

# [***NBC Fiasco Shows Who Is In Charge; Howard Kurtz And Guest Panel Discuss Trump Bond Reduced To $175 Million; Congresswoman Nancy Mace Talks About Her Heated Battle With George Stephanopoulos; Top Player Says He Never Gambled On Sports; Kurtz Discusses The Baltimore Key Bridge Collapse; One-Time Crypto King Sam Bankman Freed Sentenced To 25 Years In Prison; The White House Correspondents Association Asks Members To Stop Taking Air Force One Items Presidential Insignia***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BP6-BDR1-F072-X3V5-00000-00&context=1516831)

Fox News MEDIA BUZZ 11:00 AM EST

March 31, 2024 Sunday

Copyright 2024 Fox News Network LLC All Rights Reserved

**Section:** NEWS; Domestic

**Length:** 7370 words

**Byline:** Howard Kurtz, Clay Travis

**Guests:** Laura Fink, Kennedy, Nancy Mace

**Body**

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

HOWARD KURTZ, FOX HOST: The utter fiasco at NBC showed who's really in charge at the company. The liberal hosts at MSNBC, who not only bashed their bosses on the air, but got an apology from NBCUniversal Chief Cesar Conde for the tone-deaf mistake of hiring Ronna McDaniel.

Now, the ousted RNC Chairwoman was given a two-year, $600,000 contract despite the fact that she had tried to help Donald Trump overturn the results of the 2020 election. The revolt at the cable network gathered steam. McDaniel did her first and last interview on "Meet the Press", and former moderator Chuck Todd said this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CHUCK TODD, FORMER MODERATOR, "MEET THE PRESS": There's a reason why there's a lot of journalists at NBC News uncomfortable with this, because many of our professional dealings with the RNC over the last six years have been met with gaslighting, have been met with character assassination.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: By the next night's cable shows, nobody wanted to be left out, so every left-wing host joined the piling on.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RACHEL MADDOW, "THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW" HOST: You wouldn't hire a made man, like a mobster, to work at a D.A.'s office, right? You wouldn't hire a pickpocket to work as a TSA screener.

LAWRENCE O'DONNELL, "THE LAST WORD" HOST: There is an easy way to avoid the controversy NBC News has stumbled into. Don't hire anyone close to the crimes.

NICOLLE WALLACE, "DEADLINE: WHITE HOUSE" HOST: We've also said to election deniers, it's not just they can do that on our airwaves, but that they can do that as one of us, as badge-carrying employees of NBC News, as paid contributors to our sacred airwaves.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: The sacred airwaves means get with the program. Cesar Conde now says he wants the company to have a cohesive message, meaning a network that predominantly portrays Donald Trump as a threat to democracy. The channel's on-air talent falls into two categories, Democrats and Republicans and ex- Republicans who are fiercely anti-Trump.

Whatever McDaniel's baggage, how terrible would it be for viewers to occasionally hear her pro-Trump views? What is MSNBC protecting the audience from? Remember, this is the same network that boasts of usually not airing Trump speeches, whether on primary nights or after courthouse appearances, because, you know, he's just going to start lying.

The pundit can bash the Republican nominee all day long, but he doesn't get a few minutes of airtime. And once NBC caved, after four days, neither does one of his supporters. And then the MSNBC rebels were in a celebratory mood.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

ALEX WAGNER, "ALEX WAGNER TONIGHT" HOST: Our company listened to us, to you, and did what was right.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Did what was right by choking off a dissenting view. I'm Howard Kurtz, and this is "Media Buzz". Ahead, I talked to Congresswoman Nancy Mace and to Fox's Kennedy. The pundits began the week by practically salivating that New York A.G. Letitia James would begin seizing Donald Trump's assets, because he couldn't come up with a bond worth nearly half a billion dollars.

But out of the blue, an appeals court slashed that bond demand to $175 million. Were there skeptical questions about why the court struck down Judge Arthur and Engoron's massive bond as punitive and outrageous? Nope. Many began trashing the ruling.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JIM ACOSTA,"CNN NEWSROOM" HOST: He asked to pony up a fraction of what was originally thought was going to be a whopping nearly half billion dollars. Here we go again. He continues to defy gravity and catches another lucky break.

TRISTAN SNELL, MSNBC CONTRIBUTOR: I mean, honestly, this is so infuriating, I don't even know what to do. I don't even know if I care what the process is that these judges are arriving at. Whatever it is, it's flawed.

WALLACE: The notion that I would walk in there and have my -- what I owed knocked down to a third of the judgment is ludicrous.

LAURA INGRAHAM, "THR INGRAHAM ANGLE" HOST: Now, the left's longtime fantasy was to see New York A.G. Letitia James personally slap padlocks on the front doors of Trump's prized real estate. Now, there was a palpable disappointment.

JESSE WATTERS, "TH JESSE WATERS PRIMETIME" HOST: Trump's facing five cases from four Democrat prosecutors with zero victims. And Democrats are furious that he still owns a home.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: But the media mob quickly cheered up when Judge Juan Merchan ruled in the hush money case. And this was widely expected that after granting an earlier delay, that trial will begin on April 15th. Joining us now to analyze the coverage in Nashville, Clay Travis, the founder of "OutKick" and co-host of a nationally syndicated radio show. And in San Diego, Laura Fink, CEO of Rebelle Communications.

Clay, just as the media were all fired up, I mean, really excited that New York's AG Letitia James could take control of Trump Tower and 40 Wall Street and golf courses and so on. The Appeals Court comes along, knocks it down from nearly a half a billion to 175 million. And the host and the legal pundits start ripping that ruling.

CLAY TRAVIS, "OUTKICK" FOUNDER: Yeah, it's amazing how that works. Happy Easter to everybody out there, or as the White House wants it to be known, "Trans Day of Visibility". But look, the reality here is Donald Trump had the right to appeal.

And most rational legal observers have said that this $454 million fine and the entire prosecution on a civil context of a business related matter without any actual victim was unprecedented under both New York law and virtually any law in any state in America.

Howard, what is most amazing to me, though, is not only that Trump got this drop to $175 million dollars, it's that really it simultaneously corresponded with Truth Social going public and Trump becoming wealthier in one day than he had in his entire career. And that being able to be tangibly realized in the stock market.

And that was a result. Think about this. Of all the pile on, he would have never done this, I don't think, if Twitter hadn't banned him, if Instagram hadn't banned him, if Facebook hadn't banned him. What these left wing outlets haven't realized yet is every time they attack Trump, they make him stronger and now he's wealthier than he's ever been --

KURTZ: Right.

TRAVIS: -- in his entire life. And it's a tangible wealth.

KURTZ: In this case --

TRAVIS: That's the irony here.

KURTZ: -- in this case, $5 billion richer. Laura --

TRAVIS: Yeah.

KURTZ: -- even if journalists disagree with the appellate ruling and it's an interim step and he still might -- he and his company still might get hit with a big civil fraud penalty, how do they not question whether this Appeals Court, which didn't issue a ruling, was smacking down Judge Arthur Engoron for demanding an excessive and draconian bond?

LAURA FINK, REBELLE COMMUNICATIONS FOUNDER AND CEO: Well, I don't think that the Appeals Court necessarily said that it was too draconian. They just know that Trump, like 2008, is too big to fail. So, he could not go and secure a bond. And the size of his monetary crimes have made sure that they needed to reduce it or they had to go seize his properties.

They would have had to go in a dramatic fashion. And he's insulated by being too big to fail as a result of his candidacy for president and his status as a former president. This is a P.R. move by the justices. And once again, he gets a 60 percent discount when the taxpayers of New York have suffered from his lies and his lack of payment. This is a -- this is just another example of a double standard when it comes to Trump.

KURTZ: Well, when you say discount, the opposite argument would be the thing was just too high and not realistic. But Clay, the other case -- the hush money case in New York, I mentioned starting on April 15th, entirely predictable. But prognosticators are so thrilled now about the idea of Trump facing a criminal trial. They decided that would be the bigger story.

TRAVIS: First of all, Laura, that's an incredible argument and I know that's the new pivot, is that Trump actually gets too beneficial treatment from the courts. Sam Bankman-Fried just got sentenced to 25 years in prison. His business was way bigger than anything that Trump owned. So, I don't think there's a too big to-fail-element here. But look, I think everything going on in New York City --

FINK: He's not running for president.

TRAVIS: This is the big deal -- is actually benefiting Trump. Well, he might have one day if he hadn't gone to prison for 25 years. I think he was already contemplating it, by the way. But if you look at Trump right now, he's up five in the latest Fox News poll. He is up in all seven swing states, according to RealClearPolitics.

We're not just talking about a Trump win. We're talking about a potential Trump landslide against Biden. And I think it's all because this lawfare is blowing up in the Democrat Party's face. If you ask them all, you got South Florida, you got D.C., you got New York City, you got Atlanta. If you're only going to get one trial complete, I think that's what they're going to get.

They're going to get bookkeeping fraud that's been elevated from a misdemeanor to a felony based on, and this is me speaking as a lawyer, total B.S. claim that doesn't actually stand up, I think, on the appeals basis to be able to use another case to elevate from a misdemeanor to a felony.

Oh, by the way, while Alvin Bragg is lowering almost every felony in New York to a misdemeanor, he's elevating a bookkeeping misdemeanor to a felony. This is going to put Trump in the White House. And I think it's going to put Trump in the White House, so far as this is playing, in a massive win, even bigger than his win in 2016 --

KURTZ: Well --

TRAVIS: -- which Rachel Maddow and company still refuse to acknowledge.

KURTZ: Well, some would say it's going to come down to a few battleground states. Thank you for using B.S. as a legal term, because I think our audience needs to understand that. Look, the argument, so viewers understand, is whether or not the defense had enough time to review documents that have been turned over by the feds involving star witness Michael Cohen.

Now, look, of course, Laura, this is unprecedented. No former president has ever been tried criminally. But shouldn't the press admit that of the four cases, this is the least important and that, you know, involves $130,000 in payments to a porn star? The least important by far.

FINK: I mean, I'm hearing the press -- I'm hearing press admit that all over the place. In fact, it's the least advantageous. And it's making my case. This is the one that's allowed to go forward. Meanwhile, they have bought into every Trump legal delay. Even the Supreme Court, when Jack Smith came and said, hey, can we get an early decision on this? Because we need to move forward.

The Supreme Court kicked the can down the road and then ended up making the decision to continue to delay the trial. The justice system is in is bending over backward to make it look it make it look fair when in reality that's robbing the constituents of their right to have knowledge and votes. And, you know, I'm just going to let my colleague go on about his landslide victory and we'll -- we'll see in November.

KURTZ: Well, if it's a landslide victory, it's going to take a lot of the suspense of what we do with the next seven or eight months.

TRAVIS: Oh, Howard. They're charging -- they're charging Trump with felonies in four different jurisdictions.

KURTZ: I understand that and it's helped him.

TRAVIS: That's never happened.

FINK: We're all aware. We are all aware.

KURTZ: It's obviously helped him.

TRAVIS: And is Trump being treated --

KURTZ: Okay.

TRAVIS: -- too fairly -- too fairly by the by the court system?

KURTZ: All right, let's pick this up, Clay, because, as many people know, the press loves the fact that Judge Juan Marchan issued a gag order barring Trump from attacking witnesses, jurors or prosecutors, not including Manhattan D.A. Alvin Bragg. The Trump camp says this is an unconstitutional infringement on his free speech rights as a candidate. What's your take?

TRAVIS: There's no way that Trump's going to be restricted by anything that any judge says. I mean, can you imagine the political reaction if they actually tried to put him in jail because they didn't like what he was saying on the courthouse steps? Merchan's daughter has got a profile picture up on social media of Trump behind bars. Judge Engoron, his wife, had all sorts of negative things that she was saying publicly about Trump on social media, as well.

I think it would be the greatest gift possible to the Trump campaign if in this New York City case they put a gag order in place and then they tried to put Trump in prison or in jail during this trial for speaking out his opinions about it being an unjust case. I think Trump has painted all of his critics in the legal system into a corner here because no matter what they do to him, his base is strengthened.

And even more important than his base, the gag order is ridiculous, but it reflects in independent voters in a very favorable fashion. I think the worst thing Democrats ever did was decide to try to put Trump in prison. If they had just run against him, I think he'd be far weaker.

KURTZ: Well, Laura, the former president did attack Judge Merchan's daughter, whose firm works with Democratic candidates. There's some question about whether she still controls that particular account as a rabid Trump hater. And now, Bragg wants the gag order extended to family members of the court. Look, the media are all over this, but I doubt that he'll be penalized. Maybe a fine. There's no way, politically or judicially, that the judge is going to send Donald Trump to jail for making offensive statements or even statements attacking members of the court.

FINK: Yes, and it seems like we're all in wild agreement that Trump has immunity from consequences, even from attacking the family members of judges. This is absolutely unheard of. It doesn't need to be said that attacking the daughter of a judge and, you know, never -- don't forget, he has an army of people that are willing to go to great lengths and even threats of violence against some of these folks. So, this isn't -- this is a safety issue. This isn't just about free speech. This is about people's right to be protected from violence and from extreme behavior unleashed by the president and his supporters.

KURTZ: Well, we'll see how the trial plays out, and I think it will get a fair amount of coverage, wouldn't you say? I'm going to give myself the last word on something else, That is that Joe Biden, the Catholic churchgoing president, has been accused by the Trump campaign and some on the right, you alluded to this, Clay, of desecrating Easter by proclaiming today the Transgender Day of Visibility. What too much of the coverage is left out is the holiday has always been March 31st, every once in a while it falls on Easter.

Now, I'm sure there's some people who believe that there shouldn't be a Transgender Day of Visibility, and maybe they could have skipped the proclamation, politically speaking, but Biden didn't pick the date.

Ahead, my conversation about House ***politics*** with Congresswoman Nancy Mace. But when we come back, what NBC's abrupt firing of Ronna McDaniel after that outcry by MSNBC liberals tells us about ***politics*** and punditry.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: While the civilized world seems to be castigating NBC, MSNBC, and Ronna McDaniel, syndicated radio host Hugh Hewitt, acknowledging he's done work for NBC and is a friend of McDaniel, offered a contrarian take.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HUGH HEWITT, SYNDICATED RADIO HOST: Ronna is going to sue everyone who defamed her for breach of contract, for intentional infliction of mental distress. They are going to sue for the destruction of her business opportunities that come from being on T.V. I think they made a terrible decision, and they allowed the MSNBC bleed to take over their network, and the cult has taken over the news division.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Clay Travis, what does it say about the culture of NBC that Rachel Maddow and Joy Reid and Nicolle Wallace and the other liberal hosts were able to denounce their bosses as idiots on the air, not get frog-marched out of the building, and then torpedo Ronna McDaniel's hiring in just four days?

TRAVIS: I think it's an incredible detriment to their entire business structure, and I think what it represents is, and I've been making this argument for a little while. We basically have created in this world what I would call fan-focused media. We got the Final Four going on today, Howard. I'm hoping the University of Tennessee can finally go to the first-ever Final Four. But there's -- I'm a big sports fan. They have all these different fan sites that you can subscribe to for $10 a month. They give you more information about your favorite team.

KURTZ: Yeah.

TRAVIS: You know what they never do? They never break a negative story about your favorite team, because the business isn't to break negative stories about the favorite team. It's to cover the team that you already love and tell you that you're the best fan ever and that your team is the best team ever.

That's basically what MSNBC is acknowledging in firing Ronna McDaniel. Look, Laura and I disagree on a lot of things. The idea that I would not like for her to be able to share her opinion on Fox News, or Donna Brazile to be able to share her election opinion --

KURTZ: Yeah.

TRAVIS: I think is a strength of Fox News. I think this shows that MSNBC is a left-wing fan media --

KURTZ: Well --

TRAVIS: -- and they're threatened by anyone who questions their narrative.

KURTZ: Let me get Laura in without the sports analogy. So, you could argue that NBC made a terrible choice because Ronna McDaniel was involved in a fake-electors scheme in Michigan and other efforts to help Donald Trump in 2020. But the battle within MSNBC seemed even broader than that.

FINK: Look, there's a red line and it's called election fraud and election lies. And Ronna McDaniel undoubtedly crossed it. And that's the difference between myself and Donna Brazile and anybody else that's liberal that comes on conservative networks and this particular case.

I mean, I think you're not going to find -- the problem is there's just such a shortage of people who have not crossed that line in Trump world, who have not deliberately lied to camera. And so, that's the challenge. And this wasn't just the top hosts that were pushing back.

This wasn't just Rachel Maddow. It wasn't just Chuck Todd. This was the rank-and-file journalists throughout NBC and MSNBC. This was a journalistic issue where small-D democracy has to take priority over any one single voice. And if you can show me -- and we see Reince Priebus, we see Mick Mulvaney --

KURTZ: Yeah.

FINK: -- that are getting contracts. It's not like conservatives are not hired. The problem is there aren't enough of them that haven't participated in the election lies.

KURTZ: Well, Donald Trump on his now-valuable True Social said that McDaniel is in Never Neverland having been fired by fake news MSNB -- excuse me, just NBC. As I mentioned, Clay, with a few exceptions, there are two types of hosts and commentators at MSNBC -- Democrats and anti-Trump Republicans. So, what would have been the great harm if every once in a while the audience would be exposed to pro-Trump comments from a former RNC chief?

TRAVIS: Well, there is no harm. And the goal -- if the goal is to truly talk to all of America, they should be. Let me also mention in response to Laura, Rachel Maddow makes $30 million a year to host a show one day a week. She lied for multiple years about the 2016 election and said that Trump was the illegitimate president of the United States and that Russia was the reason he got elected and that Russia collusion was the reason he got elected. She was a hundred percent wrong on all that.

To my knowledge, she's never apologized to her audience. She also said that Trump tax returns would make him unelectable. They eventually got leaked. There wasn't much information in there. "New York Times" published them all.

She didn't apologize to her audience there. And she was a hundred percent wrong when she said if you got one COVID shot or the first COVID shot and the second one, you would never be able to spread COVID. And everybody who didn't do it was a threat to the country.

KURTZ: I mean, your point is --

TRAVIS: She was 100 percent wrong on that.

KURTZ: Your point is --

TRAVIS: Has she ever apologized to her audience about any of those things that she was wrong about? Has MSNBC ever held her accountable for her election lies?

KURTZ: All right.

TRAVIS: To my knowledge, no.

FINK: I mean, are you going to stick to the subject?

KURTZ: I got to get -- I got to get Laura in, which is, is there any obligation, even on the part of an openly liberal network like MSNBC, to air another point of view?

FINK: Well, I don't think this is exclusive to MSNBC. The number of liberal voices on Fox is exceedingly small. The number of never Trump Republicans that appear on this and other conservative networks is very small. It's a polarized media environment. So, singling out NBC simply because there -- we had a little bit of a tap dance toward authoritarianism almost on the airwaves with Ronna McDaniel, I think that's a -- that's a big statement given --

KURTZ: All right.

FINK: -- the contours of the media environment today.

KURTZ: I'm going to just jump in and say that on many shows there are liberal voices and also that there's a news division here that hosts on primary nights. That's not the case in MSNBC. It is the case at CNN. Great conversation, Laura Fink, Clay Travis. Up next, RFK, Jr. picks a rather unusual running mate, and other Kennedy is on it.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: The choice had already leaked to "The New York Times", but RFK, Jr. still got plenty of coverage when the independent candidate announced his running mate.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR., INDEPENDENT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: My fellow lawyer, a brilliant scientist, technologist, a fierce warrior mom, Nicole Shanahan.

NICOLE SHANAHAN, ROBERT F. KENNEDY'S RUNNING MATE: I really didn't think much of Bobby Kennedy because I didn't know much about him. All I had was a mainstream media narrative that was effectively telling me horrible, disparaging things.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: I spoke earlier from New York with Kennedy, host of the podcast "Kennedy Saves the World".

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

KURTZ: Hey, Kennedy. Welcome.

KENNEDY, "KENNEDY SAVES THE WORLD" PODCAST HOST: Thank you, Howie.

KURTZ: Why would RFK, Jr. pick the tech lawyer, Nicole Shanahan, who no one's ever heard of, who's never run for office before? What quality do you think might have attracted him?

KENNEDY: Well, it's obviously -- she's an ideas woman. She loves ideas. She has big ideas. And luckily, she can fund those ideas because she was married to one of the co-founders of Google. They have since split. She got some money in the divorce.

She's paid for a few of the shiny political trinkets that the presidential hopeful has used in his campaign. And you know, she's definitely a nontraditional pick. He's a nontraditional candidate with a very traditional name. And he's hoping to cover all of his bases with an attractive younger woman who appeals to progressives.

KURTZ: You know, when you talk about needing the money, when you're running as independent, you need money just to get on a bunch of state ballots. But take a look at this sound bite.

GREG GUTFELD, "THE FIVE" CO-HOST: I don't know this lady at all. It wouldn't have been my choice. My choice would have been Kennedy. So, because he needs libertarians, right?

UNKNOWN: Oh, our Kennedy.

GUTFELD: So, it would be two Kennedys for the price of one.

KURTZ: So, what do you think of Greg Gutfeld nominating you because you've already got the name?

KENNEDY: That's very sweet of Greg. I don't know if he's just trying to get out of the building or what. So, it's very interesting because, you know, there has been a lot of talk that RFK, Jr. might want to run on the libertarian ticket because they have, in terms of an extra political party outside the two mainstream parties, they have good ballot access. And you know, that is what attracted Gary Johnson, who's a former Republican governor of New Mexico and who ran with Bill Weld --

KURTZ: Right.

KENNEDY: -- in 2016. They were successful and that, they got a lot more votes than any other previous libertarian in decades. But it wasn't enough to win them the White House. RFK Jr. is making more headway than Ralph Nader did in 2000.

KURTZ: Yeah. Well, the good part would be you get to hang with the Kennedy clan. The bad part is they don't want him to run at all. Now, "The Washington Post" reports that with Donald Trump having taken over the RNC, his advisers are asking job applicants if they believe the 2020 election was stolen. Should that be a litmus test for working there?

KENNEDY: You know, I'm a firm believer that an employer can ask you pretty much anything they want. And I don't know if they're looking for election deniers as much as they're gauging people's responses, because, you know, whenever you're doing a job interview, you're always trying to anticipate what is the interviewer seeking from me? What do they want me to say? And that's a tricky one because, you know, people don't know, oh, am I supposed to deny denialism completely, or am I supposed to say the election was stolen and President Trump is the rightful President of the United States? So, I think they're really gauging to see how these applicants finesse their answers.

KURTZ: Talk about tough questions.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

KURTZ: Next on "Media Buzz" with another House Speaker, Mike Johnson targeted for removal Congresswoman Nancy Mace on coverage of the turmoil and her heated battle with George Stephanopoulos.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MARJORIE TAYLOR-GREENE, GEORGIA CONGRESSWOMAN: Today, I filed a motion to vacate after Speaker Johnson has betrayed our conference and broken our rules.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: House Republicans are in turmoil once again after Marjorie Taylor Greene moved to oust the newest Speaker, Mike Johnson, over a compromise spending bill, though the timing remains unclear. I spoke earlier with Republican Congresswoman Nancy Mace from South Carolina.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

KURTZ: Nancy Mace, welcome.

NANCY MACE (R), SOUTH CAROLINA CONGRESSWOMAN: Thank you so much for having me today.

KURTZ: You were one of eight Republicans to vote to oust Kevin McCarthy as Speaker, in part because he couldn't get government spending under control. Are you just as frustrated now with a massive spending bill, more than $1 trillion, again to avoid a government shutdown?

MACE: I have been frustrated with both Republicans and Democrats alike for years, maybe even decades because of the massive spending that our own party even leads. And I don't blame Mike Johnson or Speaker Johnson for any of this today because a lot of this was caused by the disgraced former Speaker, Kevin McCarthy, setting up a bunch of bad bills, starting with the debt ceiling. The debt ceiling bill last year that was passed and led by him and Republicans had no limits on the debt and it had a bunch of loopholes.

KURTZ: Well, as you know, Marjorie Taylor Greene has filed a motion to vacate. She's not pushing it immediately to visit the same ouster on Mike Johnson as the ouster of Kevin McCarthy, which you supported. So, if one wasn't able to get spending under control, now we have the same situation, is this something that you conceivably could support?

MACE: Well, no, I don't support ousting Mike Johnson at all at this juncture, but there are a lot of reasons why we ousted the former Speaker. Spending in the budget was one of them, but also the plethora of lies that were told by the former Speaker.

And today, Mike Johnson, he's as honest as they come. I like to call him Honest Abe. I don't agree with him on every issue, clearly. I didn't vote for the spending bill last week either, but he's honest.

KURTZ: But does it seem to you this was a mistake by MTG? And, you know, look, McCarthy hasn't been speaker for six months. So, how long can you continue to blame everything that's going on now with the leadership on the former congressman?

MACE: Oh, I blame everything on the former Speaker because the baseline that was set last year and the debt ceiling bill is what we're having to deal with today and we're reeling from it. But, you know, to your point, Republicans for years now have been a part of the spending problem. And there has not been a balanced budget since 1998 under Bill Clinton. At some point, people are going to wake up.

KURTZ: Are you worried that just a couple of defections, given the razor thin margin that Republicans enjoy, could even lead to a Speaker Hakeem Jeffries? I mean, it doesn't take many votes in this situation to topple a Speaker.

MACE: I am absolutely disappointed with my colleagues who are quitting on Congress. When you swore an oath to the Constitution and were sworn into office, you committed to your term which is two years. Again, the first member to quit on Congress was Kevin McCarthy when he did that in December. He started this trend.

I wouldn't be surprised to hear that he's trying to sabotage the Republican Party and blame it all on Mike Johnson. But at the end of the day, all of them have to look themselves in the mirror and ask themselves if they're doing the right thing for their country by risking our majority in this manner.

KURTZ: Now, that the Oversight Chairman Jim Comer is talking about making a referral to the Justice Department of the accusations against the President and his family, do you think as a practical matter of the Biden impeachment effort is dead?

MACE: I hope that it's not dead. I believe that we are on the road to impeachment. But if there's not support for impeachment, then a criminal referral is easily the very next step. But we all know that the DOJ is in the pocket of Joe Biden. I doubt whatever referral we do, or even if we did an impeachment, none of those things are going to be taken up by the Senate or by DOJ, unfortunately.

KURTZ: Well, President Biden would certainly dispute the notion that the Justice Department is in his pocket. But you've been very upfront in talking about Republicans have to find a better way to discuss the sensitive and moral issue of abortions. When I interviewed Donald Trump a little while ago, he said that he could get behind a 15 or 16-week ban on abortion after that date. Could that be a politically acceptable compromise?

MACE: I believe so. I think if we're talking about the second trimester, there are a lot of people on both sides in regular middle America, whether they're pro-choice or pro-life, can live with the second trimester limit. But it's going to take both sides coming together and working together to build that consensus. And I'll tell you right now, there seems to be very little appetite. Both sides want to use abortion as a wedge.

KURTZ: Let's take a look at your recent interview with ABC's This Week.

MACE: And you're trying to shame me this morning.

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS, "ABC THIS WEEK" HOST: I'm just asking.

MACE: And I find it offensive and this is why women won't come forward.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Women won't come forward because they're defamed by those who perpetrate rape. Donald Trump --

MACE: They are judged and they're shamed and you're trying to shame me this morning. I think it's disgusting.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I'm not shaming you at all.

KURTZ: What was it about the questioning by George Stephanopoulos asking how you could possibly support Donald Trump that made you so angry?

MACE: Well, first of all, I went up there to talk about the general election, Joe Biden versus Donald Trump. I brought my underage daughter with me. I never would have had her on set or in studio if I knew that George Stephanopoulos was bringing me on ABC News to talk about my rape.

I thought it was completely inappropriate. I got totally sidelined with that question because I was there to talk about 2024. That's what we had agreed to. But at the same time, it really exposed the left. Because if you don't -- if you don't succumb to their ideology or prescribe to the way that they think, if you don't think the way they want you to, they will bully you. They will shame you. They'll shame you over being raped.

As a man, George Stephanopoulos tried to mansplain rape to me. I don't need some man telling me how I should feel about rape. I don't need some man telling me as a rape victim that I can't vote Republican and vote for the man I believe that can save our country. That man is Donald Trump.

KURTZ: Well, Donald Trump, as you know, is now suing ABC. But just to be clear, you think the questions asked by Stephanopoulos were illegitimate, not fair game for a discussion on a Sunday show?

MACE: I wouldn't call them illegitimate. I think it's a discussion worth having. But I also think there's a way and approach to go about it. You don't bring somebody on to talk about their own rape without talking about it with them first and asking, hey, is this okay that we have this in-depth discussion? You could see me grimace when he asked the first question because he showed my speech from five years ago where I told my story for the first time in 25 years.

I don't watch that speech because it's very difficult for me as a survivor of rape feeling the pain that I felt five years ago when I gave that speech for the first time. It's very painful for me because it took a significant amount of courage for me to tell this story. It was a huge risk to me, personally. It was an enormous risk to me, professionally. I've talked about it a number of times since then.

But that particular video that they sabotaged me with, so to speak, you know, it's difficult for me to watch that video. And he forced me to watch it. I didn't want to watch it. But instead, it was 10 minutes of bullying, 10 minutes of rape shaming, 10 minutes of saying that Donald Trump was convicted of rape when he never was. He was never held liable for rape, was never convicted of it. And basically saying, you're a rape survivor. You have to vote for a Democrat.

KURTZ: Nancy Mace, thanks very much for taking the time to join us.

MACE: Thank you.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

KURTZ: After the break, Kennedy on how the press is covering the Supreme Court hearing on whether to ban abortion pills. And liberal pundits play up a poll kind of favorable to Joe Biden.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: There was a major media build-up for the Supreme Court hearing on whether to ban the widely used abortion pill known as Mifeprestone. And plenty of pundits were surprised by the chilly reception.

PAULA REID, CNN CHIEF LEGAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT: The stakes here are incredibly high, not just for people who may need access to this drug, but also for the FDA and other medications that it has approved.

CLAIRE MCCASKILL, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: This is legislating by court decision. This is exactly what the Republicans have said they're against, legislating from the court.

TRACE GALLAGHER, FOX NEWS CHIEF BREAKING NEWS CORRESPONDENT: It's unlikely they're going to get to the merits of this case because most of the Supreme Court justices were very skeptical that this case had standing to begin with to be brought in the first place.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Here's more of my conversation with Kennedy.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

KURTZ: I think the left was sweating bullets that this conservative Supreme Court would swoop in and ban these abortion pills, which now account for 60 percent of all abortions in the U.S., as you probably know. And yet the media consensus is that with a couple of exceptions, liberal justices and conservative justices, from Neil Gorsuch to Ketanji Brown-Jackson, have made clear in the oral argument they're not going to do that and perhaps will do a very narrow ruling. Does any of this surprise you?

KENNEDY: No, it is actually unsurprising from the court because they have issued unanimous decisions in certain cases where we thought that they would be split. You know, there's a lot of pontificating about the court, and people assume they know how these decisions are going to come down. But I do find that if recent history is a guide, they do tend to telegraph where they're going to come down in terms of a decision. And it was really Justices Alito and Thomas who were the only ones --

KENNEDY: Right.

KENNEDY: -- who seemed to side with those seeking to alter the FDA regulation that would allow for these pills to be mailed to millions of women across the country.

KURTZ: You know, the media obviously lean pro-choice on abortion. So, the High Court is getting some rare praise, or at least not getting pummeled as it usually does.

KENNEDY: And that's the nice thing about a lifetime appointment is you are not necessarily playing to the media. And, you know, it's always interesting to see where these alliances kind of unfold on the Supreme Court because, you know, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Justice Scalia, they were very close friends.

KURTZ: Yes.

KENNEDY: They were not ideologically aligned.

KURTZ: So, some of the anti-Trump pundits are just hailing this new poll by "Bloomberg", which shows that Joe Biden is catching up with Donald Trump in three crucial swing states, 45-45 in Pennsylvania and Michigan, and Biden ahead 46-45 in Wisconsin.

Now, we're getting a lot of like, I told you so. It was only going to take some time. People will come to their senses from people who are not big fans of the former president. But these are statistical ties, which means that either Trump or Biden could be up by a couple of points. So, I wonder if you think this is being just a tad overplayed?

KENNEDY: Well, it's interesting here, Howie, because the polls are going to go in many different directions, and we're going to see a lot of tumult and we'll probably see a lot of change. The only thing that matters is how someone actually votes when they either mail in their ballot in a lot of these particularly Democrat heavy states or when they're in the polling booth, when they're facing their conscience.

So, I think that we're going to see a big shift. I don't think this is decisive. You also see polls that show that Trump still has a national lead. The RealClearPolitics average still has him up almost two percent.

KURTZ: Any poll is a snapshot and these things bounce around. Now, very big deal made by CNN, MSNBC and others about this fundraiser the other night, Obama, Clinton and Joe Biden. And "The New York Times" had an interrogation by Stephen Colbert. But "The New York Times" had a whole piece saying, well, yeah, Biden's not as popular as the other two. But that's because we're in a much more polarizing era. Do you buy that?

KENNEDY: No, he's not as popular as the other two because he's not as popular as the other two. And neither is his vice president. You know, Vice President Biden didn't really move the needle. It was President Obama who was the rock star of the administration. But the problem for President Biden is his Vice President pulls him down. And by contrast, he just doesn't have the star power, certainly of Obama, but also to some degree, President Clinton, as well. So, I don't know if optically this was the best look for the President. I know it's a big cash grab.

KURTZ: Yeah.

KENNEDY: I don't know if cash is enough to meaningfully move the needle where the Biden camp wants it right now.

KURTZ: Yeah. Well, I mean, Biden's never been as much of a -- orator as the other two Democrats we're talking about. So, before we go, what is your take on the revolt of the MSNBC liberals against NBC's hiring Ronna McDaniel, ripping the bosses on the air and forcing her to get fired within four days despite a big fat contract?

KENNEDY: I think the bosses there are soft. I think the lunatics are running the asylum. I think they should all focus on their respective shows. And, you know, NBC was in the right wanting to find a proliferation of voices before the conventions and before the actual election. And, you know, Ronna McDaniel, obviously, would have been a great choice because she is polarizing. That means people would have tuned in to either grudge watcher or possibly agree with her.

KURTZ: It just is amazing the way in which NBC caved on this and ultimately had no choice. I think it's been an embarrassing episode all around. Kennedy, great to see you. Thanks so much.

KENNEDY: Thanks, Howie.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

KURTZ: During that glitzy Biden fundraiser, Donald Trump drew cameras and coverage by attending a wake for a tragically murdered NYPD officer. Still to come, baseball's top player says he never gambled on sports.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KURTZ: I woke up flabbergasted like the rest of the country at the unimaginable pictures a fully packed container ship had crashed into Baltimore's Key Bridge and toppled it, crippling a key route and one of the nation's busiest ports. And the media generally did a responsible job, though there was the CNN anchor who said we shouldn't speculate about this and then asked whether the destruction was deliberate.

Only later did we learn the ship had lost power, sent a mayday call, and first responders were able to stop traffic just before the crash, saving lives and limiting the death toll to six. President Biden tried to personalize it as he addressed the country.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, U.S. PRESIDENT: A container ship struck Francis Scott's Key Bridge, which I've been over many, many times commuting from the state of Delaware. They're a trainer by car, been in Baltimore, Harvard many times.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: Just hours after the catastrophe, Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott made a plea.

(BEGIN AUDIO CLIP)

BRANDON SCOTT (D), BALTIMORE MAYOR: I'm going to be the first to ask that CNN and everyone else stop showing the video. No one needs to see a possibility of their family member being severely injured or otherwise over and over and over again.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: I understand. But especially on that first day, the bridge collapse was news and the impact will be felt long after it fades from the headlines. This striking "Wall Street Journal" front page, "His story should be here," marks the one year anniversary of Russia's imprisonment of reporter Evan Gershkovich. His lost year, his captivity on bogus charges for doing his job is an outrage. It's a war crime. It's nothing short of a hostage taking. Anyone who cares at all about journalism must stand with Evan.

Baseball's biggest and highest paid star, Shohei Ohtani of the L.A. Dodgers, broke his silence about the gambling scandal that led to the firing of his long-time friend and interpreter, Ipe Mizuhari, and spawned several investigations.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SHOHEI OHTANI, L.A. DODGERS (through translator): I'm very saddened and shocked that someone who I'm trusted has done this.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KURTZ: The pitcher and slugger said the interpreter was telling a complete lie in claiming that Ohtani was helping pay off his massive gambling debts and that the one-time friend used Ohtani's account to pay the bookmaker. It's a relief that Ohtani did no betting, but he's clearly tarnished by this.

Sam Bankman Freed, the one-time crypto king, was sentenced to 25 years in prison for crimes that cost investors billions of dollars. This was, among other things, a spectacular failure by the media, which lionized him, put him on T.V. and on magazine covers. Here's "Fortune" asking the next Warren Buffett without digging into signs of a massive financial scam.

The White House Correspondents Association has asked its members to stop taking items with the presidential insignia from Air Force One. Everything from wine glasses to porcelain plates, says "Politico". It's called stealing. And some are starting to return the pilfered merchandise.

Well, that's it for this edition of "Media Buzz". I'm Howard Kurtz. Happy Easter to everyone out there who's celebrating today. You can subscribe to my daily podcast, "Media Buzzmeter". We riff on the day's top five stories or six or seven.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

**Load-Date:** March 31, 2024

**End of Document**