

# [***Growing Chorus Of Left-Wing Commentators Believe Biden Is Too Old To Run For A Second Term; President Biden Announces New Sanctions On Russia; Donald Trump Relates The Death Of Navalny To His Legal Trials; "Hotel California" And Other Big Hits By The Eagles Are The Subject Of A New York Trial***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BDR-1T71-JCS1-62N4-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

HOWARD KURTZ, FOX HOST: There is a growing chorus of left-wing commentators who are fans of Joe Biden, think he's been a good President, but simply believe he's too old to run for a second term. We'll have more on that coming up.

The network's called the South Carolina race after a big media build-up within seconds last night as Donald Trump won a landslide 60 percent of the vote on Nikki Haley's home turf.

It's just embarrassing to lose by that kind of margin where you were governor. There's no other way to view this other than a huge setback for her struggling candidacy. This time the former President came out first.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Now, there's a spirit that I have never seen. We ran two great races, but there's never been, ever, there's never been a spirit like this.

NIKKI HALEY, REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: We need to beat Joe Biden in November. I don't believe Donald Trump can beat Joe Biden.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Haley had already served notice that she was staying in the race.

HALEY: Many of the same politicians who now publicly embrace Trump, privately dread him. They know what a disaster he's been. I feel no need to kiss the ring.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: But the most unusual moment was when she spoke about her husband. Trump had vaguely taunted her about his absence. He's a National Guardsman serving a one-year deployment overseas.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HALEY: I wish Michael was here today and I wish our children and I could see him tonight, but we can't. He's serving on the other side of the world where conflict is the norm.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: That emotional response repeatedly replayed on television was striking because Haley is usually so scripted and disciplined, but it was too late to make a difference, a point that Trump had driven home.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: You're not supposed to lose your home state. Shouldn't happen anyway, and she's losing it big -- big.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Nikki Haley, the last woman standing, can keep on running, but the media will write her off losing her last real shot at stopping the coronation. I'm Howard Kurtz, and this is "Media Buzz".

Joining us now to analyze the coverage, Mollie Hemingway, editor-in-chief of "The Federalist" and Richard Fowler, radio talk show host. Both are Fox News contributors.

I'm tempted to say, Mollie, what are we going to do for the next nine months? But look, Trump wins Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, and now South Carolina. Can the media now basically declare the Republican race over?

MOLLIE HEMINGWAY, FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: Well, the Republican race has been over for a fairly long period of time. This was a particularly humiliating loss for Nikki Haley in that she used to be the governor of South Carolina, but it's a free country. She's allowed to run. Nobody believes that she will win the nomination. She knows she's not winning the nomination.

So, as she continues running, I think the media should focus more on what her motivation is. We know a lot of Democrats are supporting her, both financially and just in oral arguments. But why is she running? Is it just to hurt Trump, or is there something else involved?

KURTZ: Well, you anticipate my question for Richard, which is, by the way, "New York Times" news story today did call it a coronation, which I had put in, you know, semi-facetiously. That's the question that news outlets keep asking on the air, in print, online, and asking the candidate, why is Nikki Haley still in this race?

RICHARD FOWLER, "THE RICHARD FOWLER SHOW" HOST: Well, I think it is the right question to ask. And I think it's also worth looking at last night's numbers to get some takeaways of what is the Nikki Haley path, understanding that, to Mollie's point, she's very unlikely to win the presidential nomination for the GOP.

Here's what you see. And every time that she's ran, she's gotten about 40 percent of the vote. Our recent Fox News voter analysis said that 59 percent of the people who voted for Nikki Haley last night would not vote for Donald Trump in a Donald Trump potential re-election, as he sort of serves as this quasi-Republican incumbent.

KURTZ: So, she's the spokeswoman for that wing?

FOWLER: Yeah. Well, that, and I think it presents a problem for the Trump campaign. Because what you've seen over the past, I would say, since the beginning of this presidential cycle, is Trump hasn't done much to expand his base, right?

How do I get more voters in? How do I make up the seven million voter gap that I lost to in 2020? And if he's not expanding his base, and there's more and more Republicans saying, 59 percent of Nikki Haley voters saying, hey, I'll not vote for this guy if he's on the general election ballot, this presents a problem for him.

And while he might create the best new sneaker and thinks that's going to appease African American voters, the truth of the matter is, in rhetoric and in policy, he's failing when it comes to expanding the voter base.

KURTZ: Well, the sneakers are selling like hotcakes. I'm sure you want to respond to that. But let me add this question, which is, there is a "New York Times" piece just the other day saying that Haley is hanging around in case Trump keels over or is convicted in one of these criminal cases.

And the exit polls from South Carolina, similar to other states, say about a third of those said they would not support the former President if he's convicted. But there's a lot of ifs in there.

HEMINGWAY: Yeah, there's so much in there. Nikki Haley is not going to be the Republican nominee. There's just no way she's going to be the Republican nominee. So, people do need to think, what exactly is going on here? Why is she running? Why are Democrats so supportive of it?

I think that while there has been some openness to someone other than Donald Trump, the more she continues this campaign, the more it will sour her with Republican voters, which is not good for her in the long-term.

But the Democrat Party, you know, they've got a very weak candidate. Most people don't want Joe Biden to be President. They don't want him to be the nominee. But they kind of closed ranks.

KURTZ: Even among Democrats.

HEMINGWAY: Among Democrats.

KURTZ: Yeah.

HEMINGWAY: But they closed ranks and they're having a tight, they're having a closed primary and they're not allowing debates or anything like that. The Republican Party should probably think about this.

Does it want to win? Does it want to move on to the general election? Joe Biden's already there. Or do they want to continue this?

KURTZ: Well, as Haley has increasingly sharpened her criticism of the former President, for a long time, she was pretty mild and didn't want to alienate the MAGA base. But when she's saying things like he's unhinged and he brings chaos and he's in love with Putin, all amplified by the media, by the way, has she in fact alienated Republicans to the point where her future in the party is, to put it diplomatically, rather limited?

FOWLER: Well, I think we've got to be honest. And this is where I actually agree with Mollie. I do think to some extent that the former ambassador might be on some sort of kamikaze mission, right?

Understanding that I likely will not run again. This is the end of it for me. But in this moment, I'm going to do everything in my power to call out the problems that I have with the former president, Donald Trump.

And like I said before, I think where she might have a little bit of runway to do something like that is that you haven't seen from the former president is an expansion of his base. How do you make up that seven million vote delta that Joe Biden had in the past election?

How do you talk to voters that aren't with you? How do you talk to voters who voted for you in 2020, saw January 6th and decided that you are no longer the person that they're going to vote for? All of these things set up a world in which, yes, there's issues with Joe Biden, but there's also issues with Donald Trump.

KURTZ: Well, one way you do it is by talking to the media a lot. And the former president, even when he was in office, always talked to the media, even when he was angry at the media or using the media as a punching bag.

HEMINGWAY: Right. And, you know, we talk about how Joe Biden did in 2020 election, but leading up to the 2020 election, Joe Biden was winning in national polls by 10, 11, 12 percent. Now he's down by those numbers. I mean, he's down significantly.

So, we're dealing with a very different situation and a very unique situation in that you have people in America being able to compare what life was like under a Trump presidency and what life has been like under a Biden presidency. And that fully explains why so many people are supporting Trump over Biden.

KURTZ: You know, it is the oddest election, I think, that I've ever covered in that. I don't think any non-incumbent has swept the first four contests on the Republican side. So, all of the media geniuses who said, you know, Trump was very vulnerable and somebody was going to knock him off.

And if only we could just get one candidate against Donald Trump, they all turned out to be wrong. Remember the whole, well, he's not debating and Republican voters are going to punish him for that. No, he had a huge lead and it turned out to be okay.

But let me have you take a step back, Mollie, and I'll come to Richard. How does a man who many Republican leaders castigated after the events of January 6th, was condemned by the media, and how does he bounce back to the point where he not only is winning the nomination or virtually has it won, but it's clobbering everybody else who was in the field?

HEMINGWAY: Yeah, hatred by the media of Donald Trump and hatred of Donald Trump even by the Republican establishment has always been something of a feature, not a bug for Donald Trump. So, the fact that people feel that way about him does not hurt him with the American voters.

Americans do very much feel like the country is broken. They look around and they see the border is broken. Foreign policy is broken. The economy is broken. The crime in American cities is broken. And when they look out at the political landscape, they see a lot of status quo.

And that could be Joe Biden or Nikki Haley. But they see really very few people who are looking at tackling these issues in a different manner. And they already saw how he handled those things differently in his first term.

KURTZ: Well, Biden could certainly argue that the economy is getting better. And of course, that's always subject to dispute. But the border, I mean, no debate on that whatsoever.

So, Richard, have the media underestimated Donald Trump throughout this long campaign from the four indictments to the civil fraud suit, to the NATO controversy, most of which wound up helping him?

FOWLER: Look, I think it depends on who you're talking to. And I don't think the American voters and the American people are a monolith, right? I think it depends on what swath of Americans you're talking to.

And don't get me wrong. I think while you do see the President doing well amongst his base, while you do see the president sort of reshaping and owning the Republican Party, which at this point it's obvious that he does, the problem that the President really runs into is how do I appease independence?

How do I appease new voters to come over to my camp and think that I'm the best candidate, right? And every poll says there's this big swath of voters moving over to the President. So, the poll that I think matters the most is how people vote in elections.

KURTZ: But you said earlier that --

FOWLER: Wait, wait, wait a minute.

KURTZ: I'll let you finish. But you said earlier that Trump was not making much effort to win.

FOWLER: No, he's not. And I think a great example of this is the past election in Ohio where reproductive health was on the ballot. What we found was this. The number one demographic to vote to protect a woman's right to choose was not women.

It was actually black men. Black men voted to protect a woman's right to choose in Ohio more so than any other subgroup. This is a group that the Trump campaign thinks that they're wooing over.

How could you woo them over when the President's positioning on this is the opposite of where these voters stand?

HEMINGWAY: Well, you know, Howard University just did a poll that showed that Donald Trump's support among black men has tripled.

FOWLER: That's illusionary, Mollie.

HEMINGWAY: Well, you can take it up with Howard University. Take it up with Howard University.

KURTZ: Let her finish and I'll let you respond.

HEMINGWAY: Take it up with Howard University. And also we just see in all of the national polls, people are extremely dissatisfied with the Biden administration and how it's handling these major problems. And you can, you know, you can just, I agree with you, it'll all come down to the polls, but we're definitely seeing some changes.

KURTZ: Very briefly.

HEMINGWAY: And the only reason why I say it's illusionary is because a poll is a snapshot in time. Every time that black men have had a chance to go out to vote in 2016, they voted higher for Trump than they voted for him in 2020. So, the idea that in this election, they're now going to flip and vote higher than they voted in 2016 or in 2020, I think is illusionary based on how they voted previously and based on how they voted in Ohio.

KURTZ: All right. Well, unlike last time, excuse me, Donald Trump didn't criticize Nikki Haley. He didn't mention her. When we come back, the coverage of Jim Biden, the President's brother, called to testify how he made big bucks based on the family name.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: There is no question that the President's brother, Jim Biden, made lots of money by trading on his last name. As "Politico" reports, Jim Biden wrote to a Florida hospital chain called AmeriCorps in 2017 that he wanted to help obtain some healthcare business, saying this would be a perfect platform to expose my brother's team to your protocols -- brother being the former Vice President at the time.

Jim Biden gave a closed door deposition before a House Committee the other day, saying in an opening statement leaked in advance to "The New York Times", I have had a 50 year career in a variety of business ventures. Joe Biden has never had any involvement or any direct or indirect financial interest in those activities. None."

Now, when AmeriCorps paid Jim Biden $200,000, he turned around and wrote a check to Joe insisting he was repaying a personal loan. AmeriCorps collapsed. The DOJ is investigating major allegations of Medicare fraud.

So, Mollie, these are serious allegations. A lot of money was involved. There's no question that if his last name was something else, Jim Biden wouldn't have gotten this business. But also, when he says it was just repayment of a personal loan, $200,000, does that -- do you question that?

HEMINGWAY: Well, he was unable to provide any evidence that there was a loan or that there was interest paid. He said there was no documentation for this. He had a bunch of problems with his testimony.

So you had what he was what leaked to "The New York Times". But then, you know, where he said there's never been any involvement in different things. He -- he was confronted with a claim.

He'd said that he had never done this one particular business deal with Hunter Biden --

KURTZ: Yes.

HEMINGWAY: -- and Tony Bobulinski. And then when they showed the paperwork with him signing off on it, he was like, oh, I don't remember. There's also -- also the issue where the communist Chinese company gave diamonds to Hunter Biden. And he said he gave one to to James Biden. And James Biden says he threw it away. I mean, this was kind of a disastrous testimony.

KURTZ: Okay. Of course, Richard, this is the problem with closed door testimony as we get selective leaks without challenging the fact that he did change his accounts, that he hadn't had this deal with the Chinese company and Hunter and his partners. What do you make of the President's brother leaking that statement in advance to "The New York Times" and rather than even coming out and making a short statement for the cameras?

FOWLER: Let's zoom out a little bit here, right, Howie. Let's have a conversation. It should be a long documentary that some media outlet should do around the nepotism that happens in Washington, D.C. and the nepotism that happens in every industry.

KURTZ: I've covered a lot of presidential relatives.

FOWLER: Right. So, there's no -- there's no difference here, right? That you see people taking advantage of somebody's last name to benefit. Now, the question and I think the problem that it presents for both why this is what is more closed door testimony than open blockbuster hearings in all of these particular cases is because there doesn't seem to be any clear, connected evidence between this and the President of the United States since 2018 when the Senate was investigating this to now that the Republicans are investigating this.

We are nine months out from the presidential election and there's less than any bombshell evidence that gets you to a blockbuster hearing or potential filings of impeachment articles that could stand the disinfectant of a courtroom. And that here -- and that's what lies for the Oversight Committee, as well, as the Judiciary Committee.

They come on air over and over and over again. They continue to make these allegations and there doesn't seem to be any not clear clear evidence to subpoena somebody or for them to actually put this impeachment documents forward. And that's the problem for them as it approaches the President.

KURTZ: Well, when you say there's no clear evidence, I mean, that's why you have investigations.

FOWLER: That's what you're open to hear.

KURTZ: There certainly are unanswered questions, Mollie. And do you think also that this warrants more news coverage?

HEMINGWAY: Oh, it's fantastically interesting stuff to have the Biden family business be under investigation. And it's something that would be great if the media itself were investigating rather than working to run interference, which is usually what we see.

But there is another problem other than just impeachment proceedings for Joe Biden, which is the American people understand that the Biden family benefited in really weird financial deals on the back of Joe Biden.

And so, they can claim that he had nothing to do with it. But you have all this evidence of people saying, yes, they were put on the phone with him. Yes, they did meetings with him.

You have text messages. You still have the -- nobody's ever explained what 10 percent for the big guy would mean if it weren't for Joe Biden. And that kind of thing, everyone just understands that this is a family that has gained tremendous amount financially with no explanation for why they have benefited so much financially.

KURTZ: Yeah. But the key question remains, did Joe Biden himself benefit or just acquiesce in or allow because they've moved the goalposts a little bit, saying he had no involvement in any financial dealings involving Hunter and I guess now his brother.

But at the same time, you know, he certainly didn't have -- we don't know of anything other than of any substantive conversations. But we do know that he had the lunches and so forth.

HEMINGWAY: Howie, I do think when your children are benefiting --

KURTZ: Yeah.

HEMINWAY: -- financially from that, that is a benefit to you. And you also have these checks that are written to Joe Biden and you have no evidence to support the claim that they were mere loan repayments.

KURTZ: Richard, given the complexity of these matters, is this breaking through to average voters?

FOWLER: Look, I think once again, like I said last segment, the American people aren't a monolith. I think there's a lot of Americans understand that Joe Hunter Biden is not a Boy Scout. We could all go further and say the president's brother is not a Boy Scout.

But once again, we also know that they're -- everybody in their family have a lot of boy scouts, doesn't mean that everybody in the family aren't boy scouts. And I think therein lies the problem. You can say that this is a bad actor.

It's true. But they're also good actors in this family. And one of those actors in this moment, until evidence proves otherwise, is the sitting President of the United States.

HEMINGWAY: Now, there's another problem here --

KURTZ: Very briefly.

HEMINGWAY: -- which is that it's not just about the Biden family business, but it's also about the Department of Justice and how they seem to be running interference for Joe Biden and have been doing that for years, even after they ran the Russia collusion hoax, which did so much damage to President.

FOWLER: Mollie, it sounds like a lot of whataboutism to me, because until you can actually prove finite evidence that connects the president to this, this is just another witch hunt put on by the Republicans.

KURTZ: I got to call -- I got to a time out here. Not a boy scout is an interesting term for defense. Richard Fowler, Mollie Hemingway --

HEMINGWAY: Thank you.

KURTZ: -- thanks so much for joining us. Ahead, why big name liberal pundits are pleading with Joe Biden to step aside. But first, the media debate over the President sanctioning Russia for the killing of Alexei Navalny.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: President Biden, having told reporters he'd unveil a major package of sanctions against Russia over the murder of Alexei Navalny, made the announcement Friday.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, U.S. PRESIDENT: Putin is responsible for Alexei's death.

DAVID SANGER, CNN POLITICAL AND NATIONAL SECURITY ANALYST: These sanctions frequently make governments feel good because they're added incrementally. But it's not clear that it's changing life for the Russians as much as we'd like to advertise.

JACK KEANE, RETIRED GENERAL, FOX NEWS SENIOR STRATEGIC ANALYST: The best way to accomplish that and avenge Navalny's death is to push Putin back out of Ukraine, have him lose the war.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Joining us now, Griff Jenkins, the Fox News correspondent and anchor. And Griff, was it inevitable when Joe Biden announced these sanctions that most of the media would say that they were minor or inadequate?

GRIFF JENKINS, FOX NEWS NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT: Yes, I think so, because sanctions simply aren't working. And it's not just this administration. They're very difficult and it's a very complicated thing. The Treasury Department, Howie, has this Office of Foreign Assets Control, and that's where they put these sanctions.

And so the administration is telling us, you know, this is the steepest package of sanctions, 500 targets. They've actually got about 4000. And I give them credit for it. But as General Keane rightfully points out, at the end of the day, the point of the sanctions is to make Putin feel pain and to stop his war machine.

But as Keane points out, Russia grew their economy this past year by three percent and their GDP defense spending is at nine percent, twice what the U.S. spends.

KURTZ: Right. Our colleague Brett Baier spoke to Volodymyr Zelensky in Ukraine. And let's take a brief look.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY, UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT: Sam Jones shouted that. So will Ukrainians survive without Congress support? Of course. But not all of us.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: I found that very chilling. And obviously the Ukrainians are in a hole right now and running short on ammunition. But at the same time, as you point out, the sanctions by -- because other countries are helping Russia and Putin to circumvent them. How much more could Biden have done? He's already done a lot of sanctions.

JENKINS: Well, that's right. And you put your finger on it, Howie. And this is the most important part of this story. And that is no matter how stiff or how large a package of sanctions is on any country in this case, Russia, when you have willing participants like China, India and Brazil circumventing these sanctions, buying cheap oil in record amounts from Russia, they're going to continue to prop up Russia's economy.

And ultimately, Russia and Putin's ability to wage war in Ukraine at a critical moment, when you put the pieces together, the American U.S. military aid is stalled and it is no indication that Congress is going to get off the bench and come to the rescue --

KURTZ: Yeah, to wage a brutal war that he started without provocation. Now, you're at the border a lot. Why would the President and his team leak to "The New York Times" that he may crack down on asylum requests, quickly deport people who don't meet the new standards after months of insisting that he doesn't have the power to do that?

JENKINS: Because almost every poll out there among Democrats and all voters show that 70 -- 75 percent of Americans say that Biden owns this crisis. You're even seeing the language change in the White House crisis.

What's fascinating, Howie, and what I'm going to be watching for is this is a real watershed opportunity for Joe Biden to do it through executive orders even more than what Trump did.

If you bring back Remain in Mexico, if you use a kind of nuanced section of the Immigration Naturalization Act called 212F, which is what Trump used essentially for the travel ban to deny asylum for those who even still come across, that would do a lot.

And Biden, probably, the big question is, does he have time? If he does these things, let's say next week, will it crack down on the crossings and stop clamp down on -- on the crisis? Who knows?

KURTZ: Well, I would say just do it. Don't leak it. But the thing I think is that he's gauging the extent of liberal backlash. Many of his progressive supporters are not going to like this. But Griff Jenkins, always great to have you on. Thank you.

Next on "Media Buzz", more calls for Joe Biden to step aside. And they're coming from media liberals.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: Joe Biden's been a good President, say pundits on the left. But after the Special Counsel's report saying he has a poor memory, even some of his fiercest supporters argue he's too old to run for a second term. "New York Times" podcaster Ezra Klein says the President should go to the August convention and then bow out, letting the delegates pick his replacement.

(BEGIN AUDIO CLIP)

EZRA KLEIN, "THE EZRA KLEIN SHOW" PODCAST: He does not want to risk being Ruth Bader Ginsburg. To say this is a media invention, that people are worried about Biden's age because the media keeps telling them to be worried about Biden's age. This is not a thing people need the media to see. So, yes, I think Biden, as painful as this is, should find his way to stepping down as a hero.

(END AUDIO CLIP)

KURTZ: Data Guru Nate Silver says it's legitimate to view Biden's age as disqualifying.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEAN HANNITY, "HANNITY" HOST: You have 538 Nate Silver. He wrote a pretty scathing piece about the Biden campaign yesterday, saying in part, quote, " -- he's losing now and there's no plan to fix the problems other than hoping that the polls are wrong."

TREY GOWDY, FORMER SOUTH CAROLINA REPRESENTATIVE: I think the smart money is that Biden does not run in November. That's where I place my bet.

MICHAEL SMERCONISH, "SMERCONISH" HOST: Look at these recent headlines. Can Democrats replace Joe Biden? After Hur's Biden age comments, could any Democrats really take his place? Could Democrats replace Biden as their nominee? Democrats might need a Plan B."

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Others aren't buying the Joe must go stampede.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE SCARBOROUGH, "MORNING JOE" CO-HOST: I've spent a good bit of time talking to Joe Biden one on one on the phone throughout the presidency. I can tell you he is -- he's more together on foreign policy. If you sit and talk to him than anybody else I've talked to.

MIKA BREZEZINSKI, MORNING JOE" CO-HOST: Is he --

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Joining us now in New York, Caroline Downey, a reporter for "National Review" and in Phoenix, Lucy Caldwell, an advisor to Renew America. Caroline, these are not media right wingers, I emphasize, trying to paint a portrait of a confused and -- old man. These are liberal pundits who say, oh, this is so agonizing. But hey, Biden will be 86 at the end of a second term and he should not run again.

CAROLINE DOWNEY, "NATIONAL REVIEW" REPORTER: Howie, thanks for having me back. Like you said, legacy media is torn between feeling uneasy about Biden's age and trying to deflect from it.

"The New York Times" has flooded the news cycle with stories about Biden's frailty. "The Atlantic" said Biden looks more like a statue of himself than alive. "NPR" said Biden's age is his biggest vulnerability.

But there's other media that's really mad that this issue is now top of mind for voters. "Mother Jones" said Biden's age has become a sensationalized black hole that's distracting from Trump's alleged threat to democracy. So, I think these mainstream publications see the delicate tightrope that Democrats are walking with this.

KURTZ: A statue of himself. Ouch, that hurts. Lucy, maybe these liberal pundits are right, maybe they're wrong, but they're not so hidden concern. A lot of them bring up the fact that he pepped the Super Bowl and it was evidence that he's not running a, quote, "normal campaign". Their real concern is that Biden won't be able to beat Donald Trump.

LUCY CALDWELL, POLITICAL STRATEGIST: Well, yes, we've talked about the Super Bowl issue before. And yes, of course, this is a question of fitness in the general election and whether or not he will beat Donald Trump. But I would say with no disrespect to someone like Ezra Klein, this, I think, is a matter of media prognostication without sort of the reality that political operatives are thinking about when they think about what would it take to replace Joe Biden.

We are where we are. Joe Biden is going to be the Democratic nominee. People like Ezra Klein are saying things like, oh, we should instead just re-choose all of the delegates.

Do you know how absurd that is and how ridiculous it is to suggest that we would now shift gears and that there would be a basically a shadow election to re-select delegates, the thousands of delegates who will attend the DNC this summer?

Do you know what kinds of people are -- who attend conventions? Probably not people who are going to create a moderating force in a general election. So that's a bad idea.

KURTZ: Right, but the scenario is that Biden himself would throw open the choice of a nominee to the convention. And let me get Caroline in on this because in terms of filing deadlines, nobody is going to take this away from President Biden.

But if he did do this at the convention, and personally, I think there's no chance. He's wanted to be President for a long time. He's run repeatedly. But you would then have Kamala Harris and Gavin Newsom and a bunch of other Democrats fighting it out, which would be great for the press. Journalists would love this, but then that person would have two months to mount a campaign against Trump.

DOWNEY: Yeah, Howie, like you said, the press would have a field day with that kind of circus. But I'm not so sure the Democratic Party establishment would benefit all that much from that.

And look, the fact is, electorally speaking, swing voters are terrified of an octogenarian President. They've seen what that looks like so far. It's gaffes. It's slip ups. It's incoherence. It's mumbling. And I think that's a national security threat to a lot of independents.

But the risk is that Democrats, if they publicly -- publicly plead with Biden to step down and he doesn't voluntarily retire, that does a lot of damage to his nomination. And the Robert Hur report already did enough.

KURTZ: Yeah, that's why no big name has challenged him. I'm sure they've all fought about it, dreamed about it, fantasized about it. But, you know, incumbent President of your own party, you could be throwing your career away.

And losing is now a backlash to the backlash, by which I mean that Biden loyalists like MSNBC host Lawrence O'Donnell are saying, okay, you want Biden to back out?

Which other Democrat would have a better chance, would have better numbers going up against Donald Trump? And it does raise the question of not what the numbers are today, but, you know, they would then, of course, be the target of all kinds of attacks from the former President and the RNC.

CALDWELL: Well, sure. I mean, I think that it's important to realize here that that Donald Trump and Joe Biden in that match-up, we don't know how it's going to play out. There has been a lot of hand-wringing on both sides. But there are a lot of indications, including this most recent Quinnipiac poll that came out this week, that Joe Biden is in a pretty good -- a pretty good situation.

And as we near the general election, one of the things that we're going to see is that it's going to hit voters in the face that this is going to be a match-up between Joe Biden and Donald Trump.

Donald Trump continues to be himself. He's out saying egregious things all the time. This week, Donald Trump said that black people are going to embrace him because they love his mug shot. That is so violently offensive.

So, we're going to see more and more of a contrast between two old guys. And in terms of what Caroline said, I would disagree with that. Look, Joe Biden is old. I would not dispute the fact that he is old. When voters are asked, do you think Joe Biden is old? They say, yes, he is old. That is worrisome. That doesn't mean that they are not going to come home for Joe Biden.

KURTZ: Okay.

CALDWELL: And the voters we're talking about are what we call the "double haters" who ultimately did come home for him in 2020 and I think may very well. So, I think that savvy Democratic strategists are looking at this on balance and saying we're actually probably in pretty good shape.

Well, both candidates obviously have their weak points. But meanwhile, let me get to this. The star witness in the Biden impeachment inquiry, the now indicted FBI informant Alexander Smirnoff getting lots of coverage as House Oversight Chairman Jim Comer soft peddled his own probe in one interview, but downplayed Smirnoff's importance with Sean Hannity.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JAMES COMER (R-KY) HOUSE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE CHAIR: As to whether or not we impeach Joe Biden over here or we just focus on holding him accountable. My goal is to get the truth out there and hold people accountable for wrongdoing. That may encompass impeachment. If it doesn't, that's fine with me.

We wanted to investigate it, but we never knew who the informant was. All we knew was what Christopher Wray said. Now we see that the FBI arrested him for lying. It doesn't make sense.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: So, Caroline, this gets a little complicated, but how can the FBI charge that this man Smirnov's fabricated, among other things, meeting with Russian officials and then turn around and say that he got all this from Russian intelligence? And also, what took the FBI so long with an informant that it had vouched for as being reliable for 14 years?

DOWNEY: Well, Howie, look, I think at the end of the day, we have to see what this is going to do for, you know, Biden's political prospects. That's what all eyes are on 2024. And this kind of complicates things. It certainly undermines maybe the credibility of the proceedings.

But I do think that there is demand among maybe a lot of American people for maybe an impeachment proceeding because of Biden's abdication of duty on a number of different major domestic crises, the first one being the border, which still weighs top of mind for many independents and moderates.

And there's no end in sight. So, you know, I do think impeachment -- it's still like a viable thing for Republicans to pursue.

KURTZ: Well --

DOWNEY: But if the witnesses are -- go ahead.

KURTZ: It might -- it might be in terms of policy failures that's not usually dealt with impeachment. But here we have the focus on corruption. And so, let me finish by asking Lucy, when you have Jim Comer saying, well, maybe we'll impeach, maybe we won't, maybe we won't have a vote at all. Are the media right in saying that this indictment of the informant has kind of blown a hole in this investigation?

CALDWELL: Well, of course it has. And obviously, Jim Comer will find another reason to attempt to impeach Joe Biden. The impeachment, I think, will only rally the Democratic base to Biden and will only rally independents because of exactly what Caroline just said, which gives away the game, which is making the leap between disputes and disapproval of policy positions to a witch hunt over supposed corruption of the President's son, who is no boy scout, right? But those are distinct --

KURTZ: Okay, we all agree on that. Hunter Biden, even Jim Biden, they're not boy scouts. They made a lot of money. After the break, why Vladimir Putin, who just had his opponent killed, is now a 2024 campaign issue.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: After the tragic murder of Alexei Navalny in a Siberian gulag, his widow, Yulia Navalnaya, let's see, Yulia Navalnaya, there we go, vowed to take over his campaign against the Putin regime.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

YULIA NAVALNAYAN, WIDOW OF ALEXEI NAVALNY (through translator): If Alexei -- by killing Alexei, Putin killed half of me, half of my heart and half of my soul. But I still have the other half. And it tells me that I have no right to give up.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: In a Fox town hall moderated by Laura Ingraham, Donald Trump made more extensive comments about the killing of Russia's opposition leader and related it to his own legal trials.

DONALD TRUMP, REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: He was a very brave guy because he went back. He could have stayed away. And it's a horrible thing. But it's happening in our country, too. It's a form of Navalny. It is a form of communism or fascism. The guy's a nut job.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: And the pundits are divided.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LAURA INGRAHAM, "THE INGRAHAM ANGLE" HOST: They call him pro-Putin as they scramble to put him in jail, bankrupt him, and even come after his family. And by the way, they brag about it.

ABBY PHILLIP, CNN ANCHOR: Pretty unseemly to use Navalny's name in this way. And of course, with Trump, it's always me, me.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Caroline Downey, Donald Trump says the death of Navalny was horrible, but stopped short of discussing the Russian leader who the media, Joe Biden and most of the rest of the world say was responsible for his murder.

DOWNEY: Right. That was a significant blind spot in his statement. Trump likes to invoke his own circumstances whenever possible. But in this case, many people felt it came off as tone deaf. And the fact is, Trump's treatment and Navalny's treatment in Russia are night and day.

Even if Trump is facing political persecution by lawfare in the U.S., Russia without question is an authoritarian surveillance state run by a maniacal, murderous dictator. And so, this gave the press a really prime opportunity to jump on this and portray Trump like a heartless dictator sympathizer. And it was easy to avoid. All he simply had to do was condemn Putin in stronger terms.

KURTZ: Yeah, right. And Lucy Caldwell, you know, Trump says that he was tough on Russia when he was President, but he is taking huge media flack for not saying anything about Vladimir Putin's role here.

CALDWELL: Yeah, I mean, respectfully, when we refer to something like this as a blind spot, this isn't a blind spot of Trump's. This is a feature, not a bug. Donald Trump has enjoyed being cozy with Vladimir Putin. He has enjoyed being cozy with other dictators.

And so what we see here is Donald Trump refusing to come out and condemn something that is really heartbreaking, heartbreaking, appalling, and really reflective of the rise of authoritarianism globally, and that he is not going to be part of the solution.

He is going to continue to be part of the problem, not only through his own self-involvement and self-aggrandizement, but also in comparing himself to Navalny, but also in his refusal to condemn the murder of Navalny --

KURTZ: Yeah.

CALDWELL: -- at the hands of Vladimir Putin.

KURTZ: Yeah, and keep in mind that the Kremlin earlier almost succeeded in poisoning Navalny to death before he voluntarily returned to Russia and was jailed.

So, Caroline, the media are not just slamming Trump, but any Republican who sides with the former President, and this gets tied up in the question of Ukraine funding, as a Putin ally, what do you make of that line of attack?

DOWNEY: Yeah, I want to address Lucy's insinuation with this alleged Putin wing of the party that Liz Cheney and other pundits have claimed. It's unfair because many Republicans have always had foreign policy disagreements. There's always been division within the GOP on that question.

And so, you can't really conflate people sympathizing with Putin and those who are simply asking that more attention be dedicated to domestic crises plaguing this country, whether that's with --

CALDWELL: I don't think I conflated those things.

KURTZ: Lucy, let me just jump in. Biden met with Navalny's widow, Yulia. We have a picture of that the White House put out. And his mother, Navalny's mother, says that the Kremlin pressured her into accepting her son's body, which she now has, by agreeing to a secret funeral.

Otherwise, they would let the body decompose. So, if any situation called for denunciation of Putin and his thugs, I would think this would be it.

CALDWELL: Yeah, and of course, we know that the Russians really, really delayed getting that body to the Navalny family because they were likely hiding the fact that he had been murdered, right? It was not a situation where he just died from, you know, malnourishment or from a fast or whatever.

And so, it is exactly the kind of thing that everyone, all of us, regardless of political stripes, should be condemning. And this is not a moment to bring up, you know, differences among domestic policy, et cetera. I would say that is for another day. Condemn, condemn, condemn the murder of Alexei Navalny at the hands of Vladimir Putin.

KURTZ: All right. I will agree with that, that, you know, our domestic ***politics*** is messy, but this is an absolute outrage, a world outrage. And so good to have both of you, Caroline Downey and Lucy Caldwell.

Still to come. Joe Biden's angry with "The New York Times". Jon Stewart responds to his critics, and a legal battle over the Eagles lyrics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: It was on this program last week that I talked about Jon Stewart's return to "The Daily Show" and how liberal viewers didn't like him spending more time mocking Joe Biden's memory issues than Donald Trump's own issues. Well, Stewart, who hosts only on Mondays, felt compelled to respond to the left-wing criticism.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JON STEWART, "THE DAILY SHOW" HOST: Quite frankly, the response to the first show last Monday was universally glowing.

UNKNOWN: Jon Stewart is facing massive backlash from Democrats over his comment about Joe Biden. Oberman tweeted, well, after nine years away, there's nothing else to say to the both sidest fraud Jon Stewart bashing Biden, except please make it another nine years.

Chris D. Jackson tweeted, "Sorry, but I won't be watching you either."

STEWART: Okay, I mean, we're just talking here.

UNKNOWN: And Mary Trump tweeting, not only is Stewart's both sides are the same rhetoric, not funny, it's a potential disaster for democracy.

STEWART: It's one (BEEP) joke, it was just one (BEEP) joke.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: First rule of television, Jon, you can't please everyone. President Biden is extremely upset with how "The New York Times" covers the age issue. So says publisher A.G. Sulzberger, telling the "Reuters Journalism Institute", we are going to continue to report fully and fairly, not just on Donald Trump, but also on President Joe Biden.

He is a historically unpopular incumbent and the oldest man ever to hold this office. We've reported on both those realities extensively." Meanwhile, a mild "New York Times" fact check of Biden's economic claims led to this appeal by MSNBC Analyst Claire McCaskill.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CLAIRE MCCASKILL, MSNBC ANALYST: I move that every newspaper in America quits doing any fact checks on Joe Biden until they fact check Donald Trump every morning on the front page. It is ridiculous that "The New York Times" fact check Joe Biden on something.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: I know she's a former Democratic senator, but ridiculous? No Biden fact checks? Come on.

("HOTEL CALIFORNIA" PLAYING)

KURTZ: "Hotel California and other big hits by the Eagles are the subject of a New York trial.

Now, back in the 70s, an author obtained 100 pages of handwritten early lyrics for these songs from drummer Don Henley's Malibu home. Decades later, the writer sold the papers to a manuscript dealer, Glenn Horowitz.

Now, prosecutors say he and two other men conspired to possess stolen property valued at more than one million dollars. They say they didn't know it was stolen. Don Henley says he tried to buy the stuff back, but refused when the asking price went to $90,000. That's no fleabag hotel.

That's it for this edition of "Media Buzz". I'm Howard Kurtz. We like to rock and roll with the show, with the news, now with the actual Eagles lyrics. We'll see you here next Sunday. Same time, same place.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

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