

# [***Nikki Haley Exits Without Backing Presumptive GOP Nominee; Mitch McConnell Endorses Donald Trump Despite Past Acrimony; President Joe Biden Reaches Out To Nikki Haley Supporters; Renewed Push To Diminish Social Media TikTok Outlet Influence; Chinese Warships Clash With Philippine Coast Guard; Beijing Boosts Budget While Pentagon Remains Stagnant; Beijing Drops "Peaceful Reunification" Plan With Taiwan; Voters Dissatisfied With Likely Nominees; Nikki Haley Suspends Presidential Campaign After Former President Trump Wins Most Super Tuesday State Primaries; Pollsters Examine Divides In Republican And Democratic Party And Possible Effects On Presidential Election; MSNBC Host Decides Not To Show Former President Trump's Victory Speech On Super Tuesday; Donald Trump Calls On President Biden To Debate Him For Presidential Election; President Biden Prepares To Give State Of The Union Address***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BGW-BX21-JCS1-62F5-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Guests:** Doug Schoen, Alex Castellanos, Stef Kight

**Body**

JESSE WATTERS, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: Goodbye great white. Sorry about that.

Tonight, RFK Jr. and the guy who is going to win the nomination for the Democrats, Jason Palmer, the Samoan dragon, 8:00.

(CROSSTALK)

DANA PERINO, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: I'm going to watch all of those shows. That's it for us, have a great night everyone. Hi, Bret.

BRET BAIER, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: A lot about Samoans tonight. A lot about, OK.

PERINO: I mean, do you have one on your show?

BAIER: I don't and I don't have any cookies either.

PERINO: OK.

BAIER: All right, thanks, Dana.

Good evening, welcome to Washington. I'm Bret Baier. A rematch of the 2020 election between President Biden and former President Donald Trump seems inevitable on this Wednesday after the Super Tuesday primaries. The current president was essentially unopposed and the former president has vanquished his lone remaining serious challenger.

Former South Carolina governor and former ambassador Nikki Haley suspended her campaign today after winning just one of the 15 state primaries on the Republican side last night.

She is not however throwing her support behind the presumptive nominee, at least not yet. We'll have the first Fox News power rankings for the presidential election shortly.

First up though, Correspondent Bill Melugin starts us off tonight live from Charleston, South Carolina. Good evening, Bill.

BILL MELUGIN, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT: Bret, good evening to you. Nikki Haley had been facing mounting questions about the viability of her campaign heading into Super Tuesday last night. Last night did not go the way she was hoping so. Today, right here in Charleston, she announced her exit from this race.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

NIKKI HALEY, FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO U.N.: The time has now come to suspend my campaign. I said I wanted Americans to have their voices heard. I have done that. I have no regrets.

MELUGIN (voice over): Former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley calling it quits in a quick and concise speech this morning. After winning only the state of Vermont on Super Tuesday.

HALEY: In all likelihood, Donald Trump will be the Republican nominee when our party convention meets in July. I congratulate him and wish him well.

MELUGIN (voice over): While Hayley was gracious to Trump, she did not endorse him. Instead, she urged him to earn the support of Republicans and independents who have splintered away from him.

HALEY: At its best, ***politics*** is about bringing people into your cause, not turning them away. And our conservative cause badly needs more people. This is now his time for choosing.

MELUGIN (voice over): Haley began the race last year polling at one percent amongst a pool of over a dozen candidates. She ended up being the last one standing against Trump and the first woman to ever win Republican primary state.

And although I will no longer be a candidate, I will not stop using my voice for the things I believe in. In this campaign. I have seen our country's greatness.

From the bottom of my heart. Thank you, America. God bless you.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

MELUGIN (on camera): But in the short term, Nikki Haley says she's looking forward to becoming a private citizen once again. But looking at the bigger picture here, several questions are now developing. Where are Nikki Haley supporters going to go, is the relationship between Donald Trump and Nikki Haley going to be fixed and is Nikki Haley going to end up endorsing Donald Trump in the coming months? We'll have to wait and see. Bret, back to you.

BAIER: Bill Melugin live in Charleston, South Carolina. Bill, thanks.

Former President Trump predicted an avalanche of delegates on Super Tuesday and that is just what he received. Now, his focus is on the general election and another battle with now President Biden. That is eight months from yesterday.

Correspondent Bryan Llenas has that part of the story tonight from West Palm Beach, Florida.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

BRYAN LLENAS, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT (voice over): Former President Donald Trump taking another victory lap tonight as Nikki Haley suspends her campaign. Trump riding on Truth Social, "Nikki Haley got trounced last night in record setting fashion."

And even though Haley did not endorse him, Trump said he'd, "Like to invite all of the Haley supporters to join the greatest movement in the history of our nation."

It's possible Trump could reach the 1,215 delegates needed to officially secure the Republican nomination as soon as next week.

Last night, the presumptive Republican nominee attacked President Biden and called on the GOP to unite.

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: We have a great Republican Party with tremendous talent. And we want to have unity and we're going to have unity, and it's going to happen very quickly.

LLENAS (voice over): Today, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell endorsed Trump despite years of animosity. Trump personally attacked McConnell's Asian American wife Elaine Chao, who he called Coco Chow and China loving. McConnell said Trump is practically and morally responsible for the January 6th Capitol riot. Yet today, McConnell said Trump has his vote.

SEN. MITCH MCCONNELL (R-KY): I've said in February of 2021, shortly after the attack on the Capitol, that I would support President Trump if he were the nominee of our party, and he obviously is going to be the nominee of our party.

LLENAS (voice over): The Trump campaign now focused on Biden and winning over independent voters.

JASON MILLER, DONALD TRUMP CAMPAIGN SENIOR ADVISER: Maybe they went with President Trump in 16. Maybe they went with Joe Biden in 2020. They're back with President Trump now and everyone says they were better off with Trump.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

LLENAS (on camera): The Trump campaign is so confident that former President Trump they believe that he can win Minnesota and Virginia, which haven't voted Republicans since 1972 and 2004 respectively, but if they plan on expanding that electoral map, they're going to need money and thus far, the Biden camp has about twice as much cash on hand as Trump's, Bret.

BAIER: Bryan Llenas in West Palm Beach, Florida. Bryan, thanks.

A Georgia State Senate committee is investigating allegations of impropriety against the prosecutor in the election interference case involving former President Trump. Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis is accused of financial irregularities and conflict of interest.

Today, Defense Attorney Ashley Merchant explained why she wants Willis removed from the case, this is in the state Senate. The judge in that case has also decided what to do. Merchant is representing one former president's co -- the former president's codefendants in the case.

Meantime, the California Senate race in November will feature Democratic Congressman Adam Schiff against Republican Steve Garvey. They finished first and second respectively in yesterday's primary. Garvey is seeking to become the state's first elected GOP senator since Pete Wilson in 1982 and 88. He's a former Major League Baseball star, first baseman for the Los Angeles Dodgers and San Diego Padres.

Breaking tonight, President Biden emerged from Super Tuesday relatively unscathed with one loss in American Samoa and some protest votes in various states. Now though, it is on to the general election.

White House Correspondent Peter Doocy reports tonight live from the North Lawn. Good evening, Peter.

PETER DOOCY, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT: Good evening, Bret. There might not be anything President Biden can do to win back progressives mad there isn't a ceasefire right now. So, President Biden is trying to put together a new coalition.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: How do you beat Donald Trump in Wisconsin Madam Vice President?

KAMALA HARRIS, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: One vote at a time.

DOOCY (voice over): That includes Nikki Haley voters. President Biden said today, Donald Trump made it clear he doesn't want Nikki Haley's supporters. I want to be clear, there is a place for them in my campaign. Biden brass in Wilmington write in a memo that they assess Trump does not have the resources or the infrastructure needed to run a winning general election campaign.

That says Trump reportedly met with Elon Musk about campaign cash, leading the billionaire to post on X. Just to be super clear, I am not donating money to either candidate for U.S. president.

Super Tuesday was a near sweep for Biden and Harris except for American Samoa, where a little known entrepreneur one 51 votes to 40 votes.

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE, WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY: We congratulate Jason Palmer on his win last night.

DOOCY (voice over): Dean Phillips is dropping out and backing Biden. Posting, let's use invitation, not confrontation to welcome Haley supporters, Trump supporters and uncommitted supporters to get this done.

Later this year, influential Democrats hope to see Trump and Biden on stage together.

Joe Biden four years ago did really well in the debates. He can absolutely handle Donald Trump for 90 minutes, for two hours, for three hours.

DOOCY (voice over): Dates and times are scheduled, but RSVPs unanswered.

DOOCY: Now that the field is down to two, is President Biden going to commit to a debate with Donald Trump?

JEAN-PIERRE: That's something for the campaign to speak to.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

DOOCY (on camera): Just a few minutes after that exchange, Donald Trump called for debates, anytime, anywhere, any place. The Biden campaign quickly responded calling Trump thirsty for attention and they say that they're going to have a conversation about debates at the appropriate time this cycle, Bret.

BAIER: Peter Doocy live in the North Lawn. Peter, thanks.

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments April 25th on whether former President Trump is immune from prosecution in the Special Counsel Jack Smith's election interference case.

A ruling from the high court is expected by late June. The former president's criminal trial has been put on hold, pending resolution of that matter.

Lawmakers here in Washington have passed a sweeping anti-crime bill. When I say Washington, Washington D.C. It comes just days after business leaders in the nation's capital wrote a letter to Democratic Mayor Muriel Bowser and lawmakers on the city council warning about what they called an alarming increase in violent crime across Washington D.C.

The measure includes more than 100 proposals to fight crime, including ramping up gun violence penalties and adding punishments for organized retail theft.

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell says he still believes there will be a cut in the key interest rate this year, that sent stocks up today. The gown -- the Dow gained 76, the S&P 500 finished ahead 26, the NASDAQ rose 92.

Tonight, a former software engineer at Google is being accused of stealing artificial intelligence technology while secretly working with two companies based in China.

The Justice Department says the Chinese national was arrested in Newark, California. He faces four counts of federal trade secret theft. Each is punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

There is renewed bipartisan attention tonight to the perceived threat posed by the social media side TikTok. There are concerns about his its Chinese ownership and what that could mean for U.S. national security.

Senior Congressional Correspondent Chad Pergram is up on Capitol Hill tonight with the latest on that. Good evening, Chad.

CHAD PERGRAM, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENT: Bret, good evening. TikTok, boom. A bipartisan breakthrough, a bill curbing TikTok from reaching Americans unless the platform severs ties with the Chinese government. In a statement, TikTok said it violates the First Amendment and is "An outright ban." Lawmakers disagree.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It is not a ban, TikTok. It is not a ban.

REP. MIKE GALLAGHER (R-WI): Again, it is not a ban. Think of this as a surgery designed to remove the tumor and thereby save the patient in the process.

PERGRAM (voice over): Lawmakers worry how TikTok tracks locations and logs information about Americans. TikTok is very different in China showing kids science videos, that's why American parents worry.

REP. MIKIE SHERRILL (D-NJ): My children are not supposed to have TikTok. If you're paying attention, which they're not, they shouldn't have TikTok.

PERGRAM (voice over): The White House worked with lawmakers and endorses the bill.

JEAN-PIERRE: Once it gets to a place where we think to your point it's on legal standing and it's in a place where it can get out of Congress, then the president would sign it.

PERGRAM (voice over): But that borders on hypocrisy.

PERGRAM: In the president's campaign, he has relied on TikTok and encourage them to use TikTok to reach younger voters. Is there an inconsistency there?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I'm not going to tell him how to campaign.

SEN. JOSH HAWLEY (R-MO): I think they're complicit. So, this looks to me like a little bit of opportunism on their part.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

PERGRAM (on camera): TikTok did not respond to a request for an interview. The bill is on a fast track going before a committee tomorrow, Bret.

BAIER: All right, Chad, thank you. The House has passed a $460 billion package of spending bills. The Senate is expected to take up the legislation before a midnight Friday shutdown deadline. Here we go again.

Lawmakers are negotiating a second package of six bills, including defense in an effort to have all federal agencies fully funded before a March 22nd deadline.

Up next, growing concern over China's massive military spending.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BAIER: The sound of a large explosion reverberated around the Ukrainian port of Odesa today as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. And Greece's prime minister ended a tour of the war-ravaged southern city.

Zelenskyy says the explosion cause an unknown number of dead and wounded. Russian officials have not commented.

Two crew members of a commercial ship were killed today in a missile strike by Yemen's Houthi rebels. The British military says the remaining crew abandon that vessel in the Gulf of Aden.

This is the first fatal strike at sea in a campaign of assaults by the Houthis over Israel's war with Hamas.

China is getting ready to spend a lot more money on its military. The latest figure is an increase of more than seven percent. This comes as Beijing grows more aggressive with its actions.

Chief national security correspondent Jennifer Griffin takes a look tonight from the Pentagon.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

JENNIFER GRIFFIN, FOX NEWS CHANNEL NATIONAL SECURITY CORRESPONDENT (voice over): At dawn Tuesday in the South China Sea near the Second Thomas Shoal, a pair of Chinese warships surrounded and rammed two Philippine coast guard vessels, escorting Philippine Navy personnel, resupplying an outpost that China has tried to claim as its own.

The Chinese warships hit the vessels from the Philippines with water cannons, injuring four sailors.

VICE ADM. ALBERTO CARLOS, PHILIPPINES WESTERN COMMAND: It's been illegal and irresponsible actions of China to illegally prevent us from doing our routine mission.

GRIFFIN (voice over): What makes this incident so dangerous is the U.S., by treaty, is required to come to the Philippines defense if war breaks out between it and China.

MAO NING, SPOKESPERSON, CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY (through translator): China urges the U.S. not to use the Philippines as a pawn to disrupt the situation in the South China Sea.

GRIFFIN (voice over): China says it will boost its $222 billion military budget by 7.2 percent this year. China's defense budget has more than doubled under President Xi Jinping.

Compare that to the Pentagon budget for fiscal year 2024. $842 billion, a 3.2 percent increase from 2023.

But Congress's failure to pass last year's budget, means zero growth for the Pentagon budget, while China's defense spending gallops ahead.

MAJ. GEN. PATRICK RYDER, PENTAGON PRESS SECRETARY: We do continue to call on them to be more transparent about their defense spending.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

GRIFFIN (on camera): Another flashpoint, a new Chinese government report, states that Beijing has abandoned the idea of peaceful reunification with Taiwan.

Instead, using harsher rhetoric, vowing to resolutely oppose any separatist activities aimed at Taiwan independence and external interference, a shot across the bow at the United States. Bret?

BAIER: Jennifer Griffin at the Pentagon. Jennifer, thank you.

Up next, we'll go to the touch screen to look at the political landscape, following Super Tuesday. First, here is what some of our Fox affiliates around the country are covering tonight.

FOX5 in New York, as New York Governor Kathy Hochul announced his plans to send 750 National Guard troops to the New York City subway system to help police search passenger's bags for weapons. She's also sending 250 state troopers and police officers for the state transportation agency.

FOX4 in Dallas says Texas Governor Greg Abbott offers his condolences to the family of a fire chief, who died fighting a structure fire in the Texas panhandle, Tuesday.

Fritsch volunteer firefighter -- Fire Chief Zeb Smith, collapsed inside the home, suffering from a reported heart attack. Officials say the structure of fire was not directly related to the ongoing wildfires, but the cause is still under investigation.

And this is a live look at Nashville. One of the big stories there tonight from FOX 17, our affiliate. Tennessee State lawmakers consider a bill that would prohibit untrained service animals from being inside. Supporters say too many people are calling their pets service animals or emotional support animals without justification.

That's tonight's live look "OUTSIDE THE BELTWAY" from SPECIAL REPORT. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BAIER: Welcome back to SPECIAL REPORT. With former President Donald Trump winning big in Super Tuesday's primary races, he is now in the delegate lead. And he's just 190 delegates away from clinching officially the Republican nomination. 1215 needed.

If we take a look at our election calendar, we can see how this is all going to break down. You can see several primaries are scheduled this month, March 12th. You have Georgia, Hawaii, Mississippi, and Washington 160 delegates at stake in those four states. And then, March 19th, which is probably the magic number for the former president five states, 350 delegates in play. We can expect the former president to mathematically be the presumptive nominee by the end of the month, even though he's essentially that title right now.

Looking ahead to the general election. Let's take a look at some of the things that we're looking at. We have our first Fox News presidential power rankings. Our first forecast has former President Trump leading President Biden neither -- obviously, has enough Electoral College votes to win, you need 270, but there you see the lead, 251 to 241.

It could come down to several toss up states. Four of them, actually, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Arizona, and Nevada. President Biden won all four in 2020. Those actually hold 46 electoral votes, and that's where we have a closer look at why this race is so close. Neither candidate has 50 percent in the recent polls.

You can see all of these with Fox News Wall Street Journal and New York Times Sienna.

In our recent Fox News poll, you have a lot of the majority of voters view both candidates unfavorable. 18 percent say they plan or want to vote for a third-party candidate. 72 percent of voters are dissatisfied with how things are going in the country. That's a statistic that could really hurt President Biden.

Majority of the voters disapprove of President Biden's handling on several top issues: immigration, inflation on the top. Most view President Biden as too old to run. Again, all of this could drive voters in those swing states into President Trump's corner.

However, there are also warning signs for the former president. He faces some hurdles. A recent Wall Street Journal poll shows voters preferred President Biden in the White House if former President Trump is convicted of a felony.

The former president's legal troubles, President Biden's policies and his age are going to play out over the rest of the year. We'll likely change our election predictions over the next few months, especially maybe in those battleground states.

And that's where we are looking at very closely. Right now, former President Trump has a solid lead in Nevada and Arizona. He's narrowly ahead in Wisconsin. While President Biden has really statistically a tie but a little bit of an advantage in Pennsylvania.

Nikki Haley frequently referenced her strength in battleground state polls, and she announced the end of her campaign today. She said the former president would need to win over some of her voters.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HALEY: It is now up to Donald Trump to earn the votes of those in our party and beyond it who did not support him. And I hope he does that.

TRUMP: We have a great Republican Party with tremendous talent. And we want to have unity, and we're going to have unity, and it's going to have very quickly.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: Let's get some analysis now from Republican media consultant Alex Castellanos, Democratic strategist, former Clinton pollster Doug Schoen. Gentlemen, good to see you. First of all, let's get some perceptions after Super Tuesday, where we are as this whole thing starts off eight months from yesterday, general election. Doug, first to you, what did you see?

DOUG SCHOEN, FORMER CLINTON POLLSTER: I saw two candidates with weaknesses, but if I had to say I would agree with your assessment, Bret. Donald Trump has narrow advantage. And when you look at the voters who you isolated who don't like both candidates, they tend to vote more on policy than personality. That gives the edge, a narrow edge, to former President Trump.

BAIER: Alex, there is a lot of talk about unity in the Republican Party. If you look at this other poll we have from our voter FOX power rankings, the Biden voters are less enthusiastic. You see the enthusiasm for former President Trump on the Republican side, and you see the Democratic voters and where that falls. That kind of matches the "New York Times"-Siena poll which said Republicans at about 96 percent. Democrats at about 83 percent. So, maybe the unity question is a question about Democrats.

ALEX CASTELLANOS, REPUBLICAN MEDIA CONSULTANT: It is, I think, mostly a question about Democrats. For Republicans, I think you can say nothing unites the people of earth like a threat from Mars. And Republicans are very clear on what that threat is. It's Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, and a record over the past four years of decline, and a country that a lot of Trump voters see dissolving in front of their eyes. So I think you are going to see that Republican Party come together.

But Joe Biden has got a tough job in the State of the Union coming up. He has got the Middle East wars now happening within the Democratic Party. It is the Palestinian faction versus the pro-Israel faction. The war has come home. And how you resolve that, for example, I think is a much bigger challenge for Biden.

BAIER: As you look at Donald Trump's speech, the former president's speech he delivered, Doug, what did you take away from that? And now today, President Biden on a paper release, is saying Nikki Haley voters, we want you on our side.

SCHOEN: I think what Donald Trump realized, and perhaps belatedly, is he needs the Nikki Haley vote. The Republicans who may well be almost never- Trumpers, the independent leaning Republicans, and some conservative Democrats who voted for Haley yesterday, he needs to get them back. Haley made it clear today, I thought, that she is prepared to go with President Trump, but only if he extends an olive branch. And with Donald Trump, that's a very big if. His speech just now did not give me confidence that he's ready to go the extra mile.

BAIER: But Alex, what did you take from Nikki Haley's speech? What does she want?

CASTELLANOS: I don't know that she wants anything, except maybe long-term political viability in the Republican Party. And I think Trump is going to wait to see a bended knee, Nikki Haley come to him, and say hey, you lost, you go first. But, at the end of the day, I do think the party comes together because of that -- the threat to the country, not because of the inside ***politics*** here between these candidates.

BAIER: And what issue do you think drives the most voters? Do you think immigration still?

CASTELLANOS: I think if you look at the issues, it has to be immigration, crime. It's also a values issue, the wokeness that is changing the country. Everything -- it's not just about men playing women's sports. It's dissolving every boundary that people -- Trump voters think exist in the country. So those things are big. But --

BAIER: And that affects independents as well. We see those independent numbers going upside down.

CASTELLANOS: Very much so, but it's not just issues. This is a country that Trump voters fear, and a lot of independents, is in decline and they want strength, not weakness. I think a lot of voters see weakness, what that's produced the past four years.

SCHOEN: There's one thing that Alex is not mentioning, which is I think the ace in the hole for Biden, which is using the choice issue as a means of rallying suburban women, moderates, and making a case that the Republicans on those values issues, Alex, are out of step, too extreme. I agree with you that they are big issues and big issues for many Americans, particularly those in the middle, but the Republicans have been going too far in the past three elections being --

CASTELLANOS: But you are seeing a different Donald Trump now. You saw him last night in his victory speech. It was very similar to the speech he gave when he won in 2016 where he recognized the tremendous responsibility of running this country. He was sedate. And I think we're seeing --

SCHOEN: Do you think he can keep that, Alex?

CASTELLANOS: I think if he just does that 30 percent better than he used -- than he usually does, if he doesn't blow off half his toes every day, just every other day, then, yes, I think that will let the spotlight focus more on Biden.

BAIER: Let me ask you this. I said this to Sean Hannity last night. Ahead of 22 we thought immigration and crime was really going to be a driver. It turned out that abortion and threat to democracy really changed the perception of how those polls were going in. Can you play that game twice? Can you do that again in this election when immigration is now affecting blue states, sanctuary cities don't want to be sanctuary cities anymore? Can you do it again?

SCHOEN: Well, first and foremost, Biden has to shift his positions on the border and on crime.

BAIER: Do you think that will happen in the State of the Union.

SCHOEN: I sure hope it will because that's the only way he can play the abortion card, the democracy card, effectively. He has to say, look, I was for the bipartisan bill that was defeated on immigration that would have provided funding. We need that. We need that to get that done. We need to be tough on crime.

If he can do that, then he can play the other side of the values issue effectively, principally abortion. But it's a big if, and he has got a long way to go.

BAIER: OK, and on the Republican side?

CASTELLANOS: I think those -- I think those issues are -- you can play that same game twice, but not as well the second time. It would be as powerful this time. A lot of those women, yes, Trump is a bridge too far on abortion. But they also have young kids in school in Virginia who voted for Glenn Youngkin because they are tremendously worried that everything they are teaching their kids at home is being unwound in their schools. So, it's going to be -- it's going to be powerful a very powerful issue for Democrats. But Trump has never been 100 percent pro-life.

BAIER: He talks about it differently.

CASTELLANOS: He talks about it differently.

BAIER: In the townhall it was much different how he talked about it.

SCHOEN: It's the position of the parties more than Trump. And the fact that the party is so strong on being pro-life that makes it so hard for their --

BAIER: I'll just look at IVF and how they jumped, and the Alabama Supreme Court, and the legislators moved, they sensed they have got to move on these issues.

SCHOEN: They moved very quickly.

CASTELLANOS: He's very aware of that.

BAIER: Alex, Doug, we'll have you back.

SCHOEN: I look forward.

BAIER: Thanks.

Up next, Howard Kurtz on the mainstream media pivot to the general election. And later the panel on that question of Republican unity post Super Tuesday.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BAIER: Welcome back to Washington. Much of the mainstream media has already pivoted its political coverage to the seemingly inevitable November rematch between President Biden and former President Trump. We get details tonight from FOX News media analyst, host of FOX's MEDIA BUZZ, Howard Kurtz.

(BEGIN VIDEO TAPE)

HOWARD KURTZ, FOX NEWS HOST: It was a huge Super Tuesday night for Donald Trump, enough to knock Nikki Haley out of the race. And MSNBC's Rachel Maddow was so annoyed by his victory speech that she cut away.

TRUMP: I read an article yesterday where it said this is one of the finest run campaigns that anybody has ever seen.

RACHEL MADDOW, MSNBC HOST: Yes, OK. It is a decision that we revisit constantly in terms of the balance between allowing somebody to knowingly lie on your air about things they have lied about before and you can predict they are going to lie about.

KURTZ: In fact, Trump was citing an MSNBC news article. The popular Maddow made clear she doesn't agree with her network policy of airing major Trump speeches, and she anchored an all liberal panel that cast the former president's supporters as motivated by racial animus, and poked fun at the border crisis.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: They are voting on race. They are voting on this idea of an invasion of brown people over the border.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I live in Virginia. Immigration was the number one issue.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Virginia does have a border with West Virginia.

KURTZ: Liberal "HuffPost" grudgingly acknowledged the triumph, "Coup de Grace, Trump locks it up."

Other critics, such as former GOP Congressman Joe Scarborough, hit Trump for likening America for a third world country.

JOE SCARBOROUGH, MSNBC ANCHOR: He kept trashing America. Donald Trump's message is America sucks.

KURTZ: Cable networks anchored by journalists tried to be balanced.

JOHN KING, CNN CHIEF NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT: You have two very strong frontrunners who both have very significant weaknesses.

KURTZ: But Trump was not convinced.

TRUMP: We need a fair and free press. The press has not been fair.

(END VIDEO TAPE)

KURTZ (ON CAMERA): There are many legitimate media questions. Will Donald Trump with four indictments have a tougher time in November? Can he win over Nikki Haley voters? And this one -- will President Biden be held to the same standard? Bret?

BAIER: Howie, thanks.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

NIKKI HALEY, (R) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: ***Politics*** is about bringing people into your cause, not turning them away.

TRUMP: We are going to have unity, and it's going to happen very quickly.

SEN. JOHN THUNE, (R-SD): You're going to see a Republican Party that delivers an articulate message designed to win the vote in every state.

SEN. DICK DURBIN, (D-IL) SENATE MAJORITY WHIP: What Nikki Haley proved is that there are a number of people who ordinarily vote in the Republican circles who are not -- not as comfortable with Donald Trump as the nominee.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: Well, former Governor Nikki Haley suspending her campaign, essentially dropping out of the race today. Meantime, it sets up this rematch we have been talking about. "The Hill" writes, "Democrats ready to hit panic button in Trump-Biden race. Steve Jarding, a Democratic strategist and former adviser to the Senate Democrats' campaign arm, said Democratic lawmakers should be worried about the emerging political picture. If you were Donald Trump and his team, you would go, wow, I will take this any day of the week, he said, comparing Trump's relatively strong political position with Biden's faltering effort to get his message out to voters."

Meantime, the first Truth Social post today from President Trump, former President Trump, "I would like to thank my family and friends and the great Republican Party for helping me to produce by far the most successful Super Tuesday in history. And we'd further like to invite all of the Haley supporters to join the greatest movement in the history of our nation." He started that by saying Nikki Haley got trounced in the Super Tuesday.

Let's bring in our panel, FOX News senior political analyst Juan Williams, Ben Domenech, editor at large for "The Spectator" and host of "The Ben Domenech Podcast" on FOX News Radio, and "Axios" political reporter Stef Kight. OK, Ben, a lot of talk about unity, a lot of talk about setting the table for this election eight month from yesterday. Where do you see it?

BEN DOMENECH, FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: I was thinking back to eight months ago, and eight months ago I had a lot of people, particularly here in Washington, D.C., saying that they couldn't see a path for the former president to come back and win the White House again, that they thought, you know, his negatives were too high, that Joe Biden was doing too well at his job at that moment. And now eight months on, it seems like the opposite is the case ,and everyone who I'm talking to is saying Biden has much more difficult challenges to overcome, particularly among the progressives that Alex was talking about, the Gaza faction within his wing of the party and setting up, perhaps, a very contentious convention, perhaps, in Chicago this summer.

I personally think that it's going to be easier for Donald Trump to bring in a lot of Nikki Haley voters, in part because it has more to do with tone than anything else. And I think that on a certain level, he understands that, given the way that he has been behaving recently. Maybe that doesn't last, but I do think it's an easier approach than the one that currently faces the White House.

BAIER: The president will have a big spotlight Thursday with the State of the Union address, which is obviously a scripted teleprompter event, all presidents use that to lay out a very detailed speech, usually. The former president second time takes to Truth Social today, challenging the president to debates. He says "It's important for the good of our country that Joe Biden and I debate issues that are so vital to America and the American people. Therefore, I am calling for debates anytime, anywhere, anyplace." And Peter Doocy tried to get an answer to that at one time in the White House today.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DOOCY: It's possible that there will be no Joe Biden, Donald Trump debates?

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE, WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY: Is that what you -- is that what you are excited about? Is that what you want to see?

DOOCY: How does President Biden do in a debate? I'm not asking a question about a specific debate. I'm just asking how would he do in a debate. I know it's been four years.

JEAN-PIERRE: You literally saw just last year back in January 2023, at the last State of the Union take on Republicans during giving a major speech.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: But, Juan, there wasn't an answer, and the question is will there be debates? Do you think there will be debates?

JUAN WILLIAMS, FOX NEWS POLITICAL ANALYST: I'll tell you, I'm a big fan of debates, but I'm very dubious at this moment. Obviously, Donald Trump turned away from debates among Republicans. And now he is -- that gives President Biden the opportunity to say, well, you won't debate, why am I going to debate now? I think it would be to Biden wants advantage given the tone and the message that he wants to send to the Haley voters. The Haley voters would love to see President Biden address the age issue, speak about a vision for what he wants to accomplish, even Trump and his record, which I don't see it's astonishing to me that he has a real legislative record of accomplishment. Most people are saying, what did he get done? It's kind of shocking.

BAIER: He got a lot done in the Trump administration that people are looking back and say how they felt about the economy, about immigration, about foreign policy. They felt a lot better, Juan, if you look at all the polls.

WILLIAMS: I think right now it's a referendum on Biden. So everything, every complaint that you and I have about the world, everybody says he is the incumbent, right?

BAIER: That's part of the deal.

WILLIAMS: That's part of the deal. But I just think -- by the way, picking up on what Ben was talking about, I think that there was today the idea that Mitch McConnell endorsed Donald Trump, wow. I go back to 2021, January, it's unbelievable. I don't know that it's heartfelt but, man, what a transition from then to now.

BAIER: But Stef, that is kind of what I was getting with these pollsters and analysts, consultants, is that the Republicans coming home is what you hear about, but in reality, there's a big issue about Democrats coming home. It's like 96 percent Republicans say eventually they are going to vote for the nominee. It's about 83 percent on the Democratic side.

STEF KIGHT, POLITICAL REPORTER, "AXIOS": Yes, there's certainly still a challenge for Biden to convince his own party to turn out come November. What we hear constantly from Democratic strategists is that they feel like only now is this really kicking off, only now are voters going to start to see that this is really a matchup between Biden and Trump, and many Democrats are hopeful that they will be able to kind of, again, stir people up, stir up the anti-Trump sentiment that helped propel Biden to the White House in 2020. And they view that now is the time to start pushing that narrative. "Axios" has reported that Biden plans to really zero in on the 2025 project, what Trump would actually plan to do if he takes back the White House. And Biden and Democrats see that as their best strategy to convince some of these more hesitant voters to get on their side.

But there is absolutely a challenge there, especially with young voters, progressive voters, and you even see these polls showing black voters, Hispanic voters moving in the opposite direction.

BAIER: Good place to lay all that out might be a debate. I'm just saying.

(LAUGHTER)

BAIER: All right, up next we preview the State of the Union address, and later, a very special day for a relative of one of our panelists.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE, WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY: You will hear the president lay out the historic achievements he has delivered on for the American people and his vision for the future.

MICHAEL TYLER, BIDEN-HARRIS 2024 CAMPAIGN: And the contrast will be incredibly clear between a president who is fighting every single day to bring the American people together versus Donald Trump, who simply represents chaos, division.

REP. MIKE JOHNSON, (R-LA) HOUSE SPEAKER: If you had to describe in one word what you believe the State of the Union is, I think maybe a summary is decline. Nothing he says tomorrow night is going to change that.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: Well, President Biden's State of the Union address, he will be center stage. And it is a critical moment, if you look at the Real Clear ***Politics*** average of approval polls, he is well under water as he heads to this big State of the Union. We're back with the panel. Your thoughts, previewing this? Ben, first.

DOMENECH: I think that the number one thing that Joe Biden needs to do for his party right now is to give them a very good explanation and soundbite on the border issue. I think that the border issue is critical now for so many different senators who are up in red states for the future, really, of his party in the upcoming election that he needs to address it forcefully, strongly, and push back against the Republican messaging on that. If he can do that, it will be successful.

BAIER: Stef?

KIGHT: I think people are not caring as much as what Biden is saying as much as how he says it right now, given the concerns we have seen repeatedly in the polls about his age. We know both Republicans and Democrats are going to be looking for any indication of a fatigue or stumbling over his words. Of course, Democrats are hoping that he comes across strong and energized despite it being a late-night speech.

BAIER: Juan?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I think age and acuity, but also vigor. And I think everybody on the Democratic side is anticipating that some Republican also try to disrupt. So how does he deal --

BAIER: There could be Democrats on the issue of Israel-Gaza.

WILLIAMS: Right, but I think that the Democrats are going to be more respectful. I think the big thing here is that there have been talk about some Republicans want to make him look bad. And that's -- how does he handle it?

BAIER: It'll be a big question. We've got complete coverage tomorrow. Panel, thanks. Stand by.

Finally tonight, a special day. NASA's newest class of astronauts graduated yesterday at Johnson Space Center in Houston. Among the 10 graduates is Chris Williams, who the nephew of our very own Juan Williams. Chris, and the other new astronauts are now eligible for flight assignments. The group was selected in 2021 out of a pool of more than 12,000 applicants. Candidates completed two years of basic training, including space walking, robotics, space station systems, and more. Congratulations to Chris and the rest of the new class. That's awesome, Juan.

WILLIAMS: I'll tell you, my brother and his wife, Ginger, so proud.

BAIER: That's awesome.

Tomorrow on SPECIAL REPORT, I will have an exclusive interview with Texas Governor Greg Abbott ahead of the State of the Union address, what he thinks about the immigration issue and what would be said.

Remember, if you can't catch us live, set your DVR, 6:00 p.m. in the east, 3:00 p.m. on the west coast.

Thanks for inviting us into your home tonight. That's it for this SPECIAL REPORT, fair, balanced, and still unafraid. It's a busy week in ***politics*** and policy. THE INGRAHAM ANGLE is now.

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