

# [***Donald Trump Found Guilty On All 34 Counts In Hush Money Case; Political Experts Weigh In On Trump Verdict And Its Possible Impact On The Presidential Election***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C5M-CJ91-JCS1-6000-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Howard Kurtz

**Guests:** Leslie Marshall, Tomi Lahren, Jason Miller, Philippe Reines, Michael Tyler

**Body**

HOWARD KURTZ, FOX NEWS ANCHOR: Most of the media got what they wanted in the hush money trial. They can always call Donald Trump a convicted felon. The jury, after just two days, finding the former President guilty on all 34 counts. But that doesn't mean the election's over -- far from it. This might even help Trump, who's been attacking the judicial system as rigged and much of his loyal base agrees.

That's right. Joe Biden may have trouble beating Donald Trump, despite his new legal baggage, with many Democrats privately panicking about Biden's chances as he slightly trails his predecessor. So, we have a deeply divided country, with one part outraged by the Trump conviction, the other part celebrating the Stormy Daniels case, and the media completely and utterly polarized. In fact, the commentators couldn't agree on much of anything, including Judge Juan Merchan.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEAN HANNITY, HOST, "HANNITY": This is, by every measure, a travesty of justice perpetrated by Judge Juan Merchan.

ANDREW WEISMANN, MSNBC ANALYST: With respect to Judge Merchan, I mean, I am, I am like now, you know, I feel like a man crushed on him.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: One thing's for certain, it all came down to the jury. I'm Howard Kurtz, and this is "Media Buzz". Donald Trump unloaded on various targets on Friday, taking no questions.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT (R) AND CURRENT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE (R): We have a President and a group of fascists that don't want to do anything about it because they could right now, today, he could stop it. But he's not. They're destroying our country. They were literally crucified by this man who looks like an angel, but he's really a devil. So, we're going to be appealing this scam.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: The guilty verdict produced passionate takes by the pundits on all sides.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GREG GUTFELD, "THE FIVE" CO-HOST: I'm not that surprised. This thing always felt preordained. It feels more arranged than a marriage in Kabul.

RACHEL MADDOW, "THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW" HOST: It is now in the hands of the American people to decide if we will accept those efforts or whether we will stand by the rule of law and recognize this as a fair proceeding.

LAURA INGRAHAM, "THE INGRAHAM ANGLE" HOST: This is a humiliating day for the country that we all love. It makes us look like a joke to the rest of the world. Is this what they meant by the American way?

JOE SCARBOROUGH, "MORNING JOE" HOST: The Trump and his lawyers thought they could bully their way through these proceedings.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: And some were outright celebrating.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP) KATE BEDINGFIELD, CNN POLITICAL COMMENTATOR: The pearl clutching amongst Republicans about the idea that he would go to jail from the people who were cheering Donald Trump's lock her up chant in 2016 is a little rich, I will say. It's a little rich.

KASIE HUNT, "CNN THIS MORNING" HOST: All right. I think we need some Bloody Marys all around at this point.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Joining us now to analyze the coverage in Nashville, Tomi Lahren. The host of Tomi Lahren is fearless on "OutKick". And Orlando -- from Orlando, Leslie Marshall, the radio talk show host. Both are Fox News contributors.

Tomi, I'm sure you think this case should never have been brought. I certainly thought it was flimsy and openly political. But didn't it come down to both sides trying to convince these 12 jurors?

TOMI LAHREN, 'TOMI LAHREN IS FEARLESS" HOST: Yeah, well, again, I don't blame the jury. I blame the judge for the instructions. And we could go all day long into the legalities. I've been following this minute by minute, as I'm sure both of you have, as well. But to me, the more sickening part here is the way that the media has been covering it, the way that the media has been celebrating this.

It was a dark day for justice. It was a dark day for America, no matter if you like Donald Trump or you don't like Donald Trump. And these are some of the same media pundits, hacks, as I would call them, that don't want anybody else to go to jail. They don't want anybody else to have the book thrown at them. And then they write a new book and they throw it at Donald Trump. And then they celebrate that.

But I think far more than this guilty conviction and them wanting to call him a convicted felon, I think far more than that, they would rather talk about Donald Trump as they always have than talk about failing Joe Biden and failing Kamala Harris and failing America under Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

So, this did them a favor in more ways than one. And it's really a travesty to watch them celebrate like they are.

KURTZ: Leslie, the judge said you cannot convict on Michael Cohen's testimony. You have to find corroborating evidence. And I think the flaw in the defense has always been they had no alternative when it came to the e- mails and the texts and the signal messages and the banking records, which tended to back up what Michael Cohen was saying.

LESLIE MARSHALL, DEMOCRATIC STRATEGIST: Well, look, you know, when people talk about blame, one of the things that's great about our nation is our system. And you know, whether you like the outcome of the verdict or not, many people were angry many years ago in the outcome, as I was in the O.J. Simpson trial. But the jurors based their decisions on what is presented by the prosecution in the end the defense.

I honestly, Howie, thought going into this, I didn't think there'd be 34 counts of guilty. I was surprised about that. And even though I watched a lot of the trial, I wasn't sitting in the jurors box. I wasn't in the courtroom. So, the jury deliberated not just based on the judge's instructions, but specifically based on the evidence or lack of evidence that was presented by both sides. So, your point to me is exactly why the jury came down with those 34 guilty counts.

KURTZ: Right. You know, Tomi, the media are deeply divided, as you pointed out. They are -- you have Trump saying that it's Biden who's a threat to democracy because he has tainted the criminal justice system. And you have Biden saying Trump is destroying confidence in the judicial system. So, they're both making, taking different sides of the same coin in terms of this argument.

LAHREN: Yeah. And again, I don't want the American people to lose confidence in the judicial system or in the justice system. That's not what I want. I don't want that for my country. But to me, it is really rich, as I meant before, Howie, when you've got these individuals that don't want anyone to go to jail. They want everyone to get out of jail free card. They want cashless bail.

They want thugs and felons to roam the streets. They want illegal immigrants who beat up cops to get plea deals. But then they celebrate Donald Trump saying no one is above the law. No one is above the law. But Donald Trump has been existing below the law. And the fact that they're celebrating it when they want everybody else to wreak havoc and do as they please, that, to me, is really rich.

KURTZ: Wait, they want illegal immigrants to beat up cops? Or is that the result of the border?

LAHREN: Well, they have illegal immigrants that are beating up cops that are getting plea deals. Let's be honest, Howie, we saw that in New York City. They don't take these people who even have jumped cops and attacked cops on camera. They think those people should be given the benefit of the doubt. But Donald Trump, the book should be thrown at him, even if it's a book nobody's ever read before or ever seen before.

KURTZ: Yeah, you know, I'm kind of with both of you on this point, which is, it's a sad day for our country. You love Trump, you despise Trump, whatever, wherever you are. It's kind of, you know, 34 counts, Leslie, you're saying that was a surprise. I thought there might be one holdout and then you'd have a mistrial.

So, the constant media coverage, even though it's a terrible TV show because we're just looking at text from the reporters and then later you get the transcript, seems to me that the media, you know, the media will not come off this story maybe because the ratings are good.

MARSHALL: Yeah, it's about the ratings. I mean, come on, you know, every media entity is a business at the end of the day and you've got to have your bottom line and you want that bottom line to be higher. And Donald Trump is good for ratings.

I mean, whether he's, you know, sitting as a defendant, you know, in a jury trial or whether he's out, you know, giving speeches, as we saw prior to both the 2016 and the 2020 election. You know, Tomi and I really agree. I would agree with her on I don't want the American people to lose faith in our justice system.

But it goes far beyond the former President, because there are certainly people on the right and the left that are screaming against our system, whether it's because a Supreme Court member's wife hangs a flag upside down and he won't recuse himself, whether it's because somebody thinks that politically rigged or railroaded a former President just was and, you know, is a convicted felon on 34 counts.

The list goes on. And I'm sure for those on the right, especially with the upcoming trials, which are actually more serious in charge --

KURTZ: Much more serious.

MARSHALL: -- and which I would expect, right, much more serious in charges. I think we're going to hear, you know, a lot of this rhetoric. And I think both sides get angry with hypocritical statements of the other. You know, I, you know, I take the whole show just to sit here and give hypocrisy or hypocritical statements on both sides when it comes especially to the justice system.

KURTZ: You know, Michael Cohen is now a hero on the left, despite the fact that he admits repeatedly lying, despite the fact that he went to prison for lying, despite the fact that he lied to Congress and investigators and so forth. And he's been doing the rounds on MSNBC, incredibly long interview with Rachel Maddow and colleagues that went on and on and on. Let's take a look.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHAEL COHEN, FORMER DONALD TRUMP ATTORNEY: It's the media that wants to portray me as this sort of bombastic character. It's really not my nature.

UNKNOWN: We've all heard --

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: He's not a bombastic character. That's a surprise to me, although he certainly kept his cool in his testimony, but anybody who's gotten a phone call from Michael Cohen, he's unhappy, knows he's a bombastic character. All right, let me go to Tomi. How much does this affect the election or not, especially if Trump draws some jail time on July 11th, which, of course, is going to be two months of media speculation.

LAHREN: Right. Well, right now, I think that the haul that his campaign has been able to achieve in terms of fundraising over the last couple of days has been astounding. And yes, you've had some high dollar donations coming in from the Adelson family. But you've also had a number of small donors, people that have never donated before that saw this verdict and they were rightfully so very angry.

And they might even believe, hey, listen, if Donald Trump loses fair and square, he loses fair and square. But he's not going to lose because he's a political prisoner. So, I think this is going to breathe new life and energy into his campaign, something that the other side simply doesn't have. I don't think anybody would look at Biden-Harris, even if you're a Biden-Harris supporter, and say that that campaign has energy or that that candidate has energy.

So, again, this is going to do well for Donald Trump in terms of fundraising. But the Democrats got what they wanted because we're talking about this and we're not talking about Joe Biden's failing policies, which is what we should actually be talking about.

KURTZ: Leslie, I've got about a minute for you to weigh in on the election impact.

MARSHALL: You know, look, the people that support Donald Trump are going to support him no matter what. The people that support Joe Biden are going to support him no matter what. And those aren't the people that are going to determine this election. And we've seen that for the last numerous decades, election cycles in the general election. It's going to come down to six states and a sliver of people, largely independents in those states.

And, Howie, I'm going to say you're on national television. By some of the polling I'm seeing right now, I might have been wrong when I said I don't think this is going to move the needle at all because this is not a kitchen table issue that voters on either side of the aisle or independents are concerned about. They're not concerned about the trial. Some of them are like trial. Oh, yeah. I heard something about that in the Northeast.

But at the end of the day, what I'm seeing right now, I've seen two polls that have come out that are showing and we've seen numbers like 60 percent of people that based on this verdict, that they don't feel that Donald Trump is fit to serve, if you will. And that may come down in November to just that one or two percent margin. And that is all either the President or former President needs to win or lose this.

KURTZ: All right, okay guys, stick around. We want to hear from Andy McCarthy next on the coverage of the trial.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: Joining us now from New Jersey, Andy McCarthy, the former federal prosecutor and contributor to Fox and National Review. Andy, you say the justice system has become a clown show. Alvin Bragg should never brought the case. The judge was biased toward the prosecution. But in terms of coverage, I think a lot of people have tuned out because most of us, unlike you, didn't get to see the trial. We just had the reporters quick notes on the screen.

ANDREW MCCARTHY, FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: Yeah, you know, it's interesting, Howie, back in the 90s, when I did the blind shake terrorism case that was in federal court, it wasn't on television. And almost every single day that we were on trial, the O.J. Simpson case in California was on trial. And obviously, that got all the coverage precisely because it was on television, because it was in state court and it was a big spectacle.

You know, people can judge about historically what was the more important thing. But in terms of public understanding of the trial process, had a lot more. I think you had a lot more in California because they could watch it.

KURTZ: Yeah, exactly. And I remember that vividly. Were the judge's instructions here about intent, about Trump falsifying, excuse me, falsifying or causing someone else to falsify records, making it even more difficult for the average person to follow the action?

MCCARTHY: I think they did. But I also think they made it difficult for the jury to come to any resolution except guilt. And for example, I say that because the main objective supposedly here was a violation of the campaign finance laws, the federal laws. Because that's such an abstruse statutory corpus, Congress makes prosecutors prove willfulness, which is the highest intent standard in the criminal law.

The judge never instructed the jury on what willfulness meant because they thought that might be too much after intent to defraud. But Trump was entitled to that and he was entitled to have the jury know that that was a higher standard of mental element to prove. And yet the judge simply didn't give the instruction.

KURTZ: What, if any, missteps did the Trump defense team make?

MCCARTHY: Well, I think you have to make up your mind going in. If your position is that the non-disclosure agreements are legal, then you can't treat them like kryptonite in the trial. You know, you can't say to tell the jury they're fine. And yet have Trump take the position that he needs to stay a million miles away from him. And it's all Cohen.

And then the other thing they did, Howie, that I just don't get is they open to the jury telling them that Trump never reimbursed Cohen when there was like an avalanche of evidence that he had reimbursed Cohen out of his own mouth.

KURTZ: Yeah. And the 11 checks and all of that. So, do you think this, you know, obviously a former president being a convicted of these felonies, is this going to be one of these stories that a week from now everyone's talking about something else or do you think you'll have staying power?

MCCARTHY: Well, certainly have staying power up until July 11th when the sentencing happens. And I think just because you have the specter of the Republican National Convention right at around the same time, that'll draw even more attention to it. I think the unseen thing that happens here, Howie, is that people should not dismiss the idea that we could have any other trials.

I think that depending on what the Supreme Court does, if Jack Smith has anything left of his case, he's going to put the pedal to the metal to try to get that Washington case tried. And I think Judge Chutkan will help him do that.

KURTZ: Well, that's the thing about Donald Trump. There's always another case, allegation, accusation and so forth. Andy McCarthy, thanks so much for joining us.

MCCARTHY: Thank you, Howie. Up next, who thought it was a great idea to bring Robert De Niro to the courthouse?

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: After keeping its distance from Donald Trump's criminal cases, the Biden campaign trotted out Robert De Niro outside the Manhattan courthouse.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ROBERT DE NIRO, ACTOR: Donald Trump wants to destroy not only the city, but the country, and eventually he could destroy the world. I don't mean to scare you. No, no. Wait, maybe I do mean to scare you. If Trump returns to the White House, you can kiss these freedoms goodbye.

TRUMP: Mother Teresa could not beat these charges. These charges are rigged. And then they have a protest of Robert De Niro. Yes, it is a fool. He's a broken down fool standing out there.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Tomi Lahren, and if the idea was to get media coverage, so be it. But why would the Biden campaign bring out Robert De Niro, who's cursed Trump out, who detests Donald Trump? It was a very sort of un-Biden like strategy.

LAHREN: Yeah, well, you can't really put out any Biden surrogates because they don't have the star power. So, you have to trot out a celebrity elite. But my question is, who is Robert De Niro really connecting with? Is he connecting with the independents that Leslie talked about previously? Is he connecting with the voters that Joe Biden is hemorrhaging in the black community, in the Hispanic community, in the young population?

Is 80 year old Robert De Niro, who is rich, who is abundantly wealthy, is he connecting with those people who can't afford to buy groceries or to pay their rent or mortgage or to pay off the student loans that Joe Biden hasn't already forgiven for them on our taxpayer dime? I don't think Robert De Niro is connecting with anybody. Sure, it was a great performance for the cameras. But is he convincing any of those Biden voters to come home? And I don't think so.

KURTZ: Leslie, Biden has worked so hard to keep his distance from this and other Trump trials to avoid making it look partisan. And this looked hyperpartisan.

MARSHALL: I would agree with you. I don't know whose idea it was. I did not think it was a good idea. First of all, it doesn't matter if you're a big politician left like a Bill Clinton, a Barack Obama, or if you're a big celebrity like a Robert De Niro, that does not move the needle. And we see that in election after election. And that's what we see in the exit polling data, which to me is the most accurate election after election.

Look, I didn't think it was a great idea -- we know. love Robert De Niro as an actor. I think he's a brilliant actor, but he's not a politician. We know how he feels about Donald Trump. And, you know, again, I -- to your point, Howie, I think that the President was wise to stay clear of up until this, you know, anything regarding this trial. This is a former President and is his opponent in the next general election this November of twenty twenty four.

KURTZ: Right.

MARSHALL: Like I said, I didn't think it was a good idea. And it really doesn't do anything except give us something to talk about.

KURTZ: All right. Well, I'm a little short on time, so I'll just ask Tomi. The Biden campaign says the press is obsessed with this Trump trial. I mean, how do you not covered the first criminal trial of a former President and a conviction? So, this was the only way to break through the coverage.

LAHREN: Well, guess what? The President's son is going to be on trial this week unless something recklessly happens between now and then. So, there will be plenty of cameras there. I'm sure the Fox News cameras, I hope they'll trot Robert De Niro out to talk about that trial, as well, looking forward to it.

KURTZ: Leslie, it might have been different of a top campaign aide and held the pressure. But even though De Niro was an Oscar winning actor, they would have gotten far less media attention. And I guess that was the point.

MARSHALL: Yeah, I mean, you know, he's a big name, he's a big draw. He's a New Yorker and he's somebody who is, you know, very bombastic. We like that word. I'll bring it back again, you know, in his criticism of the former President. And but he was reading from a script. So, I don't think that those who put him before the camera wanted him to, you know, be as, oh, I don't know, forthright as he spent in the past with this criticism of Donald Trump.

KURTZ: You guys have agreed on a number of things today, which I actually think is good. But you also have strong opinions. Tomi Lahren, Leslie Marshall, thanks very much for joining us. Next, we'll get reaction from the Trump and Biden campaigns.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: Joining us now, Jason Miller, senior adviser to the Trump campaign. So, Jason, whatever reasons Donald Trump has for saying the trial is rigged, the -- Judge Merchan was highly conflicted. Didn't both sides face the challenge of winning over the jury?

JASON MILLER, TRUMP CAMPAIGN SENIOR ADVISER: Well, when the playing field is so unevenly stacked, then I think President Trump has -- very much has the right to be upset with the way that this turned out. So, keep in mind that this was something that was they could have brought this seven or eight years ago.

They go and bring it now only after President Trump had announced that he's running for President. Keep in mind the SDNY had passed on this. The FEC had passed on this. The Manhattan D.A. itself had passed on this. And then they bring it back around and it magically, just magically ends up with a judge who's donated to Joe Biden.

And Howie, I was in that courthouse almost every single day during this trial. And if you were in there and you saw the way that President Trump was unconstitutionally gagged, the way he couldn't make the arguments he wanted to on things such as advice of counsel, they couldn't introduce certain pieces of evidence they wanted to. They couldn't even call some of the witnesses they wanted. You would be saying the exact same thing, that this thing was rigged.

KURTZ: But the defense could, of course, I know there's one person whose testimony was limited, but the defense could have called any witnesses they want.

MILLER: But I'm saying, no, not -- not everybody. There are certain people that we could not call. And the very direct connection on this, on why this is rigged, I can't even necessarily get into because of the unconstitutional gag order. But keep in mind, if you saw Joe Biden on Friday when he gave that press conference and he was asked if he was behind this as he walked away and he turned over his shoulder and gave that smile, that was the look of evil, Howie.

That was a look of someone who knew that they were behind this. Oh, even going back to August 2016, when Biden sat in that Oval Office and talked about the Logan Act, they launched this whole witch hunt against President Trump. Joe Biden is the one who thinks that he's above the law.

KURTZ: You -- you're accusing him of being evil based on a smile?

MILLER: I'm saying that the look on his face very much. He knew what was going on. And he -- I believe that Joe Biden thinks that this is all funny, that this is this weaponization of the legal system against a political opponent. This is the game that they play, whether it be in 2020 when they change the rules to use the media to silence the Hunter Biden laptop. When you look at what they did with spying on President Trump's campaign in 2016, Joe Biden's been behind a lot of this.

KURTZ: Well, do you think this conviction helps Donald Trump in the campaign? A quickie Reuters poll said 10 percent of Republicans are less likely to vote for Trump as a result, but 35 percent more are more likely to vote for Trump.

MILLER: I'm more optimistic about the campaign now than I ever have before. So, let's go look at the numbers for a moment. "Daily Mail" had a poll out saying that President Trump's approval ratings are up six points following this verdict. "Daily Express" had a poll out saying that more Americans were more likely to support President Trump than not. You look at the over 53 million that President Trump raised at Donald J. Trump dot com online.

A third of those, by the way, are new donors. And Howie, last night at the UFC in New Jersey, that was a hero's welcome. Walking into an arena and 15,000 people cheering for President Trump, I think that's the message of where America really is at this point.

KURTZ: Why are all these Republican leaders, Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz, Mike Johnson and others lining up behind the former President when they usually run in the other direction when someone's been convicted? And let me play just a brief snippet from Senator Rubio.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MARCO RUBIO (R), FLORIDA SENATOR: This is the quintessential show trial. This is what you see in communist countries.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: So, is Donald Trump the leader of this party or the leader of a movement?

MILLER: Both. And the reason why so many Republican leaders are solidly behind President Trump, they realize this is much bigger than even about President Trump, because they're willing to do this to him. They'll do it to any of us. Anyone who's willing to challenge Washington, to challenge the deep state, challenge the traditional norms, you're in the crosshairs. They're going to come after you.

And lost in all of this, Howie, is the fact that you don't hear anything about inflation, about immigration, the killing that's happening overseas. Americans are ticked off. And when you have upwards of three quarters of the country think that we're going in the wrong direction and they see Biden, his campaign directly, they see the legal system targeting a political opponent.

And they're going to say, hey, we're worried about gas versus groceries. Do something about that. Do some of the 15 million illegals who have come into the country during Joe Biden's watch. Don't go and target a political opponent.

KURTZ: Well, has the courthouse become the campaign? Because I notice more and more when the former President comes out rather than just attack the judge, the trial, Alvin Bragg and so forth, they -- he gets in whatever is in the news that day. He's talked about immigration. He's talked about inflation. So, it seems like he's well aware that it can only be about this trial.

MILLER: No, and I think that shows that President Trump really has his eye on the ball when we think about November 5th and what people are concerned about. And over this six week sham trial, the fact that President Trump continually hit on those issues, I think was part of the reason why the base and the Republican Party and independents have stayed with him in such a strong fashion.

Because if we're going to be kept off of the campaign trail, we're going to bring the campaign trail to us. And we did that both in the hallways. We did the outside with allies who are coming into town, continually reminding people, this is what you're concerned about. This is what matters in the country. Biden and the media, they don't want to go and talk about this. But we are going to talk about this because this is hurting every American.

KURTZ: With the sentencing set for July 11th, which is just a few days, as you know, before the Republican convention. Won't that be a major distraction?

MILLER: Well, no such thing as conspiracies, but also no such thing as coincidences. Literally four days before the Republican convention starts and one week before President Trump formally accepts the Republican nomination. I think seeing the way that the numbers have gone up for President Trump, that any adverse ruling from that, I think would basically they may, as well, just skip the rest of the election and send President Trump right to Washington.

I think the Oval Office is the only place that he's going, but I have full confidence in our legal team to get that done. And one other point how I'd be remiss if I didn't mention this when you brought up numbers a moment ago. Why were there no major Sunday shows with head to head ballot test polling numbers out today? Think about that. All of the marketplace competitors, the other broadcast and cable stations, nobody had head to head ballot test numbers. The reason, they know President Trump's numbers are going up.

KURTZ: Well, you seem confident, especially given the situation. Jason Miller, thanks very much for joining us.

MILER: Thank you, Sir.

KURTZ: Next, reaction from the Biden campaign, fair and balanced.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: Joining us now, Michael Tyler, the Biden presidential campaign's communications director. Thanks for coming in.

MICHAEL TYLER, BIDEN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR: Thank you for having me.

KURTZ: And are you and the president trying to strike a balance between having the President speak out forcefully about the 34 criminal charges and not appearing to be too aggressive?

TYLER: Well, listen, I think on Friday you heard the President be very direct about the need for us to stand up and respect the rule of law. Frankly, I think there's only one candidate right now who is doing that. If you watch what Donald Trump did in New York with his unhinged rant after the verdict came down, he's attacking the judge, attacking the jury, undermining the judicial system in very much the same way that he's attempted to undermine our democratic institutions, right? None so more than what we saw in January 6th.

And so, this campaign is going to make sure that the American people understand that fundamental contrast in this race moving forward, that there's one candidate standing up for the rule of law, standing up for our democratic institutions, defending our Constitution, defending our democracy. And that's Joe Biden.

KURTZ: Let me play for our audience what the President actually said after the conviction.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, U.S. PRESIDENT: It's reckless. It's dangerous. It's irresponsible for anyone to say this was rigged just because they don't like the verdict.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: That's the strongest thing I've seen the President say about Donald Trump on camera. He often does it at fundraisers where there's no video. But how do we get to a situation where each candidate is blaming the other as a threat to democracy and the country and the press are so deeply and passionately divided? Does that damage our society?

TYLER: Well, it's certainly true that the stakes are incredibly high -- this go-around. This is going to be the first presidential election since the horror that we saw on January 6th, when a violent mob tried to overthrow the results of a free and fair election at the urging of Donald Trump. And so, those are the fundamental stakes. And that's what this campaign, what the President are going to make clear moving forward, right?

If we are going to continue to live in a democracy, what George Washington referred to as the sacred cause of our democracy, then there's no option but to vote for Joe Biden because everything, frankly, is on the line. And Donald Trump, you have somebody who is not only attacking the judge, the jury, the judicial institution, but this is a man who out on the stump when he does step out onto the stump and leaves Mar-a-Lago is talking about ruling as a dictator on day one. If he's able to regain power.

Meanwhile, he's calling for a bloodbath if he loses the election. Like those are the fundamental stakes. This is not a normal election. Donald Trump has already demonstrated that he's not a normal candidate. He is a fundamental, persistent and growing threat to our democracy. And Joe Biden is running to make sure that we end that threat once and for all.

KURTZ: Well, obviously, the loyal MAGA movement would view this very differently. You know, Michael, abortion has faded a bit -- quite a bit from the front pages. Do you think it'll still be a significant issue in the campaign?

TYLER: Oh, absolutely. Abortion is going to be a significant issue in this campaign. You continue to see the harm that Donald Trump caused by over to appointing the justices who overturn Roe v. Wade. You see that play out every single day right now in states like Alabama, where we had the threat to even contraceptive care on the line now.

So, I think women across this country understand that if their fundamental rights are going to be restored, where you can get the health care that you deserve and that you need, that you're entitled to as an American in this country. Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are going to be the ones who do that in the second term when we restore Roe.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump, when he is out on the stump, is not only bragging about the role that he played in overturning Roe v. Wade. He's saying that these extreme state level abortion bans are playing up brilliantly. I don't think the vast majority of American women think that these are playing out brilliantly right now.

And so, that is going to be absolutely fundamentally important. There are a number of abortion ballot initiatives in states across the country that should drive turnout. And this campaign is going to make sure that voters know that this is on the ballot box in November. We're confident when the American people understand that, when they take that to the ballot box with them, along with everything else they're going to be voting on. Again, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are going to be the only option.

KURTZ: Do the media have a gaffe patrol for President Biden making too much every time he stumbles or about his age or he confuses Egypt and Mexico? And does that hurt your campaign? Because I can tell you, having covered him since the 1980s, he was known for gaffes 20 years ago. I mean, he would be the first to say that.

TYLER: Yeah, I think this campaign is under no false illusion that the media is going to do our jobs for us. That's why this campaign has relentlessly been communicating the stakes across a number of platforms. And the President himself communicating the stakes across a number of platforms, not just doing news conferences, but actually sitting down and doing local interviews, going to -- going to local communities, right?

When we go to places like Philadelphia, not just doing like a speech, but actually sitting down at a kitchen table with the family to talk directly about the stakes, making sure that we're using all the digital platforms so that we can circumnavigate the news media bubble and go directly to the voters who are going to decide the pathway to 270 electoral votes.

The American people know that they have a fighter in Joe Biden who's been waking up every single day, fighting for their freedoms, their democracy, an economy that works for them. And they see every day, whether it's outside the Manhattan courthouse or down in Mar-a-Lago or on Truth Social or wherever else he's spouting off into a MAGA echo chamber that Donald Trump is not fighting for them. He's fighting for himself. I think that's very clear. We saw that play out this week.

KURTZ: So, the President goes around the country touting funding under the infrastructure law that he'll pass or the CHIPS law, which he has every right to do, which every President does. But it feels to me sort of like looking backwards.

Or he's going to give a speech in a couple of days about the Middle East. Few topics are more important or doing outreach to black voters. But I guarantee you a week from now, Trump will still be the top story. And doesn't that media environment make your job and the President's job more difficult?

TYLER: There's no doubt that we live in an incredibly fractured and fragmented media environment, even more so than it was in 2020. And so, this campaign understands that it has to use every single tool at its disposal to reach the voters who are going to decide this election. So, that means, things like running traditional paid media advertisements.

But it also means what we're doing right now over the course of the summer, scaling up our organizing apparatus. We've got over 200 field offices opened up across all the battleground states. That's when people are going to JoeBiden.com and chipping in. That's what their money is going towards, building the grassroots army that is going to take on Donald Trump in the fall.

I do think that stands in stark contrast to Donald Trump's fundraising, which in large part pays for 50 million dollars in legal fees for a convicted felon at this point. And so,, this campaign understands the media environment in which we have to operate and the tools that we need to use to relentlessly communicate with the voters who are going to decide the pathway to 270 electoral votes.

KURTZ: It just seems that whether it's a criminal trial or civil case or whatever, I'm sure ratings might have something to do with this. I mean, the press can't come off this Trump's story. I mean, he also is very good at making himself the story. But what the President is doing, because he's the incumbent, is governing.

TYLER: Right.

KURTZ: But I've seen announcements and, you know, he's been giving speeches around the country. But it must be frustrating, given how close this race is. You know, this is a tight race.

TYLER: Oh, it's absolutely a tight race. It's going to remain tight all the way until November. As all modern, you know, presidential elections are at this point. And so, from our perspective, that means the work that the campaign is doing and that the President is doing to directly engage with the voters matters that much more.

We have an incredibly calcified, polarized electorate. We have a media environment, as you know, which is incredibly fractured and fragmented. There's a lot of noise. And we have a candidate who we're running against in Donald Trump who, yeah, does take up a lot of media oxygen. I think you saw that throughout his criminal trial, where you had footage of security guards standing outside the courthouse for hours and hours on end.

And so, this campaign understands that it has to go around that sort of media environment or inject yourself into it in a creative way, which you were talking about earlier. But this campaign knows that you have to use every tool and that the President -- we're not going to be obsessed with Donald Trump. He's obsessed with himself.

But what we are obsessed on is making sure that the American people understand that they have a fighter in Joe Biden who's looking out for their own personal self-interest, who is fighting for an economy that works for them, who is defending and protecting our democracy and our fundamental rights and freedoms like abortion access, as you mentioned. And so, we're going to use every tool that we have to get around this crazy media environment that we know we're all operating in.

KURTZ: Well, we are out of time, but really appreciate you coming in and hope we'll do it again.

TYLER: Absolutely. Thanks for having me.

KURTZ: Okay. Next, more reaction from Philippe Reines.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: Joining us now, Philippe Reines, an assistant secretary of state under Hillary Clinton. Are you happy about this Trump conviction? Have you waited eight years to see this happen?

PHILIPPE REINES, FORMER DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS: I don't think it's simple as that. I am happy to see that when people do something wrong and they are caught for it, that they are punished for it because he has done multiple things wrong over multiple years. And whether it's good luck or whatever it happens to be, he skates for it.

KURTZ: So, isn't that cause for celebration?

REINES: I mean, it's not celebration, but it's justice. And I, you know, I have a lot of friends, Democrats who over the last weeks and months have done "this might help him" and "he's going to raise more-money" and all that. It's not going to do any good.

I've been surprised about the numbers, the polling since the verdict. A lot of people, including Republicans, including independents, seem to be taking this very seriously. So it's not about Democrats celebrating. It's about people.

This seems to be something that the polling during the primaries was correct about, that they were worried about all four of these cases and is coming to fruition. Now, what comes of it? Who knows? Because in the end, he does seem to be rather lucky. But this is a factor that people are allowed to factor in.

KURTZ: Do you have any doubt that most journalists are at least pleased with this? You know, there was laughing at the anti-Trump jabs in the media room in New York. And is there a danger here of spiking the football? Because now, some Democrats are telling the Biden campaign, you need to keep talking about this.

REINES: I got to tell you, I do. And that's not just a reflex as a Democrat. I worked for Hillary Clinton. I know that makes a lot of people wince. The reason I say that is because my experience with media is not that they're liberal media, because the press does not give Bill or Hillary Clinton an easy pass on anything.

So, I don't know what specific reporters political bent is. I can guess sometimes. I can guess not. In hindsight, there are a lot of reporters that I didn't think were Republican or conservative that have turned out to be. But I think reporters do what's best for number one in the end. I don't think they're laughing about Donald Trump because you know what? Every -- let's look at the verdict. You had both Fox and MSNBC record numbers.

KURTZ: Yes.

REINES: That is good. So, on the one hand, you can't say that MSNBC and liberal media are happy about this at the same time, say that they're making profits off of it. There is a real incentive for Donald Trump to be in the White House again.

So, yes, on an individual level, when someone goes home and they've got kids and they don't want their kids to grow up in a world where they think Donald Trump is ruining things, that's different when they go to work and they see that Donald Trump is good fodder.

I know that's confusing. It sounds maybe not right, but it is true. I mean, you've seen it. I saw it for 15 years. Reporters and media outlets do what is best for their companies, irrespective of their own political ideology.

KURTZ: "Politico" says, as you know, that Democratic leaders are privately freaking out, but not publicly, that Biden may not be able to win a second term. And if I just landed here from Mars, I would say, how can the incumbent president not easily be the guy who was just convicted of 34 felonies? But it's a tight race.

REINES: It's a tight race because I -- look. I don't want it to be tight. I can ask the same questions. My best guess at it is that there is a throw the bums out kind of dementia -- dementia, kind of dimension that has been going on since 2010 with the Tea Party. And if you look at every race since then, someone in power, whether it's been the president or it's been the House or the Senate, has suffered for it and has been tossed out.

Now, in this case, you have this weird situation where the bums are the guy who threw out the last bums. And somehow, Donald Trump is representing a newness, which was actually an oldness. I mean, we haven't had this situation in, I think, 134 years. We haven't had a former president trying to regain the office.

So, the idea that this guy who's not even looking forward. I mean, look at his speech on -- on Friday. He's talking about all the people he wants to get revenge on. That's hardly I mean, he doesn't talk about how he's going to lower inflation. I understand why people are upset with Joe Biden for inflation, but he doesn't. Donald Trump doesn't sit around saying, here's my four-part plan on lowering inflation. So, I see what his intention --

KURTZ: He does occasionally ---he does occasionally, but --

REINES: Occasionally, but he should be doing it every day, all day.

KURTZ: Yeah. But at the same time --

REINES: People are unhappy. People are happy with our ***politics***. I'm unhappy with our ***politics***. I'm not going to show that by voting for Donald Trump. I'm not going to show that by voting for RFK.

KURTZ: Throwing thumbs out is not a pleasant environment --

REINES: It's not.

KURTZ: -- when you are the incumbent. Philippe Reines, it's always good to talk to you.

REINES: Thank you, Howie.

KURTZ: And that's it for this edition of "Media Buzz". I'm Howard Kurtz. We'll see you back here next Sunday.

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