

# [***Nikki Haley's Last Stand***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BD4-FHS1-JBR6-91J2-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** Haley heads into the South Carolina GOP primary knowing she desperately needs a positive result in her home state.

**Body**

Nikki Haley's 2024 presidential hopes could all but be over unless she manages to pull off a shock victory at the South Carolina GOP primary on Saturday. *Newsweek* spoke to an expert about Haley's chances.

There have already been suggestions that the former South Carolina governor should drop out of the race after she finished third in the Iowa caucus and lost the New Hampshire primary to [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) by 11 points, despite suggestions she would put up more of a serious challenger to the former president in the Granite State.

Matters only got worse for Haley when she opted not to take part in the Nevada caucus, where the delegates were actually handed out, over claims it was "rigged" in favor of Trump and instead only took part in the Nevada primary.

In an [*embarrassing night for Haley*](https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-nikki-haley-nevada-primary-loss-1867557?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), she finished in second place on 31 percent, losing to "none of these candidates" by more than 30 points. Trump was [*not on the Nevada primary ballots*](https://www.newsweek.com/why-donald-trumps-missing-nevada-primary-ballot-1857409?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), and easily won the Nevada caucus on February 8, further cementing his position as the overwhelming favorite to clinch the GOP nomination.

Undeterred, Haley's team insisted that they were still at "full steam" and looking ahead to the primary in her home state of South Carolina.

However, numerous polls suggest that once again [*Trump appears to be the clear leader*](https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-nikki-haleys-chances-south-carolina-primary-1863939?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) in the two-horse race.

All the most recent surveys heading into the February 24 primary show Trump with strong double-digit leads over Haley, including a YouGov/CBS poll which showed the former president by 35 points (65 to 30 percent).

A February 13 FAU PolCom Lab and Mainstreet Research poll showed Trump with an even greater lead of 45 points over Haley (65 to 23 percent).

Danielle Vinson, a professor of ***politics*** and international affairs at Furman University in South Carolina, suggested that Haley may not need to win the February 24 primary, but will definitely need her support to push closer to around 50 percent to increase the pressure on Trump.

"If she falls below 40 percent, I don't really see a rationale for continuing other than waiting around and hoping Trump's legal problems will overtake him—which seems unlikely at best," Vinson told *Newsweek.*

Haley's office has been contacted for comment via email.

In the early days of the GOP primary, Haley struggled with not [*having as much of a national profile*](https://www.newsweek.com/nikki-haley-2024-campaign-poll-trump-1783009?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) as some of the other [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) in the field, including former Vice President [*Mike Pence*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/mike-pence?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) or Florida Governor [*Ron DeSantis*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/ron-desantis?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

However, Haley managed to sweep aside all the other candidates to become Trump's final serious challenger, with [*strong performances in the televised debates*](https://www.newsweek.com/who-won-republican-debate-gop-primary-california-1830516?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and her ability to appeal to more moderate and anti-Trump voters helping her campaign.

However, in the end, it was always unlikely that anyone would be able to topple Trump as the de-facto leader of the GOP, with not even his four criminal indictments hurting the former president's support among his Republican and MAGA base.

"She is a disciplined candidate, and her strategy made sense at one level—clear the field and then compete head to head with Trump," Vinson said. "However, praising Trump and saying she would still vote for him if he's the candidate for much of the past year undermines her current arguments that he is not up to the job."

At age 52, there is always a chance Haley [*could come back for another White House bid*](https://www.newsweek.com/nikki-haley-gop-primary-debate-trump-2024-future-bids-1850293?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)where Trump will not be such an overpowering presence.

"While she has made some people mad with her attacks on Trump, I do think she might still have a future in ***politics*** if the Republican Party gets past Trump," Vinson added.

"While elected officials and party operatives have long memories and might hold grudges, her attacks on Trump are unlikely to lead to lasting animosity from most voters in the Republican Party.

"And people have found her to be competent and well-versed in policy, which might help her in a more normal primary process than the one we have this year that is mostly a referendum on Trump and a battle over style rather than substance."

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2352212/nikki-haleys-last-stand.jpg)

**Graphic**

Nikki Haley's Last Stand

Photo-illustration by Newsweek/Getty

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