

# [***Ron DeSantis Suspends 2024 Presidential Bid; 2024 Race For GOP Nomination Now Trump Versus Haley; Voters Sound Off On DeSantis 2024 Race Exit; Haley Calls Out Trump And Biden Decline; Interview With Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC) On Trump 2024 Endorsement; Interview With Rep. Jim Jordan (R- OH); House Oversight And Judiciary Will Question Hunter; House Judiciary Launches Probe Into Nathan Wade; Speakership May Be On Chopping Block Again; Border Remains Top Focus For Voters In 2024; Interview With Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar (R-FL); Border Security And Ukraine Aid Hang In Balance; Optimism Grows For A Bipartisan Immigration Deal; Iranian Proxies Escalating In The Middle East***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B59-5BD1-F072-X000-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

MARK LEVIN, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: I would just ask, people given what's going on in this country and around the world: What kind of a Republican do you want to nominate to take on Biden and to take on this horror story? Is it a person who relies on the same elements, the money people, the party leaders, and the voters in the Democratic Party?

It doesn't sound so smart to me.

I'll see you next time on "Life, Liberty & Levin."

TREY GOWDY, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: Good evening and thank you for joining us. I'm Trey Gowdy and it is SUNDAY NIGHT IN AMERICA.

And then there were two.

In November of 2022, a little over a year ago, Governor Ron DeSantis took the stage in Florida a hero. He just won an overwhelming re-election and his speech was decidedly presidential. He was popular, well-funded, one of the few success stories that midterm night. But now, before even the first real primary of 2024, he departs a vanquished foe.

Less than 48 hours from the New Hampshire primary, the second contest of 2024, but the first real primary, Ron DeSantis is gone from the presidential stage. It's a two-person race now between former President Donald Trump and his ambassador to the UN, former South Carolina governor, Nikki Haley. There is but a single obstacle between Trump and a third Republican nomination.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: The radical left Democrats are supporting Nikki for a very simple reason, because they know she's easy to beat. They came out with a poll two days ago, where she is way down to Biden, and I'm way up on Biden, and that's the way it is.

[CHEERING AND APPLAUSE]

TRUMP: She's unelectable.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GOWDY: After Governor DeSantis withdrew, he endorsed Trump and Nikki Haley doesn't sound like she's going anywhere.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

NIKKI HALEY (R), 2024 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: It's now one fella and one lady left.

[CHEERING AND APPLAUSE]

HALEY: We're going to have a strong America that we can all be proud of.

And we're going to make sure that we fight all the way until the last second.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GOWDY: Joining us now with the latest is Alexis McAdams live in Manchester, New Hampshire -- Alexis.

ALEXIS MCADAMS, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT: Hey, Trey.

Well, how quickly do things change, right? In ***politics*** here, just in the past few days, we had checked in with Governor Ron DeSantis who said he had no plans of dropping out, was going full force in the Granite State. But now he is backing former President Donald Trump and Donald Trump said he's happy to hear it. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: He endorsed me, so I appreciated that.

[CHEERING AND APPLAUSE]

TRUMP: I appreciate that and I also look forward to working with Ron and everybody else to defeat Crooked Joe Biden.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MCADAMS: Well, that's a much different tune, right, compared to his recent rallies. He slammed DeSantis continuously, always making fun of the Florida governor for pretty much everything you could think of.

But earlier tonight, Trump changed his tune telling our Martha McCallum he'll no longer call him Ron DeSanctimonious.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MARTHA MACCALLUM, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: Let me ask you about Ron DeSantis, you said you didn't speak. Did he reach out to you? And --

TRUMP: I'd rather not comment. You would maybe ask Ron that question, but I'd rather not comment, but he was very nice.

Look, he left. It is a very hard thing to do. He left. Somebody said what are you going to do with the name DeSanctimonious? I said, that name is officially retired as of this moment, we are retiring that name.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MCADAMS: And just this week, we sat down with a Florida governor before he went back home for just a short time asking him what are his plans here? Because he wasn't polling well, right, in the Granite State. I asked him, are you looking forward to 2028? Are you looking for an off ramp? He laughed it off. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MCADAMS: Are you looking for an off ramp at all? People are saying that now since, you know, let's say your polling is lower here that you're now focused on 2028. What's your answer to that?

GOV. RON DESANTIS (R-FL): Zero for 2028 That's like -- that's so far away I mean, in political time. I'm focused on 2024. I mean, we --

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MCADAMS: And we all are looking into what's going to happen next and you check out these polls, Trey, you can see in the coming days what could shift.

Just this morning, this poll came out, Joe and Trump, holding that 50 percent support among likely Republican primary voters while his closest competitor, former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley is standing at 39 percent. Some voters tell us they're happy the Republican field is narrowing.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I think he should have waited. I don't think he should have gone up against Trump. I think if he had waited, he might have had a better chance.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MCADAMS: And more events here in the Granite State tomorrow, a lot of shake up though here on the ground and we're just 48 hours now until that primary. They're expecting record voter turnout -- Trey.

GOWDY: Thank you, Alexis. Stay warm.

Now to Bryan Llenas who spoke with Nikki Haley after news of Ron DeSantis' withdrawal broke earlier today.

BRYAN LLENAS, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT: Trey, good evening.

Tonight, former Governor Nikki Haley had her largest campaign rally in New Hampshire yet. Over a thousand people according to the campaign were at the high school auditorium behind me, in part to also see TV star Judge Judy, who says she traveled 1,700 miles to be here today.

She praised Haley inside that auditorium, saying that she has poise and that America right now is at a crossroads.

But earlier today, Haley had this to say about Governor Ron DeSantis dropping out of the race. Listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HALEY: There were 14 people in this race, there were a lot of fellas, all the fellas are out, except for this one. And this comes down to what do you want? Do you want more of the same --

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: You. We want you.

HALEY: Or do you want something new?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LLENAS: Now in a statement, Haley added this as well: "So far, only one state has voted, half of its votes went to Donald Trump and half did not. We're not a country of coronations, voters deserve a say in whether we go down the road of Trump and Biden again, or we go down a new conservative road."

Now all week, Haley has focused her attacks on former President Trump calling him a divider, someone who sows chaos and who would be too distracted by investigations to do the job.

She has also been going after Trump's age, particularly Trump, who is 77 and comparing him to President Biden, who is 81 years old. She says that both are just way too old. I spoke to Haley before the DeSantis announcement and this is what she had to say.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HALEY: They know that if you're looking at eight hard years, you can't do four years with Trump or Biden. Look at the decline of Biden over two years. We can't afford to have Trump in any confusion over this next time. He is already starting to show that.

I'm not saying anything to be personal to either one of them. It is a fact that you decline over time, it is a fact that you slow down.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LLENAS: The campaign is hoping for high-voter turnout, particularly here in New Hampshire, where the independent voter or undeclared voter is the largest voting bloc, and to that end, "The Boston Globe" today endorsing Haley and they had this to say: "For independent voters who can cast a ballot in either party's primary, this ought to be the easiest call in a generation. Your vote is going to matter a lot more on the Republican race, and you have an opportunity to help save the country from the alarming prospect of a second Donald Trump presidency."

And Trey look, Haley and her campaign insists they do not need to finish first in this race. Haley has said she just needs to do stronger than she did in Iowa and she hopes to do stronger than she did here in South Carolina. There's a rally in Charleston already set by her campaign -- Trey.

GOWDY: Yes, you know, that may have been true if it was a multiple candidate race, but now it's just a woman versus a man. It is one versus one. I mean, does she need to win?

I mean, we are headed south where it's warmer. It's a state I love, but Trump is leading in the polling down there. So does Haley need to win New Hampshire?

LLENAS: Yes, and that's the question here and that's the question that the campaign and Haley refuse to answer. It was a lot easier with DeSantis in the race, because they can just say, we finished second. And now that we finished second, DeSantis finished second in Iowa. We can go to South Carolina and make the decision.

But now that DeSantis is out, what's the margin here which you can go out on that stage and say -- and declare that she was the winner? You know, she declared that she was the winner in Iowa and she came in third place, so it looks like right now, she is going to head to South Carolina, no matter what.

GOWDY: Bryan Llenas covering a fascinating field where you can come in third and claim victory. I might try that sometime. Thank you so much. Stay warm.

Our next guest knows what it's like to run for president and also what it feels like to withdraw and suspend his campaign.

Tim Scott was once on the debate stage with DeSantis and Haley and recently endorsed former President Trump and he joins us now from the Great State of South Carolina.

Welcome to you, Senator.

Let me ask you this.

SEN. TIM SCOTT (R-SC): Hey, Trey.

GOWDY: Was it a question of -- hey, how are you -- was it a question of endorsing Trump versus another candidate? Or was it a question of Trump versus just sitting it out and endorsing no one?

SCOTT: You know, Trey, that's a great question. For me, it really came down to either sitting out or endorsing someone who could lead this nation to the highest level possible, and that was simply Donald Trump.

Having an opportunity to work with him from 2017 to 2020, we produced the highest opportunity zones in the nation ever. Opportunity zones actually put more resources in the poorest communities across the country. We cut taxes by $2.3 trillion.

It was fantastic to work with the former president in such a way that we produce the kind of results that said to the American people, no matter where you live, no matter the color of your skin, no matter what coast you're on, no matter whether you're in a blue state or a red state, your life is going to be better because Donald Trump was president.

I made the decision to endorse the president, because it was the only option on the table to move America forward. So it wasn't how do I help Nikki? Or how do I help President Trump? It was how do I help America? And the only way to help America was to focus on Donald Trump.

GOWDY: All right, Senator, I wanted to get you to respond to something. I heard that Nikki Haley supporters suggest that you would not have had a job if it were not for her. And I could have sworn that you were in the House, which I admit is not a great job, but you had a job.

And then you had to run for re-election three times statewide on your own. So to those who say you owed her something, your response is what?

SCOTT: Well, it's simple. I heard Governor Sununu's comments as well. He was born on third base. Your father's the governor, your brother's a US senator, and you're going to give employment advice. Well, I can say this about South Carolina.

I ran against Strom Thurman's son and won. The governor's namesake's son, Carroll Campbell, Jr., I ran against his son and won. So getting to Congress was not just an easy path, but more importantly, Nikki did what was best for South Carolina. I'm going to do what's best for America and that's why I endorsed Donald Trump.

GOWDY: All right, real quick. Let me ask you this. Midterm night, 2022. You had an overwhelming victory, so did Marco, so did Ron DeSantis, and yet, it seems the primary voters are sticking with the former president.

You talked to voters for months and months. What do you think explains that voter loyalty?

SCOTT: Well, it's really down to results. The American voter, especially Republicans are concerned that the democracy is in jeopardy. You look at the results of Joe Biden, the highest inflation we've seen in decades since the Jimmy Carter years. That means that the average young person can't afford to buy a house.

You look at the devastation around the world. When President Trump was in office, we had peace -- peace across the world. Ukraine was not facing an invasion from Russia. China was not looking at Taiwan licking their chops. We had the kind of world that we could be proud of, because we had a strong American president.

The voters, conservative voters and independent voters want a return to some normalcy. They want the restoration of law and order. They want Donald Trump.

GOWDY: All right, presidential ***politics*** was not foremost on your mind this weekend, I don't think. I think -- I think the world's most eligible bachelor is no longer a bachelor. Is that correct? I think you are now engaged to be married and I think that's hearts breaking all over the world that I hear right now.

GOWDY: Well, Trey, I will say without a question. Saturday was the day that I isolated for the last several weeks. As a matter of fact, when the former president called and said, I really want you to endorse me, and I'd love for you to be somewhere on Saturday, I said, off the table.

I've got something more important to do on Saturday. It is the second most important decision you will make in a lifetime, making Jesus Christ the Lord of my life was number one. And the woman I'm going to marry, number two.

And so going to the beach and getting on my knee and asking Mindy to marry me was so much more important than anything else and I wanted to make sure that that sacred day would not be disturbed by anything political.

GOWDY: Well, she's a beautiful, talented young woman. I wish you all the best. My question, I'll ask you later on. I know how you got down on one knee. I just don't know, at our age, how you get back up off that one knee, but we'll talk about that later.

Best wishes to Mindy. Congratulations to you. We'll see you soon.

SCOTT: God bless, Trey.

GOWDY: We continue with our discussion with Princeton University scholar, Dr. Lauren Wright.

Dr. Wright, it seems like yesterday we saw Ron DeSantis onstage in Florida looking and sounding presidential on the night of his overwhelming re- election, and now this. You're a scientist, what in the heck happened?

DR. LAUREN WRIGHT, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR: Well, it's really quite striking if we think about how top of mind DeSantis has been for Republicans considering an alternative for Trump, for really the better part of a year now.

People have been watching him closely. He won re-election handily in 2022, but really, I think the message here is, it is Trump's party. It's a little bit ironic because Trump is in the weakest position to win a national election perhaps of a lot of these candidates, however, the base simply loves him so much.

He is so well-known. He's already been president, and so, all of these other messages, DeSantis included, and I would say Haley tried this as well of with me, you get the policies and not the drama. It shows people love the drama, they want Trump they want the energy and the personality is part of that.

They don't really care that much about whether he is, you know, pure conservative principles, pure conservative policies, they love him. That's the message, Trey.

GOWDY: You know what, Doc, it seems to me like the most interesting race right now, not to minimize the Trump versus Haley is the race for vice president.

Does it matter who the Vice President is? Or is it particularly important when the two leading candidates are a little bit older than your typical presidential candidate?

WRIGHT: That's a great question, and I think you're right. From an institutional standpoint, the age matters, who would take over if something happened to the frontrunner or the president-elect, however, election-wise, and I study presidential surrogates, so I know this very well. There's very little a running mate can do to change vote outcomes.

They can help energize people, they can help bring resources to a campaign, bring energy, bring attention. But of course, the principal is the one who matters most.

I was just thinking about this earlier, though, because there's not a lot of overlap among Trump and Haley supporters. So would he be able to put some of those attacks aside, and if he's inevitable, bring her on board to try to unify the ticket. That's one avenue the campaign has to consider.

GOWDY: All right, let's you and I make predictions, all right, or I'll make them. You're a PhD, you're too smart to make predictions. Who do you think he picks to be a running late? I'll let you go first.

WRIGHT: I would wonder if it's Haley, but I'm thinking about Elise Stefanik. And then maybe there's an outsider we don't even know about yet. So those are who I am thinking about.

GOWDY: All right.

WRIGHT: Yep.

GOWDY: All right, and next time, I'll talk to you, I'll give you my idea. How's that? Thank you.

WRIGHT: And congratulations to Senator Scott, by the way that was exciting to follow that up.

GOWDY: Yes. I'm happy for him and you won't want to miss this tomorrow morning, "Fox and Friends." Lawrence Jones' interview with former President Donald Trump.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

GOWDY: Welcome back to SUNDAY NIGHT IN AMERICA.

What was that old song? I fought the law and the law won. I think that's it.

Hunter Biden did not write that song, but he sure could sing it. He fought the House over a subpoena and thought he could dictate the terms of engagement. He said he'd come for a public hearing, but not a private deposition, but he lost. He doesn't get to make that decision.

So to avoid contempt of Congress, he surrendered. He's now agreed to sit for a deposition February 28. Sitting and talking are two different things. Biden is under indictment after all, so he may be present, but will he have laryngitis when he shows up?

Congressman Jim Jordan is the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee and a longtime member of the House Oversight Committee. He might have actually been chairman, if memory serves me correctly, and he joins us now.

REP. JIM JORDAN (R-OH): Trey, good to see you.

GOWDY: Chairman, it was by the way, great seeing you and Polly in Iowa.

JORDAN: Yes, it was.

GOWDY: This is a win for the House. It's a win.

JORDAN: Yes.

GOWDY: Biden refused to come, and now he is. You get to talk to him, but what do you want to ask him?

JORDAN: Well, I think -- no, you're right, Trey, it is a win for the House, I think, and we had good negotiation with his counsel and he is coming in, which is the way you want it work because you want to get the testimony. Whether he'll exercise the privilege or not for some of the questions, we'll find out.

But I think the first question I'll ask him is, who did you call when the chairman of Burisma, this company that Hunter Biden sat on the board with, he asked Hunter Biden, we're under pressure from the prosecutor in Ukraine? Can you help us?

Hunter Biden gets on the phone and according to his partner, business partner, Devon Archer, when we deposed him, he said first he called his dad. And then second later, in the interview, he said, well, he called DC. I want to know who he called. Did he call the vice president? Who else did he call in DC? What did they talk about?

We want to know that because what happened just a few days later, Joe Biden went to Ukraine and said, you're not going to get the loan guarantee money from the American taxpayer. He conditioned the release of that money on the firing of the very prosecutor who was applying the pressure to the company that Hunter Biden sat on the board of.

So to me, that's an important line of questioning. It would probably be the first one that I'll go for.

GOWDY: All right, Chairman, you put your finger on something.

Folks in the media, the public even some members of Congress, they want public hearings. They love public hearings, and sometimes they're entertaining, and sometimes they're necessary. But tell our viewers why it's important to have these longer sessions?

What you just described, you could not get done in five minutes. You need more time to ask follow up questions. So help our viewers understand why going this route is the better route?

JORDAN: Well, you know this as a prosecutor, and you did this, when you were a member of Congress, I watched you in many of these depositions. You get an hour each side. So you'll start with the majority party gets an hour, and you can probe all kinds of lines of questioning, the follow-up questions.

You've also got your counsel and other members there that can help you. But you work a full hour and then you're fair, the other side gets an hour. But you can dig into these issues and ask the kind of questions you need to ask.

I mean, there's some obvious questions that you could ask in a public hearing or in a private setting, like one of the questions I would ask is, who's the Big Guy? We all kind of know who it is, but I want Hunter Biden to go on the record and tell us who the Big Guy is. I mean, I think that's an important question.

What was the brand that your business partner, Devon Archer said you were selling? The access to the brand, and he said the brand was Joe Biden, is that accurate? But you want to probe and get into all those lines of questioning.

It's tough to do in a five-minute session in an open hearing where a witness can kind of filibuster and different things can happen. But in a private deposition or a transcribed interview, you get the full hour each side and it goes back and forth many times, several hours throughout the day.

GOWDY: Speaking of a full hour, there's a soap opera called "The Young and the Restless," and honestly, that's what I thought I was reading about, but it's really Fulton County, DA Fani Willis, being accused of hiring a boyfriend who has no criminal trial experience, and now, there are judges that have a few questions for both of them. What do you make of this story?

JORDAN: No criminal trial experience, no real experience in what she is saying is the issue here and the RICO charge she is bringing, and she's paying him more than she's paying the "experts" who are part of her team.

And oh, by the way, he billed 24 hours straight. I don't know how you do that, unless, you just go a whole day without sleeping and you're working around the clock, I guess. So yes, this is a big concern.

We've actually written Mr. Wade -- Nathan Wade, the guy she's hired, we want to know who he talked to at the White House. We want to know who he talked to on the January 6th committee. We want to know who he talked to, the correspondence he had with the Justice Department.

After all, the district attorney's office there in Atlanta, received $14.6 million in grant money from the federal government to help run their office. We think we have a right to know what's going on here.

So we're going to continue to dig into this as I think also is the state of Georgia, which I think is appropriate, because there's a lot of Georgia tax money being used in this ridiculous attack on President Trump.

GOWDY: It was 30 degrees below zero in Iowa and the question I get is, did Jim Jordan still not have a jacket on? And the answer is yes. He didn't wear a jacket. He's tough. He didn't care how cold it was. It was great seeing you. Maybe I'll see you in New Hampshire.

JORDAN: You, too.

GOWDY: Thank you for joining us on a Sunday night.

JORDAN: You bet. Thank you, Trey.

GOWDY: All right, up next, who needs enemies when your friends are so willing to do you in? Friends might not be the right word, Republican colleagues might be more accurate.

Kim Strassel on the circular firing squad that is known as Congress, next on SUNDAY NIGHT IN AMERICA.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MARIANNE RAFFERTY, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT: Welcome to "Fox News Live." I'm Marianne Rafferty in Los Angeles.

All eyes on New Hampshire as former President Trump and Nikki Haley make their closing arguments ahead of Tuesday's primary. The two have been ramping up their attacks on each other over the weekend. New polling suggests the race is Trump's to lose.

He is currently leading Haley by 15 to 20 points. Haley though has seen an uptick in support as the field of candidates dwindles.

President Vladimir Putin is reportedly expressing interest in visiting North Korea soon. It comes as the two countries continue to strengthen their relationship with one another. This announcement coming days after Foreign Ministries from both countries met in Moscow.

Pyongyang has sent Russia missiles and ammo to us on the battlefield in Ukraine.

I'm Marianne Rafferty. Now back SUNDAY NIGHT AMERICA.

GOWDY: Welcome back to SUNDAY NIGHT IN AMERICA.

First Kevin McCarthy, then Stevie Scalise, and then Jimmy Jordan, Tom Emmer, and now Mike Johnson. Some House Republicans just can't seem to find a leader they like other than themselves and of the loudest critics lack the courage and the votes to be Speaker themselves.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REP. MATT GAETZ (R-FL): Kevin McCarthy's true coalition partner on all things of substance has been than the Democrats this Congress. He worked with Democrats on the debt limit bill and only Democrats are really campaigning on that bill.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: In the entire four terms I've served, one of the worst votes I've ever cast.

REP. BOB GOOD (R-VA): Well, I wish the Freedom Caucus could be the determinant of every bill that's drawn and I think we'd be a lot better off if we could do that.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GOWDY: So some people think being Speaker is third in line for the presidency, but really, it's first in line for the gallows.

Kim Strassel is a "Wall Street Journal" columnist, a Fox News contributor, and she joins us now.

Eight House Republicans led by the guy from Florida linked arms with Rashida Tlaib and Adam Schiff to run off McCarthy, and now it looks like Johnson is doing pretty much what Kevin did, which he has to rely on Democrat votes to keep government open. So what are they going to do to him?

KIMBERLEY STRASSEL, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CONTRIBUTOR: Yes, well, hi, Trey.

Look, I think right now, Johnson is benefiting from the fact that people realize how embarrassing their behavior was. You're right, if there was a moment, this week, when this continuing resolution was passed, the House Freedom Caucus hates it, and voted against it, so did many heads of committees, but it passed with Democratic support. And yet no one is suggesting that they're going to try to take Johnson out.

And I think that's because they're embarrassed by what happened before. I think that in their heart of hearts, they know that they're probably not going to get a more conservative leader than they have in Mike Johnson.

And then finally, the last thing is, Trey, this is a big issue from when you opened, which is these guys can grouse all they want, but none of them have the votes to become Speaker themselves.

And so they got to figure out how to get on the same page and understand the only thing that helps right now is unity.

GOWDY: You know, Kim, you know this, and I suspect our viewers know it, but it bears repeating. Most of those yelling the loudest are in ruby red districts with no chance of being defeated in a general election in November. But they have GOP colleagues in districts where Biden won.

So how does all of this internecine drama help keep the majority or -- I mean, I wonder if they don't care? I mean, selfie sticks work in the majority or the minority, it doesn't matter. You can still do your selfies and be a social media star. But in the house, the majority is all that matters. So are they not aware? They are like jeopardizing it by putting some of their colleagues in tough spots.

STRASSEL: Well, you know, what the most remarkable thing to me about that is, too, Trey, is it if you are in one of those ruby red districts, you have no chance of not being re-elected. It means that in some ways, you have the greatest ability to actually be reasonable on things, to occasionally take a harder vote, to be a leader on something and say, look, we're not getting the whole loaf, but half a loaf is better than none, and we need to come together.

They are not willing to do that. And instead, there's a lot of posturing going on. There's a lot of opportunity to be in front of the media, as you said, with your selfie stick. And you've got all these guys, as you said, the only thing that creates a Speaker is if you have 217 votes, and right down there, now they're down to what? Two? Two in terms of a majority.

This is going to be a tough election. Nobody should kid themselves. And every time they turn the storyline into their own internal divisions and fighting, they are broadcasting to the nation that they cannot govern, and making that re-election issue that much harder not to mention some of these tough votes for the guys that really do need to win for that majority.

GOWDY: I want to pick up on something you alluded to earlier. Mike Johnson is a very good decent man. I served with him. It also means he's no match for some of his opponents in the GOP conference, because he is a good decent person. But his opponents have nowhere to turn. I mean, he was -- in fairness to him, he was like the eighth choice. So who are they going to replace him with?

STRASSEL: Well, and I think that that is what has held off another motion to vacate the chair, is we saw the spectacle this fall of going after person after person that they rejected. And again at the time, let's go back, roll the tape, many of them when they did vote for him, in the end said, oh, you know, look, all of this was worth it because we got Mike Johnson. He is finally a conservative. Now they're going to change your mind?

GOWDY: Yes. Well, people in that line of work are not great at admitting they were wrong, but sometimes the voters are good at telling you, you were wrong, whether you admit it or not.

Kim Strassel, great columnist from "The Wall Street Journal." Love having you on the show. Thank you for joining us on a Sunday night.

STRASSEL: Thank you.

GOWDY: Up next, immigration, border security, and perhaps the dumbest idea you have ever heard from a member of Congress, which is saying quite a lot.

We'll explain next with some help from Florida Congresswoman Maria Salazar right after the break.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

GOWDY: Welcome back to SUNDAY NIGHT IN AMERICA.

Border Security and Immigration are important issues to the voters In fact in Iowa, the border was cited by more folks than even the economy. It was issue number one.

Voters are serious about having a country with real boundaries and laws that makes sense, and laws that protect Americans but also provide hope and opportunity for those truly in need, but some House Democrats seem to think it's a joke.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REP. MAXWELL FROST (D-FL): Pushing your bigoted HR 2 bill, then also pass this bill. I've taken the liberty of drafting it for you. It removes the Statue of Liberty, our largest symbol that tells people to come here.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GOWDY: Well, what a stupid thing to either say or think that because a country wants to know who's coming in why that we should take down a beacon of liberty.

Real countries have real borders. While this member of the House is acting like a clown, other more serious minded legislators are close to shaking hands, perhaps on a bipartisan deal tied to stronger border measures with aid for Ukraine.

It's a good agreement and what does a real border have to do with Eastern Europe? Joining us now is House Foreign Affairs Committee member, Congresswoman Maria Salazar from the great state of Florida who is one of those serious minded legislators trying to solve this complicated issue.

Let me first get your reaction to the agreement being worked on in the Senate.

REP. MARIA ELVIRA SALAZAR (R-FL): Well, thank you for the opportunity.

We don't have the final legislation, so it would be irresponsible on my part to be speculating. But we do know that we have to solve the mess at the border or we've got to seal the border, just like you said.

Any country that respects itself needs to have control of who is coming in and who's not. And right now, what we have is six million illegals coming in the last three years.

We cannot afford that for the rest of -- in 2024. So that's why I have written a law called the Dignity Law, which accomplishes the same thing as HR 2, which did pass with a majority of the Republicans in the House of Representatives.

The thing, Mr. Gowdy is that we need to do something bipartisan, because we need to have the votes between Republicans and Democrats to pass legislation, whether it's in the Senate or in the House of Representatives.

And as you know, we only have two-vote margin. So my bill is the only one that both political parties have sat down and we have negotiated and we accomplish the same thing as HR 2.

We seal the border, we invest $35 billion in the best technology -- best technology -- and then we end catch-and-release, which is the big monster in the room. Because catch-and-release is what has or the asylum system or the asylum laws that we have right now is what the illegals are gaming the system.

Stop it. We create humanitarian centers where we give the opportunity to anyone who is claiming asylum to come in, prove their case in 60 days in a humanitarian campus, five campuses along the border. If you have merit, you stay; if you don't, you have to go back home.

After that, we determine that the cartel, the Mexican cartels, this bunch of thugs who are the coyotes who are making an immense amount of money, we're going to make them -- we're going to designate them part of a transnational organization, meaning that we will be able to not only arrest them, ask Mexico to deport them and freeze their assets.

We're going to make the child sex traffickers rot in jail, 25-year mandatory sentence, and we're going to provide Border Patrol what they need -- technology, more money, more agents, and then after we do all of that, we can look back and we can make those who are here who have been here for more than five years, who have been paying taxes to pay for having come in illegally, and then give them some type of dignity so they can work in the Promised Land, which human dignity is one of the seven principles of conservatism.

GOWDY: All right, let me ask you. For those at home that obviously, they care very much about this issue, but they may not follow it as closely obviously, as you do. ***Politics*** is messy. And sometimes you have to do things that seem unconnected.

To a viewer at home, what does securing the border or immigration reform have to do with military aid to Ukraine? Why are those two issues linked together?

SALAZAR: Well, because that is what some members of the publican party have asked leadership to do. We don't have to do that. I don't mind doing it, but I do know that the most urgent and imminent issue we have right now is that we've got to seal the border, and we need a piece of legislation that does it. And then -- and we have not been able to come together in the House and in the Senate to produce that legislation.

So I'm just waiting to see if dignity is taken up as a consideration. We've got to seal the border, and we've got to take care of those people who are here, 10 million illegals. We're going to make them pay for having broken the law.

GOWDY: Real countries have real borders, and Maria Salazar has real solutions to a problem that has confounded this country for a quarter century.

Congresswoman, thank you so much for joining us. Look forward to continuing this conversation.

SALAZAR: May the Lord help us. That's all we need. And thanks to you for your time.

GOWDY: Yes, ma'am. Amen.

Still ahead, Biden is facing friendly fire in DC over the conflict in the Middle East while Iran grows stronger.

Former Navy SEAL, John McGuire is next on SUNDAY NIGHT IN AMERICA.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

GOWDY: Welcome back to SUNDAY NIGHT IN AMERICA.

It doesn't matter what Israel does, enemies of the Jewish state are undeterred. Even as Israel vows to scale back the war against Hamas, Iranian-backed terrorists continue to attack and the potential for expanded conflict in the region grows.

More Hamas tunnels have been found in Gaza. The Houthi continue to attack US and commercial assets despite American airstrikes in Yemen and Hezbollah is firing missiles into Israel trying to provoke a war in the north.

Here at home, Biden is fighting against the doves in his own party and those who can't seem to pick between Israel and a terrorist group that rapes women and kills children.

Senator Bernie Sanders tried to force a vote that would have frozen military aid to Israel, while some Biden staffers looked to stage an anti- Israel walkout.

Trying to make sense of this, although it will be hard is former Navy SEAL and current US congressional candidate, John McGuire. Welcome to you. Thank you for your service.

What's going on in the Middle East? And why is the US response to Iran, seemingly so slight and measured? It seems like they do just barely enough to invoke self-defense but no more?

JOHN MCGUIRE, FORMER US NAVY SEAL: Well, that's a major lack of leadership. Our commander-in-chief, he is lacking leadership. You know, under Trump, we would not have these problems.

In the beginning of his administration, he immediately sent a signal to the Middle East that we will stand strong with our allies. And when you don't do anything about these limited attacks on US soldiers, they get emboldened. And the next thing you know, they're sending missiles at our ships, a couple of missiles a week or so ago, and then Sunday, another missile. Thank God, our air forces took out those missiles.

But peace through strength, you remember Ronald Reagan said it, it's true. We've got to send a signal.

The only thing a bully understands is if you punch him in the mouth. And one thing we learned in the military is there's a bully on every corner and if you don't stand up to them, it just gets worse.

Now, we need the leadership of President Trump. You know, under President Trump, he got to peace treaties in the Middle East. And I think every president since I've been alive has talked about having a peace treaty in the Middle East and he had two.

So major leadership vacuum, we need more leadership.

GOWDY: Our Democrats in Washington are at odds with one another, which is rare, but they're at odds with one another over Israel, which should provide an opening for Republicans in the House, if they can just stop fighting with each other.

And honestly, I love the Commonwealth of Virginia, I really do. But one of the ringleaders of this internecine fighting is from your own home state.

MCGUIRE: Yes, it's amazing. I've got to tell you, I stand with Israel a hundred percent. They are our best ally, strongest ally, and they are the only democracy in the Middle East and they are holding the line, so we need to fully support them.

And Trey, I don't know if your audience has access to my at AIPAC white paper, but if you want to know where I stand on Israel, check out that white paper.

You know, I think I'll be a better fit for the Fifth Congressional district because my opponent, Bob Good, he has a major lack of leadership. He's not representing the people in the district the way a strong leader would, you know, you can't be voting no on everything, no solution kind of guy.

I think he causes a lot of problems. He votes no on everything. And if he doesn't get his way, he partners with the Democrats that want to destroy our country from within. They want to destroy Israel, and all of our conservative values.

I mean, all of those people that he partnered with are anti -- well, they're pro-choice, they're anti-gun and anti-liberty. And so I think we can do better than Good. And we need leadership and we need someone who knows how to build a team, how to lead, and how to win because we are losing our country and I think all of your listeners would agree, we all have -- well, our children have less freedom today than you and I had growing up.

GOWDY: Thank you. God bless you. Take care of yourself and thank you for spending part of your Sunday with us.

Hope you have a great week ahead. Until next week, you can find us online at Gowdy America or on "The Trey Gowdy Podcast."

Good night from South Carolina.

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