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## WASHINGTON POLICY STRATEGY

# Potomac Perspective

**Brian Gardner**  
Chief Washington Policy Strategist  
[bgardner@stifel.com](mailto:bgardner@stifel.com)



We have reached critical mass. Based on developments of the past few days, we now think it is more likely than not that President Joe Biden will drop out of the presidential race. Vice President Kamala Harris is his most likely successor as the Democratic Party's nominee. We do not think this materially alters the outcome of the general election. We estimate Donald Trump's chance of winning at around 65% - 70%. We think the odds Mr. Biden will drop out of the race are around 80% (up from 40%).

### Time's Up

Efforts to convince President Biden to drop out of the presidential race hit a lull following the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump. In recent days, those efforts have intensified. We now think they have reached critical mass and there is an 80% chance (up from 40% last week) that President Biden drops out of the presidential race. The factors that led us to increase the odds of dropping out include:

- Signals from former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-California) that Mr. Biden should not run. We believe former Speaker Pelosi's view carries significant weight with President Biden.
- Comments from Joe Scarborough on MSNBC. Mr. Biden often watches the show. While Mr. Scarborough did not explicitly call for Biden to drop out, the message was unmistakable. We think this will carry weight with Mr. Biden.
- Former President Barack Obama has reportedly told people that he does not believe that Biden can win. Mr. Obama's comments might not directly impact Mr. Biden's thinking, but it will further erode Democratic support.
- The diagnosis that Mr. Biden has COVID is probably not a game changer but will reinforce the issue of Mr. Biden's health and age. The video of Mr. Biden haltingly walking up and down the steps of Air Force One after the diagnosis will reinforce the public's concerns about Mr. Biden's ability to campaign vigorously and win the election.

Mr. Biden's remaining source of support among Democrats consists of Representative James Clyburn (D-South Carolina) and the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). We think it is only a matter of time before this group signals that it agrees with other Democrats about the need to move on from Mr. Biden.

While Mr. Biden could announce his decision as soon as this weekend, we think that it's more likely to be early next week after his isolation for COVID ends.

### Next Up

Vice President Kamala Harris is the heavy favorite to succeed Mr. Biden as the Democratic Party's nominee. Due to time and logistical constraints, it will be difficult for any Democrat to organize a campaign and raise money. Ms. Harris could inherit the Biden campaign infrastructure, including the campaign's funds. Furthermore, we expect the CBC will back Vice President Harris if Mr. Biden does, in fact, drop out. Other Democrats will struggle to match these advantages.

### General Election Impact

This is, obviously, an unprecedented and fluid situation. We do not, however, think replacing Mr. Biden with Ms. Harris fundamentally changes the general election. Donald Trump would remain the frontrunner, in our view. In the short run, Ms. Harris

could revive Democratic enthusiasm, but she has not proven to be an effective campaigner nationally. We also suspect she would struggle to win back the working class voters, who have been moving away from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. That said, if she campaigns more effectively than she has to date, there is a possibility she could boost younger voter and Black voter turnout. Mr. Biden has struggled to win support from these two key constituencies at a high enough level to ensure reelection.

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