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WEBINAR

ANALYZING THE ELECTION RESULTS OF SUPER TUESDAY

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KAMARCK: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to this Brookings webinar on Super Tuesday. I'm Elaine Kamarck, Senior Fellow here at Brookings. And for purposes of the discussion today, I'm the also the author of "Primary Politics Everything You Need To Know About How America Nominates Its Presidential Candidates." With me today, I have three seasoned political analysts. I'll introduce them in alphabetical order. First we have Christopher Cadelago. He is the California bureau chief for Politico. Before that, he covered the White House for Obama and Biden for Politico, as well as covering the Biden and Harris and Harris campaign. And he's worked at the Sacramento Bee in a variety of other California papers, newspapers. So, Christopher, welcome to Brookings. Next we have Chris, William Christopher, Bill Christopher. He is a leading American conservative writer. He was founder and editor of the Weekly Standard, and he recently joined The Bulwark as editor at large. He's the author of many books and articles and a much sought-after speaker and TV commentator. Finally, last but not least is Gabriel Sanchez. He is my colleague here at the Brookings Institution, as well as a professor at the University of New Mexico. He specializes in Hispanic politics and in doing some polling. And he is the author of a forthcoming book, "Latino Politics in America Community, Culture and Interests." So I, I'm going to take the prerogative as moderator and start today's discussion with a little history of Super Tuesday. It owes its creation to President Jimmy Carter. Carter was the second Democratic nominee to win under the new reformed rules, and the first one to become president. Unlike other politicians of his day, he understood that in the new system sequence mattered. It was a sequence of contests, not one. At the same time, both political parties were trying to figure out how to keep the nomination season from running into the fall or Christmas of the year before. So they adopted rules saying when their states could begin to hold primaries: early March. And they carved out exceptions for traditionally early states like Iowa and New Hampshire. So in the run up to Jimmy Carter's reelection campaign in 1980, his campaign used their influence from the White House to move as many Southern states as possible early in the season. And the idea was that if a lot of Southern states happened early on, he could build up a delegate lead, which would hold him in good stead against any challenger. At the time they were doing this, they thought the challenger would be Jerry Brown. It turned out that governor Jerry Brown, it turned out that his most formidable challenger ended up being Senator Ted Kennedy. But that's the way these things goes. So is the 1980 nomination race began, Super Tuesday had a definite Southern accent. By 1988, the Southern accent was even stronger as moderates in the Democratic Party, led by the Democratic Leadership Council, tried to create a calendar that would produce more moderate candidates for the Democrats. In fact, it didn't work out that way. The Democrats nominated Michael Dukakis. But that just goes to show how, these things never quite work out the way people think. Nonetheless, for a time, Super Tuesday was known as the SEC primary after the Southern Southeastern

Conference for college sports. As the new role rules in nomination politics took hold, states came to understand that being early made you important. So over the years, more and more states moved to Super Tuesday, creating more of a national primary. Minnesota, Massachusetts and California joined Southern states on Super Tuesday, and this year's Super Tuesday, while not the SEC primary anymore, still has a Southern accent to it, with seven states from the South, if you include Oklahoma, composing a little bit less than half of the states that we heard from yesterday. States do come in and out of Super Tuesday, but it remains the first big delegate day of the nomination season, which is why it is so important and attracts so much attention. So with that, let's go to a discussion of what happened yesterday, and I want to start with Bill Kristol and ask Bill, hey, what do you make what are we to make of Nikki Haley in showing last night? And what do you think she's going to do next?

KRISTOL: Good to be with you all. I voted for Nikki Haley in Northern Virginia and I'm glad to say that she carried my little precinct in Mclean by better than 2 to 1. So I guess I can still go to the Giant, you know, and not not be harassed or, shunned by all my fellow Northern Virginians. But she didn't carry Virginia, which seemed like a state where she might have a real shot. She lost almost 2 to 1, and basically she lost, but she did well against Trump because Trump, it's Trump's party, and he's now being renominated for the third time in a row. Something that does not happen very often in American politics. I was running my mind over this. I mean, Nixon had three nominations, but not sequential. FDR, obviously, but I think no one else. And I don't know, I mean, I guess Grover Cleveland, I guess the late 19th century, I mean, it's very, I mean, the degree of Trump's control of the party was really shown last night. Haley is running a good campaign, I think picked up most of the you know, non-Trump enthusiastic and non-Trump acquiescent votes. Ended up getting 25, 30, 34 in most of the states. Sort of depends on whether they were open primaries or not and obviously on the character of the Republican Party in these different states. And she and she, suspended her campaign this morning. So, last one standing, all these, you know, those those of us who've been involved in the anti-Trump efforts had many excuses for why, you know, it didn't quite work out. as the field was fractured. We never got a one-on-one race. Well, we got a one-on-one race this time, with a good candidate, really. And someone who could appeal to pretty much the entire swath of the Republican Party. She's not too liberal on social issues for Republicans. She was a governor of a Republican state, the ambassador to the UN, and appropriately tough on, you know, Iran and and foreign policy and so forth. And still, at the end of the day, the party wanted Trump. The party got Trump. Governor Haley pulled out this, this morning and did not endorse Trump. I think that's the biggest story of the last six weeks, will turn out to have been the dynamic of the Haley campaign itself, which pushed her, to be a more radical critic of Trump, as I would put it, than she

certainly was in those debates last year on the stage where she raised her hand to say she would endorse Trump and where she was very much pulling her punches against Trump, except for some vague stuff about how it's a little chaotic when he's around, you know, she really took him on on NATO and Putin and she took him on, even on January 6th at the end, which has been sort of, territory you can't go into if you're a Republican, apparently, and, and some other issues as well. So it's interesting. I mean, you've been through this, Elaine, others too. I mean, I'll just say a word on this and stop. The, you know, these campaigns that do have a dynamic of their own, right? I mean, she didn't start off intending to quite to be where or expecting to be where she is today, I think. And I, I give her credit, really, in a way, for internalizing that dynamic. And I think also dealing with Trump wasn't pleasant. So - and Trump's people - so that probably radicalized her a little. Reminds me a little I was just a kid then that Eugene McCarthy, you know, it was not a big new left youth power person in 1967. He was a slightly diffident Catholic, you know, anti-war, but, you know, sort of senator from Minnesota. Hubert Humphrey was the great liberal hope in Minnesota, not a champion in Minnesota, not McCarthy. And the dynamic of that campaign made McCarthy much more radical in a sense, and much more the embodiment of a certain movement almost than he intended to be or started out to be. I think the big question now for Haley is how much she embraces that. She might not, she might take a month or two off, maybe end up endorsing, maybe not endorse, maybe just say or sentence about I support the ticket and go not, you know, stay out of it. Keep her powder dry for 2028. Or does she, as she sort of suggested this morning in her in her remarks, you know, think she has a role to play in 2024 and she's going to continue to criticize Joe Biden and she apparently can't imagine supporting Biden. But, obviously, the bulk of what she's done so far is to criticize Trump, but would she keep doing that in a general election campaign? Does, are there third party or independent candidates she could support? I think she's a big unknown factor in this race. You know, whatever you have, Biden and Trump are not unknown. And, you know, they it's the first time in over a century we've had a president and the most recent president running against each other. So they're like, this is a rerun. This is a rerun with one new thing in it, basically at this point, which is Nikki Haley. And that makes her a very interesting and potentially, I think, kind of important figure, even though in terms of actual votes, she's not in Biden or Trump's class so far obviously.

KAMARCK: Well and Bill, you know, I was thinking today I can't remember a Super Tuesday where the outcome so clearly identified all the places on Election Day that both candidates were going to have to pay attention to. You know, I mean, Joe Biden came out this morning praising Nikki Haley and saying nice things about Nikki Haley. He clearly was looking at all those places and all those swing states that she won and saying, okay, I want to talk to those people and, report -- Trump did not do that. Trump is not big on being

gracious, as we now know. Nonetheless, his campaign is reported as being focused like a laser on the places where Nikki Haley won. Obviously hoping that they will come back to the party. And I don't remember any any Super Tuesday giving us this, this kind of a path to the to November.

KRISTOL: But also, don't you think I don't remember too many Super Tuesday is just ending the race. I mean, usually they are determinative --

KAMARCK: Determined. Yeah

KRISTOL: -- in retrospect or very indicative of where it's going. You know, in the first who ins the most states there, you know, ends up winning the nomination, Clinton and [inaudible]. But but this time it's really over in both parties and never was that not over. So it's an unusual situation, two, you know, 81 year old, 77 year old who are having a rerun race, which the country doesn't really want. But it seems now we're going to have eight months of it and that I feel like that's sort of unsustainable. But I could be wrong about that. I probably am wrong about that, but I don't know. And then Haley is kind of a wildcard. It's an interesting, unusual moment. It makes you wonder how much all the rules we've learned about campaigns and how they've worked in the past will hold in this one. It's just very different. We haven't had [audio interruption] the age situation. We haven't had, you know, they just met. Trump is unique in his own way in many ways. It just I feel like I'm both, you know, like we're all political junkies here. And so we're all thinking what analogy to this and to that. And I think that's all fair and how important. But I also wonder whether how much this one's going to look like previous ones, I think. Are there going to be debates, just a million obvious questions. Could they be serious third party, etc.?

KAMARCK: Gabe, let's go to you next. And I want to ask you, what did you see in the Democratic primary results? In Michigan last week, we saw a significant protest vote. Did you see anything last night that, looks like that may continue?

SANCHEZ: Yeah. Thanks Elaine for putting this together and inviting me to to be on this panel. You know, one quick note on Haley, which is obviously the big news of the evening, I can't do much more than my colleague has already said. But she's obviously in a super powerful position to potentially swing the election outcome based on whether she makes an endorsement and how she maneuvers. And you saw both candidates, you know, obviously, Biden much more aggressively than Trump, make a case to her and the

voters that supported her that they should move in their direction. Now, expect much more of this aggressively and strategically courting that really critical vote. My two cents is, I would expect her to take a bit of a middle of the road approach, not endorsing either candidate, but noting that she plans to vote for the GOP like she always has in the past, kind of playing it safe and down the middle. And, you know, the big picture take home message is with Haley out of the race, Trump now can focus on the general election, and mostly focus his resources, right. The war chest that he has specifically, you know, on Biden in the general election. So that was the big news. But on the Democratic side, you know, we did see some mixed evidence of a protest or some are calling it the non-committed vote across Super Tuesday states where this was an option for voters. Keep in mind, not all voters have the opportunity to express their opinion in that way. So it's a little bit of a mixed bag. But although we did not see evidence, as you noted, of a very strong and organized effort at the same magnitude that we saw in Michigan, which, just for some context, right, just over 100,000 voters in Michigan filed what often is referred to as a protest vote. So we didn't see that magnitude. But we did see, unfortunately for the Biden administration, meaningful numbers of voters choose to take this route, which is obviously troubling for the Biden administration, given how tight the race is projected to be. And in some of these states where the vote margin back in 2020 were in range of these voters having an impact is definitely a concern for them. The state that I'd like to pinpoint an example of this is Minnesota. Where folks might have saw, you know, roughly 46,000, that's roughly 19% of the vote, were were in this, you know, protest vote situation, non-committed vote situation, which at least in terms of the on the ground effort and what we saw from the numbers is the closest we saw on Super Tuesday states to what we saw in Michigan. The New York Times had a breakout of some exit poll data from Minnesota, which is important because it gives us some indication of who these folks are. And I think what's troubling for the Biden administration, it was a coalition of not just Muslim-American voters, which was what we saw primarily in Michigan, but also young progressive voters, which is obviously key for the Biden administration. They've got to see not just a high vote share among young voters, but they've got to see turnout and enthusiasm at high levels, to see a path for victory for Biden. So that was troubling, if you will. Other states, North Carolina, big numbers in terms of overall votes, I think it was 88,000 that I saw late last night, much smaller in terms of percentage of the vote. You also saw in Massachusetts about 9%. Colorado 8%. So you saw this again, not at the same magnitude, but if this holds up through Election Day, it obviously poses a pretty significant challenge for Biden as, again, the vote margins in some of these key states, North Carolina and Michigan being two of the key battleground states, right. Obviously, any significant shift to what we saw in 2020 could jeopardize reelection for the Biden administration. However, all that being said, I don't anticipate this being the big challenge for Biden in November, and primarily because so much has happened in the political world

since the 2020 primary, it's very easy to forget that we had a lot of similar concerns about enthusiasm for Biden back then, as we do now. Back then, folks might forget about all of this, but it was really a question of whether or not Bernie Sanders supporters would galvanize around Biden, support the Democratic ticket. All of that seems like light years ago. But at the end of the day, right, Democratic voters coalesced around Biden, turned out at the numbers that they needed to see, you know, him, eventually emerge as the victor. And so there's a lot of parallels to what we see now. Finally, on this point, right, let's not forget that if, former President Trump continues to message around things like the Muslim immigration ban, it would be very hard for me to imagine this group of non-committed voters not eventually coalescing around Biden to prevent a Trump victory. So a lot of reason for the Biden team to be worried. But I think big picture a lot of this looks similar to what we saw in terms of the early numbers around enthusiasm concerns for Biden back then.

KAMARCK: Boy, the two of you have really given us the, you know, \$100,000 question here, which is, are these voters coming home? Are the Haley voters coming home? Are these uncommitted, small as they are, coming home? And I think it's useful to remind the audience that these the Haley numbers are very small. The uncommitted numbers are very small, but they are in some instances bigger than the margins that happened in 2020. So let me give you an example that I called up earlier in the day. Trump's margin in North Carolina in 2020 was 74,483 votes. The Haley vote was 249,651. Now, as Bill alluded to earlier, some of those might be Democrats who were thinking who who basically were never going to vote for, a Republican and just decided that Haley was the lesser of two evils. But to the extent that some of them are really Never Trumpers and are just they've just had it with Donald Trump, that could be easily the margin in a really, very, very close state as were as were several others. Let's see, Chris, let's go to you. The, in in some ways, the down ballot races in this on Tuesday were more interesting than the top of the ticket, just because we knew what was going to happen. Can you tell us a little bit about what you saw in California, what you maybe what you saw in North Carolina and what you think this means for the fall?

CADELAGO: Yeah, I think not only that the the outcomes of these down ballot races, but also what we saw in the voter turnout in some of these races. And just to start with California, we had a Senate race here, to fill the seat permanently of the late Senator Dianne Feinstein. And that was a race that featured three House members, pretty well known, from California, in some cases very well known, folks like Adam Schiff, Katie Porter, the congresswoman from Orange County. And, there was, some maneuvering there. Schiff spent a lot of money to promote in this open, top-two jungle primary, the Republican to give himself an easy ride into into November. But that electorate and part of the reason, that was possible is because based on the early

mail returns which are tracked by, you know, you can look at age bands, you can look at who's who's voting. It was a far, far older electorate. It was a very low turnout, especially for a presidential primary, in large part because of what Bill spoke about, which is this, repeat presidential. If you had had a scenario where there was a Bernie Sanders on the ballot, you might have seen, a different outcome there. And there was also kind of warnings in other states, potentially even some upside for Biden, North Carolina being a real example. In the governor's race there where Mark Robinson, who's, you know, had a litany of anti-Semitic comments, just has really been out there, potentially putting that state on the map for Biden in a way that, may not have been the case before. You talk about Georgia, you talk about these other stretches for the Democrats, to pick up some of these states. North Carolina could move in one direction to the, you know, far, right, so to speak, or even in a very Republican direction with kind of a trifecta with its legislature and governor. Or it could really go the other way. The Democratic attorney general there, Josh Stein, is popular, and it could give, sort of a foothold for Biden to to spend some money this time around and really play in North Carolina in a way that, you know, hasn't happened since Obama, frankly. And so that's a really interesting one. And then just in some of the other down ticket races, there there were some upsides for Democrats in a state like California. California and New York, as this audience very well knows will be, seminal to helping determine whether Democrats can retake the House. And you had a number of situations where it was possible in this strange top-two system where, outcomes can, knock out leading Democrats, and, and promote two Republicans. And in that case, it would put, you know, take that seat off the map, and, and and make it not competitive. And Democrats basically avoided those sort of doomsday scenarios. And so they came out of, out of the, the state, and at least in California, with a pretty good night. But I, I think this low turnout, we'll see, you know, whether things sort of revert back in this general election environment. But there's a real warning there. The other thing I'd mention is we're trying to quantify what are these, you know, protests, you know, these these Palestinian protests, the cease-fire protests over Gaza really mean in terms of turnout. And just looking at the young vote, looking at the types of folks that have been protesting in states like, you know, a lot of a lot of blue states, frankly, New York, California, that certainly did not translate either to the more progressive pro early cease fire call candidates. It certainly does not look like it's it's translated in the number, of turnout. And so, when we look at the concern among Democrats and the concern in some of these other states, for folks not turning out for Biden, I think the question will be, do these folks obviously come back home to Biden? Do they just not vote? And, there were some kind of clues in what we saw in the Super Tuesday, turnout, at least in California showing, that it was, you know, the percentage of folks, I think it said 18 to 35 and then 45 and older, you know, are roughly, are roughly equal. And the turnout among the

senior population, so to speak, so over, you know, well, over 45 was many multiples higher than the younger turnout. And so that yeah, that's really the big takeaway from California.

KAMARCK: That, you know, that's so interesting because of course, one of the other huge questions is, was, was that Michigan turnout for uncommitted, was that a function of the fact that Michigan, more than any other state, has high concentrations of Arab-Americans? Or was it a premonition of things to come? And there wasn't a lot of time between Michigan and Super Tuesday for uncommitted to get organized. Apparently, the people who organized in Michigan are trying to organize it in other states. But so, you know, was this a function of no time or is it simply unique to Michigan? And I think that's the interesting question that you raised. Okay. Listen, I have another question now for absolutely everybody, which, which which is what do you think is going to happen in the next series of primaries? Will they tell us anything or with Haley out of the race, is this going to be, are these going to be non-events that we you know, we just nobody pays any attention to? Which does tend to happen by the way, towards the end of the nomination season where people stop voting, people stop covering it, people stop doing exit polls. You know which which is breaks my heart. I'm sure it breaks Bill's heart and everybody else's. But, you know what what what might we see down the road before we get to the conventions? That will give us some more to chew on. Why don't we start with Chris, and we'll go to Chris and Gabe and Bill. Now you're. You're muted.

CADELAGO: I'm going to give a, I'm going to dodge a little bit on this one, and I'm going to say, I think from, from a kind of news and what's interesting perspective, you know, we're really going to start to see a lot of attention on, you know, the Trump VP pick and, and sort of where does this go next for folks? What is the next story here? But if I were to look, you know, if we were to try to drill down into some of these numbers, in these, in these next upcoming states to try to figure out, you know, whether there's clues there. I think we'll continue to really look at, Trump's numbers in the suburbs. That's that's one that, has been, you know, there's been some mixed mixed messages out of those numbers in some of these contested primaries and, and even caucuses so far. And that will be a big one. And then, you know, around the, vote share around some of these college campuses, when it comes to younger folks, folks, whether they are coming on for Biden, like you mentioned, this uncommitted, vote and whether that continues to pick up any momentum. The big question on that, of course, is how many of these folks are really trying to send a message to the White House, send a message to Biden, but then come home in the end anyway? And and also, how does that situation, potentially resolve itself in the next, number of weeks? We're looking at it, in terms of how, will, you know, Israel and Palestine play in a general election. And, you know, it's possible that in the next month

or even in the next few weeks that we see some real movement there, at least, that's been discussed by the administration and seems to be at least an expectation right now. And so those are the, the, probably the main things, we're looking at here, but attention is really going to shift to, this general election. It already frankly has as, as Bill mentioned, I mean, Biden has put out probably three statements after the conclusion of primaries so far, basically re-pivoting to, the general election and Trump. And then we've been sort of sidetracked each time by some of the Haley news and her, her sort of haymakers at Trump. And Democrats were entertained by it. And, some Republicans wanted it to keep going. But this is this, this primary, and nomination, frankly, has been, basically over and, and kind of an academic exercise for some time now. And so, you know, we can basically move on and try to read the tea leaves and focus on who, who Trump is going to, pick as his, vice presidential nominee.

KAMARCK: Hey, Gabe, I'm wondering if you could answer this, but also focus a little bit on the Latino turnout. Latino turnout. I mean, we had the two big Latino states, Texas and California, on Super Tuesday. What do you take away from that, if anything?

SANCHEZ: Yeah. Real briefly, I think I agree with with Christopher, you know, in terms of what to expect moving forward. With Haley's big announcement, that takes a lot of the fire out of the speculation we could all make about future states on the primary side. But I always like to remind folks that whenever we're talking about the primary season, it's very hard in general to make generalizations because the electorate is so much different. Once we get to the general election and turnout is higher. Young voters, basically all the non highly partisan folks become much more relevant. So I think moving forward, a lot of it will be the ability for both campaigns to analyze any weak spots in their base, because at the end of the day, this is really about the bases of both camps. And so down the stretch, they'll be able to look at weak spots, do they see any areas where they need need to invest more resources to increase turnout? Those kind of things I think are incredibly valuable for both campaigns. They just don't provide as much, I guess, public consumption-oriented news, I think is the way that I agree with Christopher on how much there'll be for us to speculate on. So that's my my 2 cents there. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about Latinos. That's my area of specialization. And just like we've seen the last few election cycles, ton of speculation, just like we saw during the 2022 election that Latinos, right, would be moving to the right, are continuing to move to the right. And there's a lot of speculation that Trump consequently could improve his vote share among Latinos in 2024, which would obviously be huge for the Trump campaign, right? But if they're able to actually improve on their standing with Latinos from what they did four years ago. Now, just taking a look - and again, you

know, California and Texas are the two big states. They comprise roughly half of the full Latino population in the U.S. reside just in those two states. So it's fortunate for us that we're in Super Tuesday. I'll look to Texas, for an example of what I think provides a sliver of good news for Biden with Latino voters. My colleague Michael Rios, out of UCLA's voting rights center that they have over there at UCLA, put out some analysis of voting precinct data early this morning in south Texas, which showed that heavily Hispanic precincts actually improved their performance with Biden relative to back in the '22, 2020 primary, excuse me. That's a big deal, because if folks pay close attention to south Texas, this was an important narrative, for Republicans and Trump after 2020 and 2022, which was an area that they really invested a lot of energy in, put some some Republican precinct housing kind of location offices in south Texas really garnered heavy. And their performance with south Texas Latino voters was one of the big talking points that's, to them, indicated they have an opportunity to really galvanize more of the Latino vote moving forward. So the fact that Biden showed improvements in performance in those heavily Hispanic precincts, some of those south Texas precincts are like 90% Latino. So it really is an important place for us to look at where important. Other thing I'll say briefly is if we look closely at the exit poll data, I think that also shed some light on the important role that immigration will play in this race. As I've been writing about pretty extensively for Brookings over the last couple of years, I noted that unlike 2020 and 2022, when immigration really dropped in issue salience not only among Latino voters, but voters overall, nationally, we're seeing evidence in the exit polls that immigration is a top priority for not only Latino voters, but voters overall across a lot of these states, even in some cases outpacing abortion in issue saliency. What that means, at least my perspective on the analysis that I've been doing over the years, is that when immigration is a top priority for Latino voters, this generally translates into higher Democratic vote share. And this is particularly the case if we see inflammatory language about immigrants, and the extension of immigrants to Latinos, from Trump. So if we do see evidence of Trump, really, villainizing immigrants and often his messaging, you know, carries over to not just immigrants, but Latinos or Mexicans specifically, I think this goes very well for the Biden campaign, because the evidence is consistently showing when that happens, Latinos' enthusiasm goes up and their support for Democrats goes up as well. However, I'll close with the exit poll data and some polling that has been credible of of Latino voters has some, sunshine for the Trump campaign. And that's because on some big surveys, the Unidos poll, for example, had a very large sample size of Latino voters. They asked individuals, if you identify immigration as your top priority, tell us in your own words, what, what that means? And when you look at that follow up data, there's actually a pretty good balance among Latino voters of folks who say path to citizenship, which obviously bodes well for Biden versus border control and border security, which bodes a

little bit better for Trump. So I think that little bit of a mixed bag of where we are now sends some signals to both sides that they have some opportunities to really court the Latino vote, specifically on immigration.

KAMARCK: You know, that's fascinating, Gabe, especially the the South Texas precincts, because, after all, this was not a contested primary. You know, where I mean, the outcome was known. It wasn't like there was a big battle between Biden and somebody else, and that would serve to increase turnout. So that's pretty interesting. Bill.

SANCHEZ: That's the first thing I woke up to this morning thought it was maybe the most interesting thing I've seen so far in the numbers.

KAMARCK: Yeah, yeah. Bill?

KRISTOL: I mean, obviously this data is, yeah, there were there was actually a big contested congressional primary down in south Texas that was Gonzalez, right. So that could have gotten voters out. And this is where you can, it is a little hard to go from the primary to the general for many reasons. One of them is that you get a congressional contested congressional race or Senate race like we'll have in Ohio, you get a big turnout. It doesn't, what does it tell you? It just tells you that voters in Ohio are going to vote because they're voting on the same day for the Senate primary, I believe, whereas voters in some other state don't have any, you know, the presidential race is done and they don't have a contested Senate or gubernatorial or even congressional races, and they stay home. So it's a little hard to know what to say. I think about the turnout thing, though, I generally think, yeah, that I mean, a lot hinges ultimately on is this 2016 or is this 2020? And 2016 was a medium turnout, let's call it old fashioned turnout election. And a fair number of votes for third, fourth and fifth parties that ended up being like 6-7%, I think going up, 5-6% at least. 2020 had a huge surge. People really do not have not internalized this fact. I think we went up 20% in turnout from '16 to '20. That does not happen in America. In America, the changes are usually like 2% from one cycle to another. And of course, '18 had a huge surge in the off year, which was carried through in '22, 2022. So we have had three straight very high turnout elections. Will the re-run of Bush and -- Bush -- Trump and, and Biden be so, so. . . generate that kind of enthusiasm among infrequent and less less informed voters or not? And and which voters stay home? But you could argue this one either way. The new current wisdom, I would say, is the less informed voters maybe are, are Democratic, that the Democrats benefit from high turnout. They did well in

2018, 2022 to get all those young voters out. The old-fashioned wisdom was that that was that the there was the Trump Republicans who were the not, less informed, less frequent voters. And Trump mobilized them. I don't know, do Trump, do establishment Republican stay home? Do young voters who are on the left stay home? So I think the turnout question of whether it's symmetrical or asymmetric is going to be very interesting for the campaigns to think about and for observers, obviously, to try to figure out. But I don't know how much guidance we'll get in the primaries, except we will get some sense in general, I suppose, of how much interest there is. And you can compare turnout in the later states when the race was already resolved in the past to turnout in the later states when the race is resolved, you know, now, I suppose, but, you know, there's always some surprise. So just to come back to very briefly, the one thing you mentioned right near earlier, like I would say now, if I were in one of these campaigns, I would put North Carolina in as much and make it as much of a priority and make it as much of a quest-- you know, state that's in play almost as much, at least as the classic swing states. The margin people. So had some. So North Carolina has been Republican since Obama, since 08, and and therefore didn't -- Obama won right by a point or something. I mean, the, it we don't think of it as a swing state. It didn't go back. It wasn't one of the five states that went back and forth from '16, to 2016 to 20, it flipped from 2016 to 2020. The actual margin in North Carolina was 74,000 votes in 2020. That's half the margin of Michigan. If you just came down from Mars and someone said, which of these two states is more likely to flip, you could easily say North Carolina, isn't it than Michigan? And Haley got 275 or something like that, thousand votes in North Carolina, and Trump's margin was 75,000. So I think one thing that will happen is that we were all used to talking about six, maybe seven swing states, New Hampshire or something like that. But I think North Carolina is going to be way up there as a real contested state. And that's something we sort of learned from the -- and because of Robinson, this very far right, extreme governor candidate who's the type hurts, we found from some of our efforts in 2022, who hurts Republicans. It's a little like Mastriano in Pennsylvania or Kari Lake in Arizona. And you know, if you put that together with the fact that the state's trending a little bit Democratic anyway, I don't know, if I were in the Biden campaign, I'd think a lot about investing a lot. I would say analytically I would put more money on Biden winning North Carolina than Georgia right now. So, Georgia has the sane, Georgia has the sane Republican Party. If, you know, you're okay with Brian Kemp, you tell yourself they'll keep Trump in line, whatever you tell yourself, you know what I mean. You don't like Fani Willis and all this, you know, kind of wackiness there at the what's going on in Fulton County. I mean, it's pretty easy if you're a moderate to moderate conservative suburban Republican in Georgia, come back to the Republican fold. Whereas I'd say in North Carolina it's the opposite. You look at Robinson, you think this is nuts. So that's like one of these random things that's happened over the last couple, two, three, four weeks that I think actually is pretty

interesting if you're into campaigns. And then no one particularly I didn't know particularly expect this. But I think of the yeah, the turnout. So that's one state issue. But the broader turnout issue and the asymmetric implications of lower turnout, who is turning out. Well, we say small numbers 8%, 9% 11%. That's a lot. 8% of even one party is 4% of the electorate. 4% of the electorate goes away from one party, one candidate in some of these states, it's massive right? Or even if that 4% goes 3 to 1 instead of 4 to 0, right. For the, you know, so I mean, the degree to which even these things on the margin in so such a polarized and closely divided electorate, at least in the closely divided states, can make a huge difference. It's, I think, the Biden I bet a discounter like I think pretty much both all three of you of the ultimate importance of this uncommitted vote it. You know, such an easy thing to do. You're not hurting Biden. You're not helping Trump. You just expressing an opinion or making a gesture. I don't I don't I don't minimize it that way. It's a legitimate thing to do. It just not, you know, it doesn't tell you what you're going to do in November. But things could go in a direction where people feel even more strongly about this. And I don't know, you know, look at 2016. That's that's why it could be 2016.

KAMARCK: It could be 2016.

KRISTOL: The uncommitted vote could be the Jill Stein vote of 2020.

KAMARCK: Let me let me add a little factoid about North Carolina that I heard last night, which which also surprised me, which is, you know, you know, there's the big division in the American population now is between college educated and non-college-educated. If you're college educated, you're going to tend to vote Democratic; non-college, you'll tend to vote Republican or for Trump. And one of the commentators mentioned that North Carolina has the biggest increase in college educated people of all states. And of course, driven by that Raleigh-Durham research triangle where there's so much science and pharmaceutical industry going on. So that, if we put this in our little North Carolina discussion here, I think we've just got a new state to add to the Arizonas and the Michigans and the Pennsylvanias in terms of looking at 2024. Let me, we're about time for audience questions. So I'm encouraging the audience to please send your questions in. But I want to ask one thing for every before we get to audience questions, which is, given what you've seen and given that the State of the Union in a presidential election year is almost always a preview of how the president, incumbent president, is going to run. What do you think the most important thing Donald Trump has to -- I mean, I'm sorry, Joe Biden has to do to, on Thursday night. Gabe, we'll go to Gabe and Chris and then Bill.

SANCHEZ: Yeah. Great question. I mean, I guess the obvious is, be president and look presidential. I mean, the American public has not seen the president in a live prime time showing in quite some time. Right? Did not participate in what has become a tradition that you even the Super Bowl kind of opportunity. So I think a lot of it is, especially with these questions about his age and all these other dimensions, that it's really about, you know, borderline age discrimination, just how alive and viable he looks, especially in the context of a lot of the exit poll data continuing to raise questions about, you know, his just overall capacities. I think that's probably going to be the most powerful indicator. That's much less about what he has to say and much more about just the visual optics. Right? I think that, to me is what I'll be paying attention to. Substantively right? A whole bunch of the issues we've talked about name, you know, your population that he might have some challenges with, in terms of enthusiasm. Is it going to be Gaza, is it going to be immigration and really showing that nuance of border enforcement, but also some compassionate language about immigrants and immigration. One one thing we really haven't talked about is, is Dobbs and abortion? Right? I mean, the enthusiasm, at least our polling data strongly suggested a lot of the enthusiasm and turnout in 2022 was compliments of the Supreme Court in frustration and anger about the court. How is that going to play out? And will the president, you know, step into that? So that's my my my quick thought on that is really, to me, going to be much more about imaging than it is going to be about anything that that actually comes out of the president's mouth on that.

KAMARCK: Chris.

CADELAGO: Yeah, I think it's it's a real opportunity to for him not just to speak to the country as a whole. We know he obviously passed up, a big opportunity to address the country in the Super Bowl interview. And there have been a number of, more sort of prime-time venues that they pass up. There's the obviously the news conferences that they do far fewer of. And so there's that element. But the, the, the kind of speaking to the, the base of the party now that we have this, this, this matchup set, is, is is going to be there for him, and stressing these things that he's done. I know there's a lot of frustration that talking about the kind of list, laundry list of accomplishments hasn't necessarily broken through, with the public. There's still, a lot more opportunity to lean into that. They obviously feel like he has a record that would be the envy of a lot of folks running for a second term. And so there's, you know, a high profile way to do that. I also think that we all kind of think, over and over, the bar has been set pretty low for Biden in these, these big, performative moments. And, having watched many of these come and go, he does generally seem to clear that bar and in some

cases very easily. And so there's always this tension and buildup around whether, whether Biden will, will meet the moment, so to speak. He's had, some good, speeches in this in the same venue before. And so I think the sort of, you know, thought that, can he clear that bar again is, is probably a little bit of, of overthinking on that. Once he sort of gets in the zone, he tends to, he tends to, to clear it and, so, you know, it's it's the thing to watch. It's coming up. But we doubtfully will be talking about this on Monday. Not to, diminish the State of the Union. But, yeah, it's it's, it's probably works in his favor that people, genuinely question can Biden get through a 60-minute speech? And the answer is yes. We've seen him do that. Do it many times, and he'll he'll do it again. So.

KAMARCK: I will interject here a surreal experience I had three weeks ago, which is at the Democratic House retreat. Biden came and I was 20 feet away from him, and members of Congress were asking him questions, and he was lucid and funny and what, not not in the least bit senile or demented. And as he was speaking, people started to look at their phones. You know, the news was coming across and the the Hur report was coming across. So it said he was an old man and he was slow, etc.. And it was a kind of a surreal experience because there he was, you know, not being a very old man. And there was, there was the news we were getting saying just the opposite. So, yeah, you're right, the bar is low for him. Bill.

KRISTOL: I mean, Hur is going to testify to Congress on Tuesday, I think, right, on the 12th. And that could actually be more important. I mean if he's credible and, you know, people think, oh, look, he was just telling what he saw and it was different from what you saw. But people could behave differently on different days. Or maybe he was kind of a partisan guy, Democrats trying to make this point. And that would be a sort of an interest. So it's a pretty big week between Super Tuesday and the State of the Union [inaudible] next Tuesday, and various other, government shut down, non shut down, Ukraine aid. I mean, so things are, a lot of moving parts. It's always hard to predict which one makes a difference. I would just say I was talking to someone today about he gets no credit for the economy, which has been good, inflation's coming down. And I was thinking back to Reagan, [inaudible] Reagan and Clinton. I would say they had narratives about the economy, why they were going to do what they were going to do. Clinton had the budget deal in '95 in particular. Reagan had, it was the tax cuts. And, you know, things didn't go great for all their first terms. And people kind of understood they had a view, a vision, an agenda. And when things started to turn up, as they did basically in '96 for Clinton and very much in '84 for Reagan, people were sort of saying, okay, I guess maybe his theory was right. You know, he had these policies and now things are getting better. So we'll re-elect him. And that's kind of how and even Obama had some of that, I would say in 2012. Didn't do as good

a job selling it, but he came in and the economy was falling off the cliff, and he and Geithner and Summers said, we're going to be able to stabilize this. And by 2012 it wasn't great, but it was good enough, you know. Biden has no, I mean, he's done various, he's done a lot. And I would argue he's done a pretty good job on a lot of these things. And he has a very good Treasury secretary, I think, Janet Yellen. But they have no narrative, there's no big narrative or at least it's not very evident. And I don't know if maybe it's a little late to do it now. But I, I think if you don't have a narrative, you're just the mercy of events. If you don't have a narrative, gas prices go up 30, you know, 30 cents because of some freakish stuff going on somewhere in the world, or eggs or have some what do they have, some virus or something? And they went up. You looked at that doubled in price and were, "my God!" you know, and you need to have that to overcome the kind of randomness of events. I think he has a little more of that in foreign policy, actually. But, so I don't know whether he can lay that out. I mean, he could do it on the democracy stuff, I think, and on the foreign policy, Putin, the NATO kind of side of things. It would help him a little bit, I think, if he had a New Deal, Great Society, you know, I mean, Bidenomics is not a substitute for that, you know, I mean, that's a, that's putting the president's name on the thing, that's not, it worked for Clinton, you know, centrist welfare reform. You know, I mean, there are there are things that people were --Bush, you know, the foreign policy side or compassionate conservatism. I'm not saying as a slogan exactly, but I think it would help him if he could give people something a little more to hang on to. If there's some hiccups sometime in the campaign or if he does, you know, slip somewhere, somewhere and stumble for two seconds and to kind of overcome that kind of that kind of problem.

KAMARCK: Good. Listen, we've got a couple of minutes left, and there's two very good audience questions that have come in. So rather than do them sequentially, I'm going to do them all at once. And you can answer both or answer one or whatever. One, one of our audience members said, how many independents switched from Democrat to Republican to vote against Trump? I think that's a very interesting question. And the second interesting question came in is if Trump is convicted with a criminal charge, what is the likely impact on his popularity? So, Bill, why don't we start with you and go to Gabe and Christopher?

KRISTOL: I think Trump is unlikely to be convicted on one of the criminal charges, the two federal ones that really could make a difference. And even if he's convicted in New York, it'll be a misdemeanor. Maybe it'll be bumped to a felony. This is this complicated argument the district attorney there has made. He'll appeal. And it was about something that happened in 2016 and not fully, correctly disclosing a certain payment. It's not even his income, it's not tax fraud. It's like, you know, election fraud. And I guess you'd say you're not

disclosing something you shouldn't have. So I don't think that makes -- I think the courts could have made a difference, but I don't think they, I think it's very unlikely that they will at this point. On the other, what's the other question, the --

KAMARCK: How many independent switches from Democrat --

KRISTOL: Well, it differs a lot from state to state because obviously the, ups in New Hampshire, Virginia have full ability to vote. And the other, Virginia I walked in yesterday morning, and they said, you know, registered, checked who I was, photo ID, drivers license. And then it was, do you want a, Mr. Kristol, do you want a Democratic ballot or Republican ballot? There's no party registration. You don't even nominally reregister. The only thing you're disqualified from doing is obviously voting in the primary of the other party on the same day, but I can go in June and request, having requested a Republican ballot for Haley, I can go in June and vote in the Democratic primary for House of Representatives. So it doesn't even last, for some states, you know, it lasts for a year that you're in that party or something. So, so, but other states have much more restrictive parties and partisan primaries, so it's hard to generalize. It's pretty clear that in New Hampshire, South Carolina, which is open, Virginia, there was a non-trivial number of Democrats who went over to Haley. But it's always harder than you think. And some Democratic-leaning independents. Independents, it's a funny category, as you know, because it's got basically Democratic voters in it, Republican voters in it, and true independents in it. Anyway, I think the Haley number is a little bigger than it looks, but people say that's, Haley got 25% of the vote, roughly in all the Republican primaries, all in. And that means there's a quarter of the Republicans who are, you know, anti-Trump. That's probably, that's high. It's probably more like 20%, 21. You know, it's not. But, but the number of Democrats is not a majority of the Haley voters. And so those are genuine Republican or Republican-oriented voters, some number of whom must have voted for Trump in 2016 and 2020, just by the mathematics, maybe half of them. I guess one poll showed half the Haley voters were probably Biden voters, basically. And then so the question we're when you think about the question is, can Biden hold the Never Trump Republicans who already voted for him in 2020? And that's one which he won, right, so, as opposed to 2016. And then could he win over maybe a few more post January 6th and so forth. And then how much motion is there the other way? Are there, we're seeing this in some of the focus groups that my colleague Sarah Longwell, there are some Biden voters in 2020 when he was a challenger and there was chaos, and the pandemic, he was a more attractive candidate to these people. Now that he's got the burdens of, fears of incumbency, anti-incumbency is pretty strong. So anyway, long way of saying that, I think it's pretty it's hard to get a real number on that. It differs from state to

state. It's enough. It's enough to change the election one way or the other in terms of the, the independents and the swingish voters in the key states.

KAMARCK: Gabe.

Sanchez: Yeah, I think Bill said it really well. I mean, it's hard to put a a kind of finite number because so much of that was the Haley effect, right? And how how much of that was specific to to her role in the campaign. But it's a non-trivial number, right? I think the harder thing is, you know, to speculate, well, what does that mean for the general election? I think I'm with Bill. These are folks that, you know, probably Biden would capture anyway. So is this an indicator of enthusiasm, what does it tell us? That's that's a little bit harder to speculate on. And I won't I won't put my neck out there too far without any hard data to, to make some observations about. I think the question, you know, is is an interesting one about the the criminal charges. I agree with Bill. There's not a high likelihood of conviction, but I think the question was what impact if that did occur, would that have on his popularity? And I think it's super surprising that, like most experts that I talked to, not a whole lot. And when you think about it, with the number of charges that have been brought against the the former president continuing to increase and so much of those issues, right, you know, having some semblance of what we've usually referred to as how quote unquote, presidential is a candidate, it's surprising that hasn't moved the needle nearly as much as a lot of us would expect that it would. And I think part of that is at this point, right, with the a showdown of a rematch of a of the last election, how many voters are out there that don't already have a strong opinion, one way or the other about former President Trump, where this would make a sizable shift in their views? Right. Similar to what we talked about in terms of a crossover vote. I think there's enough there to make a potential difference. But at the end of the day, you know, it's surprising to a lot of us that just the speculation, the charges themselves haven't made a big impact. And because of that, I wouldn't expect it to move a whole lot, you know, moving forward to them.

KAMARCK: And even even when Mitch McConnell, who hasn't talked to to Trump in three years, when Mitch McConnell decides to go ahead and endorse Trump, you got to wonder if anything changed, if anything will change anything. Christopher, you get the last word.

CADELAGO: Yeah, I was going to say. I mean, this question is asked pretty frequently in, in exit polls and we've seen a number of, big name Republicans out there ask this question themselves about whether they would still support Trump. And all the data we've seen out there suggest that a large number of Trump voters

in these, in these primaries and caucuses would continue to stick with him, even if he was a convicted felon. And what that would mean about all the other folks who are on the fence that we've just spent the last, you know, hour talking about. Certainly that could that could have a huge impact on him. But if we're just talking about the folks who have answered that question, it seems to be a pretty resounding, yes, that they would stick with them. And so, but again, it probably academic because, the meaningful cases out there where he can be convicted, don't at the moment appear to be, moving forward before November, so probably won't get an answer.

KAMARCK: And then the other question was, how many Democrats do you think were in that, in that, in that Haley vote?

CADELAGO: It seems like quite a few. I mean, there are a number of people who, they're the Democrats were concerned enough about this happening that there were entire campaigns, one I'm thinking about on the ground, when I was in South Carolina, the chair of the party, a number of elected officials, folks who parachuted from out of town, would come in and basically have a whole five minute opening saying, we know you want to go in there and send a message. You may even like Nikki Haley because, she was their, governor, but please vote Democratic. And a lot of that was about trying to, on the first try, as the sort of first in the nation state, and having, as you know so well, moved up the state, to try to have the best showing possible for Biden and, and try to rally Democrats and coalesce them behind him. But it was, I mean, it was a concern enough that Democrats were certainly sounding the whistle about not crossing over. And again, where they go in the, in the general, another question. But it seemed like a not insignificant number in these primaries we've had so far.

KAMARCK: And on that note, let me thank Christopher. Let me thank Gabe. Let me thank Bill. This was a great discussion. There's a lot of unknowns, but hopefully we've given people, a framework for thinking about what this means going forward. And I'm sure we will be coming to you again and hopefully some of our guests. Gabe has to come with us. He works for, he works for Brookings. But, I'm hoping that Bill, you and Christopher will join us again as we move through this election year. Many thanks.

KRISTOL: Thanks.