

# [***A Worm in the Apple of RFK Jr.'s New Camelot | Opinion***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C1D-XH71-DY68-1001-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** With a week in which Robert F. Kennedy Jr. declared that a doctor had found a dead worm in his brain, which he then topped off with an abortion flip-flop, he is neither endearing himself with voters or his running mate.

**Body**

Last week—well, last week wasn't great for Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

With a week in which he declared that [*a doctor had found a dead worm in his brain*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/08/well/live/brain-worm-parasites-rfk-jr.html), which he then topped off with [*an abortion flip-flop*](https://www.foxnews.com/media/rfk-jr-says-supports-abortion-even-full-term), he is neither endearing himself with voters [*or his running mate*](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2024-election/robert-f-kennedy-jr-surprise-running-mate-abortion-position-rcna151344).

There's plenty to unpack here.

Initially, Kennedy stated in an interview that abortion should be legal up until full term, with the decision left entirely to women. Previously, he had suggested a federally enforced ban three-months into a woman's pregnancy. That's a massive shift.

Kennedy's running mate, Nicole Shanahan, pushed back hard on this, forcing Kennedy to walk back his comments, clarifying that he supports legal abortion only up to a certain point in pregnancy before restricting it once the fetus becomes viable outside the womb.

Put as mildly as one can, RFK Jr. is a man who has some pretty out-there views that set him apart from mainstream thought, especially when it comes to public health. Part of his oeuvre is vaccine safety—he has pushed the thoroughly debunked idea that vaccines cause autism for years.

Kennedy also throws shade at 5G technology, claiming it could lead to major health issues, despite there being no solid evidence to back that up. He often criticizes big pharma and standard medical practices, favoring alternative approaches that most doctors wouldn't stand behind.

This is a man who is, put as simply as humanly possible, not a serious presidential candidate.

And that's where RFK Jr's week really begins and ends.

**How Did We Get Here?**

RFK Jr.'s campaign begins and ends with his name, a storied political family that defined an era. The ongoing Camelot myth and tragedy.

But the theme running through everything that the original Kennedy political generation touched was DEMOCRACY.

John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert F. Kennedy were profoundly committed to pushing forward democratic values. JFK, who became the 35th President in 1960, was a strong advocate for civil rights and nuclear disarmament and aimed to inspire Americans towards a more equitable society.

His presidency, tragically cut short by assassination in Dallas in 1963, is celebrated and enshrined for its progressive reforms and idealistic spirit. Robert, as U.S. Attorney General, was intensely focused on civil rights and social justice, and played a pivotal role in his brother's efforts to tackle organized crime and corruption.

Following JFK's assassination, RFK pursued his own political career, running for president in 1968 on a platform centered on unity, poverty alleviation, and ending the Vietnam War. His assassination later that year marked the end of an era characterized by a profound commitment to democracy and ethical governance, a legacy of the Kennedy brothers' belief in doing the right thing for their country and its citizens.

This was simply good ***politics*** done well for admirable ends.

In this context, it's hard to be hard on RFK, Jr.

**So where do we go from here?**

Into a dark abyss of uncertainty, really.

Last week should, mercifully, prove to be a momentum killer for the Kennedy campaign.

As voters choose between what they feel is expired milk or expired yogurt, close to 15 percent of them might be fine voting for a particularly rancid cheese. Maybe, the more they actually consider the cheese, they might (but probably won't) realize that one of the other dairy products isn't simply well past its best-before date, it's laced with cyanide.

If we thought the traditional binary choice we faced in 2016 and 2020 was hard enough, now we add in a truly wild wild card in a JAG (Just a Guy) with the Kennedy last name. Because if Nicole Shanahan (infinitely more qualified to become president than the senior person on her ticket) were making a presidential run, she wouldn't even make a 1 percent blip on the electoral radar.

[*The most recent HarrisX/Harris Poll*](https://harvardharrispoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/HHP_Apr2024_KeyResults.pdf) by the Harvard University Center for American Political Studies, with a large sample of two million registered voters, has RFK Jr. at a 44 percent favorability rating. It's admittedly the highest of the current polls, but a year ago his favorability was close to 50 percent among an average of all polls.

Add to that, [*last week's Quinnipiac poll*](https://nypost.com/2024/05/08/us-news/biden-leads-trump-in-wisconsin-but-race-narrows-with-rfk-jr-on-ballot-poll/) on the battleground state of Wisconsin and the news is more concerning. RFK Jr. is currently polling at 12 percent in Wisconsin, with strong forward momentum.

All of this was perfectly framed on Monday morning when [*the New York Times published what should be seen as a blockbuster piece*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/13/us/politics/biden-trump-battleground-poll.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare) in which they reveal the depth of President [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s current slide in the polls in the key battleground states. The insertion of any third-party candidate to the mix is going to test our patience, our polls, and our society.

This is all too much to digest for some of us who like to think we are grounded in an actual political reality.

RFK Jr. won't become president in 2024 or ever. That's the fleeting good news - fleeting because unless something or a set of things that are more dramatic than what we saw last week happens in the next few months, RFK Jr. ultimately has the power to determine who the next president will be. And if that doesn't scare you, pay closer attention.

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*The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.*

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2392754/rfk-jr.jpg)

**Graphic**

RFK Jr.

Brandon Bell/Getty Images

Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. speaks to attendees during a campaign rally at Brazos Hall on May 13, in Austin, Texas.

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