



BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI Pool Photo

THE RACE HEATS UP

Vice President Kamala Harris lands at Andrews Air Force Base for a flight to an Indiana rally. President Biden later spoke to the nation in an Oval Office address. Read our coverage at latimes.com and in our eNewspaper, where subscribers get an exclusive “LATEXtra.”



ANALYSIS

Underdog Harris faces key choices in new campaign

She must quickly decide on the most strategic states and running mate and the right image to project.

By DAVID LAUTER

WASHINGTON — Almost everything has gone right for Vice President Kamala Harris in the initial days of her sudden presidential campaign — rapid consolidation of support from party officials, a massive surge in financial contributions and a burst of enthusiasm among party activists that has swept aside the despair that had enveloped many Democrats.

Yet Harris remains the underdog in the race against former President Trump, at least in terms of winning the states needed for an electoral college majority.

Whether that changes could turn on three fundamental strategic decisions Harris and her top advisors must make in the 3½ weeks between now and the opening of the Democratic National Convention on Aug. 19.

In rapid succession, Harris must:

- Settle on an electoral

college path, which will guide how the campaign spends its money and, critically, its limited time;

■ Choose a running mate, which will help set a tone for the campaign and, if possible, reinforce the electoral strategy; and

■ Perhaps most important, decide how she wants to position herself politically to rebut the Republican portrayal of her as a feckless, out-of-touch California liberal.

Typically, campaigns spend weeks — sometimes months — studying reams of data to make those decisions. Harris has just days.

Moreover, Harris and her team will have to make their choices more by gut instinct than is usual: Polling data so far provide tantalizing hints about the status of the race, but with the presidential campaign traversing territory that is without precedent in American politics, both sides, and outside analysts, are flying somewhat blind.

“It’s still really early” to accurately measure what the public thinks about the remade Democratic ticket, said Democratic pollster Natalie Jackson. “All of this is still sinking in with the general public.”

With major news events coming, including the selection of a vice president, [See Analysis, A7]

A NEWS CRISIS IN CALIFORNIA

Trying to make Big Tech pay for journalism

Can the state learn from efforts in Australia and Canada?

By JENNY JARVIE

Three years ago, when Australian politicians took on the titans of Big Tech — crafting legislation to force Google and Facebook to pay for news articles they share on their sites — Google threatened to pull out of the country.

If the News Media Bargaining Code became law, Google Australia Managing Director Mel Silva said in a Senate hearing, the company would have “no real choice” but to stop making Google Search available in Australia.

Facebook’s parent went further. After the bill passed the lower house of parliament, Meta blocked Australian news outlets from posting content on Facebook and prevented users across Australia from linking to news sites for six days.

But Google and Facebook did not carry through with their threats in Australia.



RICK RYCROFT Associated Press

FACEBOOK initially fought Australia’s law requiring tech giants to pay for news articles.

By the time the bill became law, the government had made a key concession: It allowed digital platforms to bypass regulation if they volunteered to make private deals with media companies. The result: Google and Facebook rushed to negotiate agreements with most major news outlets to get around regulations in the law.

Ultimately, Australian officials estimate, Facebook and Google doled out \$166 million a year to Australian newsrooms — a tiny fraction of Alphabet and Meta’s combined value of more than \$3 trillion, but substantial payments for many ailing media groups.

The Australian law is now a model for legislators in Sacramento who are proposing the California Journalism Preservation Act, a bill that would require tech giants to compensate media companies for accessing their news content.

The California legislature is considering the bill. [See Journalism, A9]

Hollywood power brokers putting their money on VP

By STACY PERMAN, SEEMA MEHTA AND SAMANTHA MASUNAGA

Barely a month ago, a veritable who’s who of Hollywood A-listers turned out for President Biden. The event, organized by former DreamWorks Animation Chief Executive Jeffrey Katzenberg, drew George Clooney, Barbra Streisand and Julia Roberts.

Jimmy Kimmel moderated an interview with Biden and former President Obama at the gathering in downtown Los Angeles’ Peacock Theater. Sheryl Lee Ralph sang and Jack Black entertained the star-studded crowd wearing a pair of American flag overalls.

The evening raised more than \$30 million, the largest one-night campaign haul in Democratic history.

But behind the fawning praise and laughs, cracks began to appear in the public façade.

Some of the most powerful members of Hollywood, who had steadfastly supported the president, harbored some serious reservations about the 81-year-old’s mental acuity.

At times during the event, Biden’s answers meandered and Obama occasionally jumped in to redirect the conversation.

Then came Biden’s disastrous debate performance. And those very same industry stalwarts who had just feted Biden began saying he should not seek reelection.

“Lost” co-creator Damon Lindelof, who attended the fundraiser, was one of the first to publicly call for Biden to step aside.

“Biden has to go & the Dems need to wake up,” he wrote in a column for Deadline, adding that donors should withhold checks until he did so. Within days others followed suit. Netflix co-founder and major Democratic donor Reed Hastings also called on Biden to end his reelection bid.

The most damaging blow came a week later, when Clooney wrote a blistering op-ed for the New York Times, saying, “The Joe Biden I was with three weeks ago at the fundraiser was not the Joe ‘big F-ing deal’ Biden of 2010. He wasn’t even the Joe Biden of 2020. He was the same man we all witnessed at the debate.”

Clooney’s public excommunication proved to be a tipping point. [See Harris, A6]

Sheriff’s officials investigated reporter

Then-Times journalist had used leaked info. 1st Amendment expert criticizes the inquiry.

By KERI BLAKINGER AND ALENE TCHERMEDYIAN

For at least three years, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department secretly investigated — and ultimately urged the state attorney general to prosecute — a Los Angeles Times reporter who wrote about a leaked list of problem deputies, according to internal department records.

The inquiry began in 2017

when investigators under then-Sheriff Jim McDonnell tried to figure out who slipped the list of roughly 300 names to reporter Maya Lau. The case soon fizzled out. But after Alex Villanueva took office as sheriff in 2018, the department revived it, according to a 300-page investigative case file recently reviewed by The Times.

The department eventually deemed Lau a criminal suspect — alleging she knowingly received “stolen property.” And it pointed to Diana Teran, its own constitutional policing advisor, as the source of the leak, even though Teran was the one who’d initially reported it and denied passing along

the information.

Sheriff’s officials sent the case to state Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta in 2021, and in May this year his office formally declined to prosecute. The office declined to answer specific questions, saying only that it “found insufficient evidence” to merit criminal charges.

“I’m glad this investigation is over, and it’s an outrage that the Sheriff’s Department would criminally investigate me as a reporter for doing my job,” Lau, who left the paper in 2021, told The Times. “It’s the kind of action that’s aimed at intimidating journalists from digging into government agencies.”

[See Reporter, A5]

Extreme heat is a way of life in Death Valley

Residents learn to live with the deadly high summer temperatures.

By NOAH HAGGERTY

DEATH VALLEY, Calif. — The temperature had just crept past 125 degrees, and Stephen Peterson was staring absently at a family cooling off in the Stovepipe Wells hotel swimming pool.

“It can make you stir-crazy,” he said of enduring the oppressive heat.

Summer in Death Valley — famously (or infamously)

the “hottest place on Earth” — can be brutal. Even without this month’s heat wave, the temperatures in July frequently top 120.

Although tourists and thrill seekers seldom spend more than 24 hours here in the summer, park rangers, tourism staff and Native Americans live here full-time, when conditions can easily kill those who are careless. For some of these year-round residents, the heat can feel like a prison because of the restrictions it places on life.

Peterson and his buddy Aniken Yeager work in the park. [See Heat, A7]

Netanyahu’s divisive address

In speech to Congress, Israeli leader defends war and derides U.S. protesters. **NATION, A4**

Kershaw to take mound again

Dodgers starter is set to make his 2024 debut Thursday after a long rehab stint. **SPORTS, B10**

NBA won’t re-up TNT contract

League snubs Warner Bros. Discovery in favor of Amazon’s bid for rights. **BUSINESS, A8**

Weather

Mostly sunny, warm. L.A. Basin: 92/67. **B6**

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