of the Flies.

MCCCARTHY: Yeah, That Matt Gaetz, what Matt Gaetz did, has broken the Republican majority. He's now created Lord of the Flies. Ask anybody inside our conference. They actually know it.

KURTZ: Well, so you're saying all the things that the press wrote about. I mean, certainly Gaetz was part of that. The congressman was. That, well, of course, it had partially to do with the fact that any single member, and you had to make that concession, could offer a motion to vacate. But you had nothing to do with spending?

MCARTHY: Let's talk about the motion to vacate, okay? That has been around for more than a hundred years. Every Speaker has lived with that, except Nancy on her second time. She changed it. I don't get to determine that. Two hundred and eighteen people determine what the rules package are.

The Democrats wouldn't support doing the difference. So, I had to live with what is there. That's part of the job. That's fine. But I never woke up any morning worried about the motion to vacate. Could it happen? Yes.

KURTZ: Right. Well, I'm getting a sense of deja vu, because while Marjorie Taylor Greene staunchly defended it.

MCCARTHY: But I know -- look, don't believe that the motion to vacate will come to play, because I think --

KURTZ: I didn't ask the question yet.

MCCARTHY: I know, but I know the direction you're going. Well, the timing is unclear, so she doesn't have to pull the trigger. She says she's going to reevaluate. But she didn't make it privileged. See, what Gaetz did was much different than what Marjorie's doing. But listen, I think Republicans have learned from that that that probably wasn't the best idea.

I think the outcome that they have now, they realize it wasn't a smart idea. That's what Byron and others are saying. I think what we're going in this close to election, I think what helps the current Speaker is, tell me this. If he is not the Speaker, who can win it?

KURTZ: I don't know. It's a pretty thankless job.

MCCARTHY: But have you advised Marjorie Taylor Greene on this? Because the point I was going to make is she defended you against a motion to vacate. And now she at least is pushing one, whether she goes through, we shall see, against Mike Johnson. And the controversy is many of the same things, cooperating with Democrats, spending too much. Although, you know, he's part of a minority in the federal government.

MCCARTHY: You know what's interesting on the spending, if you look at those who claim to be conservatives, the Matt Gaetz's of the world, they continued in a continuing resolution that actually spent 50 more dollars billion dollars as they moved through. They locked in Pelosi's policies.

They denied the ability to have a border bill. I think if the country really sits back and look, and remember, our whole government is designed to have to have compromise. I don't think it's a bad thing that Democrats vote with Republicans. I like to get more Democrats to vote with me, that my idea is so strong that I even got them to. So, to me, that doesn't make sense. I just think let's govern and do what you said you're supposed to do. And I've watched a lot of people on both sides of the aisle make that happen.

KURTZ: Right. And I've watched a lot of Republicans. Marjorie Taylor Greene isn't the only one. Say, you know, we certainly haven't accomplished much in recent -- recent months since you left. And I don't think you disagree with that. But I do need to get a break.

MCCARTHY: Well, press can write more of that.

KURTZ: All right. More with Kevin McCarthy in a moment as Joe Biden talks about his opponent's criminal trial.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

And we're back with former Speaker Kevin McCarthy. Let's turn to the Donald Trump hush money trial, which I would agree is the least important and most openly partisan of all the criminal cases. But when you suggest that Joe Biden is behind this because he can't win an election, I raise this with the former president, as well.

He is denying it. The T.V. interview, we can put it up. He says his lack of ethics has nothing to do with me. I have not once talked to anyone in my administration about Trump's legal problem. So, what proof do you have to the contrary?

MCCARTHY: Well, isn't it come out before, too, where he even in his own words proves that's not true, where he was complaining to -- in his staff about Trump and the legal issues?

KURTZ: Wait, is there a difference between complaining privately to your staff and actually trying to meddle with the wheel?

MCCARTHY: Well, listen to this. I think fairness is a word that's probably a really powerful word in America. Is it really fair that the nominee for one party is now within is in a trial this close to a presidency? Also, is it actually fair to the voters? Think, for instance, how would Biden have handled this? When a "New York Post" newspaper came out during the last election running a story about his family, what did he do?

Well, now the Secretary of State, who was part of his campaign, went and got 51 people, former CIA directors, to put a notice out to say this is Russian propaganda. Then they put pressure on companies to say you can't repost that. So, the most powerful companies that get news couldn't repost a story.

KURTZ: Right.

MCCARTHY: So, so, why wouldn't the President --

KURTZ: So, was it a little bit more than that?

MCCARTHY: To be fair, why wouldn't the President take a different position? Why wouldn't Joe Biden caring about the voters saying, you know what, this is wrong? If I have nothing to do with this, they should not have this trial right now. So, the American people could actually spend time on what the issues are.

KURTZ: Hold on.

MCCARTHY: I think that's even that would be the real position for this Biden to take.

KURTZ: You're saying you did want President Biden or you do want to meddle with the Justice System just in favor of Donald Trump.

MCCARTHY: No, I want his opinion to be fair. I want his opinion to look for the American people in fairness. Who in America thinks it's right that if Joe Biden was in trial right now beforehand or that President Trump? And really, they've already looked at this issue how many times? And really, from the standpoint --

KURTZ: No, a lot of people passed on bringing those charges. That's why I said what I said.

MCCARTHY: Yeah, have already looked at. And who do they -- and but think about it. Their number one witness has already proven to be a liar in the process. Cohen, the attorney --

KURTZ: We will see what happens when he testifies. Everybody knows.

KURTZ: Let me get to.

MCCARTHY: But it goes back to one question.

KURTZ: Yeah. Does anybody in America believe President Trump would be holding this trial now if he wasn't running for president? That's the number one issue. So, even if you dislike President Trump, you should stand up for fairness in America and say this is wrong.

KURTZ: All right.

KURTZ: This should not go on. Briefly, let me get to Alejandro Mayorkas, as you know, the Democratic controlled Senate.

MCCARTHY: But there's one point.

KURTZ: Let me ask my next question.

MCCARTHY: You have to understand it.

KURTZ: Yeah.

MCCARTHY: In fairness, where is this trial being held? This is the second most democratic county in the entire country. And if he's going to -- if President Trump's going to be held by his peers, Biden won this county by 87 percent. I get it.

KURTZ: It's an anti-Trump audience. It's in New York where he grew up.

MCCARTHY: But that's totally -- but that goes against everything we know for our Justice System and about America. That's what's wrong.

KURTZ: Should Donald Trump be calling January 6th inmates hostages when they were convicted by the Justice System? You denounced January 6th.

MCCARTHY: I think what happened in January 6th is wrong. Everything about it is wrong all the way through. We have a difference of opinion.

KURTZ: Alejandro Mayorkas, as you know, Democrat controlled Senate dismissed the impeachment articles against the Homeland Security Chief. Media basically attacked them as symbolic. Two hours of discussion. No trial. Story vanished. Media. Why did the press let it go? And is this something that could come back to bite the Dems?

MCCARTHY: I think so, because they love impeachment for no reason. And now they go and do this. Who in America believes your Secretary of Homeland who says the border is secure?

KURTZ: Okay. And is that an impeachable offense?

MCCARTHY: Well, you wouldn't know because you never had the debate in the Senate. Shouldn't it at least been debated? So, does that mean every Democrat says the border is secure? Because what's concerning to me in one month, last year in February, we caught more people on the terrorist watch list in that one month than we caught in the entire last four years.

So, when a terrorist attack happens in America and those Democrats think it was they shouldn't even had a debate about it, that's going to haunt because who got harmed America because of their lack of holding up their right to their own job.

KURTZ: Yeah, everybody knows that the border is an absolute mess. Kevin McCarthy, appreciate your stopping by. Thanks so much.

MCCARTHY: Hey, thank you.

KURTZ: Still to come, Israel hits Iran with limited airstrikes. Why both countries are playing it down.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: CBS struck a very sour note after heavily promoting a special on Billy Joel's 100th concert at Madison Square Garden. You heard him there. He was into the last verse of his iconic hit "Piano Man". This is 11:30 at night when the network cut away for local newscasts. The fans went nuts. Network apologized to Billy Joel, its stations, its audience, and re-aired the music special Friday night.

For the latest on the Mideast war, we're joined now by Fox News Correspondent Trey Yingst in Tel Aviv. Trey, Israel struck these targets in Iran. Everybody was saying, what would the retaliation be? A military base. And the only reason the American media were able to report it is because it was an unnamed U.S. official who confirmed it. What's your take on that?

TREY YINGST, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Absolutely. Routinely, the Israelis avoid commenting on strikes across the Middle East. And this has been a policy of the Israeli government and military long before this current conflict started on October 7th. The Israelis for years would strike inside Syria, hitting targets linked to Iran, and then never taking credit for them.

It's part of the mysterious play they want across the region, trying to ensure that their operations remain secret. And also, they want to keep the regime in Tehran guessing. You can contrast that to the Iranians, who after the threats they made following the strike earlier this month in Damascus, Syria, that killed one of their top generals, they basically projected what their plans were going to be. And the Israelis didn't want to make that same mistake.

KURTZ: Yeah, they also seem not to want to have any casualties, but Iran is not threatening retaliation, at least not publicly. The media coverage in both countries has been muted. So, do you think both sides are now looking for de-escalation?

YINGST: Absolutely. The Israelis with this strike in the Isfahan province, just south of the Iranian capital, Tehran, gave leadership in Iran the ability to walk away from this. They are not threatening to retaliate against Israel. They're actually saying they don't know who is responsible for the strike.

So, they have an off-ramp, and the Israelis have the ability to send a message to Iran saying we're able to target the air defense around your Natanz Nuclear Facility, and thus target the facility itself if we want to. And so, this was a calculated maneuver by the Israelis, also coordinated with the United States ahead of time, to not drag the region into a broader conflict.

KURTZ: Yeah, the fact that it could strike at that area where Iran works on its nuclear program was sending, I think, a clear message. There was a report that Israel was going to fight back that night against the Iranian missile and drone barrage, but informed the U.S. about it and ended up with a more limited strike. Does this mean, and I've got about half a minute, the Biden administration is now back, after some tense times, to having more leverage with Bibi Netanyahu's government?

YINGST: Certainly, and we've seen that over the past several weeks. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu publicly saying that the Israelis won't be swayed by the American administration or the President himself. The reality behind the scenes is much different.

The Israelis rely on the United States not only for military equipment, but also intelligence support in their battle against Hamas and Islamic Jihad inside Gaza, and against Iranian proxies across the region. And so, they're certainly taking some direction from the President.

KURTZ: Right. Well, Trey, I always appreciate your analysis. Sorry, I didn't mean to step on you there. Well, that's it for this edition of "Media Buzz". I'm Howard Kurtz. You can subscribe to my daily podcast, "Media Buzzmeter". It's usually about a half hour. Sometimes I go longer. Sometimes I go shorter. That's part of the fun of it. And we are here next Sunday, 11 Eastern, with the only media analysis show on national television.

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