

*Well, tonight, President Biden is walking into a fundraiser in San Francisco right about now, where he will continue to build his big lead over Donald Trump in campaign fundraising.*

*Before the president left for California yesterday, this was the single most childish question the White House press corps delivered.*

*Mr. President, good afternoon, sir.*

*You're going to California.*

*Is this about coming up with a plan B for 2024?*

*Does Gavin need to stand by?*

*Are you ready?*

*Yes, sir.*

*Well, I'm looking for it.*

*I'm looking at you.*

*We're looking at you.*

*Sir, Nikki Haley or Donald Trump?*

*Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa.*

*What I came to tell you was, I told you we'd be announcing sanctions on Russia.*

*We'll have a major package announced on Friday.*

*I'll be happy to sit with you all doing that, okay?*

*Nikki Haley or Donald Trump?*

*When you said- When you said- Who you rather challenge in November, Nikki Haley or Donald Trump?*

*Oh, I don't care.*

*And they don't care.*

*They don't care that Joe Biden just described the serious work that he is doing in the Oval Office behind closed doors, developing a new package of sanctions against Russia for Vladimir Putin's assassination of Putin's political opponent, Alexei Navalny.*

*They don't care.*

*They are horse race reporters, and the horse race is the presidential campaign.*

*And so you can rely on them to waste an opportunity to talk to the president of the United States about the actual work that he does, and instead come up with wise guy questions like, does Gavin need to stand*

by?

*That's a reference, of course, to California Governor Gavin Newsom, who could not be more strongly supporting Joe Biden's reelection campaign.*

*Those reporters and much of the pundit class and recreational commentators on presidential campaigns, whose voices are heard on a variety of non-political shows and podcasts, don't understand where we are in the presidential campaign.*

*The short answer to where we are in the presidential campaign is that we are in the fourth quarter of the presidential campaign.*

*The truth is that presidential campaigns are four years long.*

*The news media doesn't begin covering them until the third year of the campaign.*

*We're now in the fourth year of the campaign.*

*When Donald Trump was inaugurated as the president of the United States on January 20th, 2017, the other thing he did that very day was file his candidacy papers for reelection.*

*So if you think of a presidential campaign as a long plane flight over, say, the Atlantic Ocean, the plane is now somewhere over the North Atlantic approaching Ireland.*

*It's not the time for someone to decide that the pilot who has flown this plane before successfully should be pulled out of the cockpit because he's too old.*

*And some passenger named Gavin, who has never flown one of these planes, should take over.*

*Gavin Newsom has never been a presidential candidate in a presidential campaign.*

*He has no idea what it's like, but he understands enough about presidential campaigns and how they work to know that it is way too late for the Democrats to change candidates.*

*Bob Costas, the brilliant sports analyst, said recently that Joe Biden should drop out of the race.*

*And he added that he has been saying that for four years.*

*Four years ago was the time to say it.*

*Three years ago was the time to say it.*

*But it has been too late for a long time.*

*And if Joe Biden announced two or three years ago that he wasn't going to run for reelection.*

*He would have been the most pathetic, lame duck president you've ever*

*seen who would not have accomplished anything, nothing as president, because Congress could have and would have completely ignored him. Everyone who says Joe Biden should drop out.*

*And for the purposes of this discussion, I am only referring to the people who want the Democrats to win.*

*Every one of those people who say Joe Biden should drop out must now say exactly who the nominee should be.*

*And none of them do.*

*None of them say that.*

*Some of them suggest a long string of names of possibilities.*

*That list always includes Gavin Newsom.*

*And so you would think that in their articles and their comments on podcasts and TV, they would show you all of those polls where Gavin Newsom polls better than Joe Biden against Donald Trump.*

*There must be so many of those polls, but there aren't any.*

*The most recent poll substituting other Democratic names for Biden against Donald Trump, including it included only Vice President Kamala Harris and Gavin Newsom.*

*It's an Emerson poll that is now 10 days old.*

*Donald Trump was polling at 45 against Joe Biden at 44.*

*Substituting Kamala Harris as the candidate produced a result of Donald Trump polling at 46 against Vice President Harris at 43.*

*And substituting Gavin Newsom's name produced an even worse result with Trump polling at 46 and Gavin Newsom polling at 36.*

*36.*

*Gavin Newsom might not know how to run a presidential campaign, but he knows how to read polls.*

*You would think with the way the media obsessed over every poll it can find that they would have noticed these polls.*

*And how does today's poll from Quinnipiac fit in the dump Biden strategy?*

*A national poll by Quinnipiac shows Joe Biden at 49 and Donald Trump at 45.*

*Now, I mentioned the polls, not because I have great faith in polls at this stage of the campaign, but just to point out the challenge you have if you want to argue that the Democratic nominee for president should not be Joe Biden.*

*There is no substitute candidate who polls better than Joe Biden.*

*Now, assuming you still believe in Gavin Newsom, even though he's*

*polling 10 points behind Donald Trump, you must then explain how your choice of nominee gets the nomination.*

*The more thoughtful dump Biden proponents have actually recently tried to work their way through the maze of how someone other than Joe Biden can be nominated for the president and the Democratic Party. They all rely on Joe Biden, first of all, releasing all of his delegates at the convention on Monday, August 19th.*

*And they all assume that the delegates who have showed up for the convention, at least 90 percent of whom will be Biden delegates, maybe more, will then easily agree on Gavin Newsom.*

*You certainly get the feeling that most people who want to dump Joe Biden also want to dump Kamala Harris from the ticket.*

*They don't seem to fear what would happen among a key voting demographic who delivered the presidency to Joe Biden and the vice presidency to Kamala Harris.*

*Black women voters.*

*One thoughtful essay about this process reminded us that this is the way Abraham Lincoln was chosen at the Republican convention in 1860. It took three long ballots to nominate Abraham Lincoln.*

*You can expect the balloting at the Democratic Convention in August to take at least three ballots, maybe more.*

*And you can imagine what the press would say about the Democrats struggling to nominate a candidate and how much disarray they would figure into their reporting.*

*You can hope that it's not a rerun of the 1924 Democratic Convention in New York City when it took one hundred and three ballots to nominate John Davis, who went on to lose to Calvin Coolidge.*

*That Democratic Convention lasted from June 24th to July 9th, two weeks to get a nominee, a nominee who would lose the last time the Democrats nominated a presidential candidate that way.*

*He lost to Republican Richard Nixon.*

*This is what that convention looked like in 1968 in Chicago, where there was violence in that convention hall and days of violence outside the convention hall, which was later described as a riot by the Chicago police against peaceful protesters by a commission that investigated the riots at the 1968 Democratic Convention, which ended up nominating Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who then went on to lose because that's what happens.*

*After violent conventions like that, the Democratic Convention in*

*Chicago is in Chicago again this year.*

*And as it happens, the magic number of delegates for winning the presidential nomination is 1968, 1968.*

*There are going to be protesters.*

*There always are.*

*Usually they are not violent.*

*This year, there will definitely be protesters supporting Israel and there will definitely be protesters supporting Palestinians.*

*The television cameras will be trained on those protesters more than on delegates.*

*The longer the convention goes on trying to find a nominee, the messier it could get in Chicago.*

*The modern orderly convention that is really, really are television shows produced by the party last four days, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Thursday night in primetime is always the triumphant speech by the nominee.*

*But at a contested convention, we have no idea what Thursday night might bring.*

*Politically, throwing the nomination open in a contested convention is a step into the unknown.*

*One thoughtful essay that has worked through this scenario suggests it would be very exciting TV for the first time at a political convention.*

*That means for the first time since 1968, when you could watch the rioting live on TV during the convention, sometimes in split screens that showed the protesters being beaten in the streets by the Chicago police while the Chicago political machines, henchmen, were beating up reporters in the convention hall.*

*Exciting is one word you could use for that kind of TV.*

*It was also horrifying.*

*The Republican nominee for president, Richard Nixon, was watching the Democratic convention on TV, and that is when he knew he was going to win in November.*

*I mentioned that Joe Biden's at a fundraiser tonight where he is crushing Donald Trump in the fundraising competition.*

*The latest campaign finance reports show that the Biden-Harris reelection campaign has 56 million dollars on hand at the end of January, while the Trump campaign had only 30 million dollars on hand. President Biden's also raising money with and for the Democratic National Committee, which has 24 million dollars on hand at the end of*

*January.*

*The Republican National Committee has 8 million dollars at the end of January.*

*In the month of January alone, the Trump campaign raised 8.8 million dollars and spent 11.4 million dollars.*

*Donald Trump has spent a total of 50 million dollars on lawyers during the campaign and will spend much more.*

*Other PACs and fundraising committees supporting the Biden-Harris ticket had a combined 117 million dollars at the beginning of this year. And here's the part right here.*

*Here's the part of the story that no one who has said Joe Biden should drop out or has written that Joe Biden should drop out has ever mentioned that every other Democrat whose name shows up in these articles as a substitute for Joe Biden, as the Democratic nominee, has raised exactly zero money for a presidential campaign.*

*No one has told you about the money.*

*That means none of them have thought for a second about the money. Every serious observer of presidential campaigns is supposed to know how important campaign money is.*

*And not one of these people who are telling you it's time to get rid of Joe Biden seem to have given a thought to the money.*

*So here's what they haven't told you or simply do not know.*

*Not one penny Gavin Newsom has in his campaign treasury in California is usable in a presidential campaign.*

*Money raised for statewide elections of governors in California and other states is raised under different laws than the laws governing federal campaign money.*

*So Gavin Newsom has zero to spend on a presidential campaign as of tonight.*

*And Gavin Newsom knows that.*

*And Gavin Newsom, if he can get the nomination, would then leave the convention with no ability to even fly his way home.*

*So let me say that number again.*

*Zero.*

*That's how many dollars Gavin Newsom would have to spend, would have to spend on a presidential campaign campaign, leaving the Democratic Convention.*

*He'd have zero.*

*There is one other candidate besides Joe Biden who has raised money*

*for a presidential campaign and that only that one candidate who's done that is Kamala Harris.*

*The money raised for the Biden-Harris campaign has been raised in the name of both candidates.*

*So Kamala Harris has a legal claim on all of that money.*

*If Joe Biden were to drop out of the race, all the imagined contested Democratic Convention candidates there, there would only be one candidate, Kamala Harris, who would actually have real money for a presidential campaign.*

*And that might be decisive.*

*That might get her the nomination in this scenario at the convention after who knows how many ballots.*

*But at least Kamala Harris could leave the convention with real money to spend on a presidential campaign and no one else could.*

*So when someone tells you Biden should drop out, immediately ask them who the candidate should be, then ask how that candidate can get the nomination on how many ballots, and then ask the question that, you know, has never passed through their minds.*

*What about the money?*

*And if they can't answer all of those questions to your satisfaction, you are not talking to someone with a solution.*

*We don't have time to explain the complexities of nominating a vice presidential candidate at a contested convention.*

*Let's just assume that all of the delegates would agree that whoever wins the presidential nomination gets to choose their own vice president.*

*If Kamala Harris is not on that ticket, the candidates who are on that ticket would have to very politely ask her to agree to move all of the Biden-Harris campaign money to the Democratic National Committee, which is the only legal move that can be made with that money.*

*Kamala Harris would still want to beat Donald Trump.*

*And so I'm sure she and Joe Biden would agree to move their campaign money to the Democratic National Committee.*

*But she would not be able to move all of her voters.*

*Most of her most ardent supporters would, I'm sure, in the end, on Election Day, find their way to voting against Donald Trump.*

*But that's not what happened in 1968.*

*In 1968, enough voters who supported the anti-Vietnam War candidate, Senator Gene McCarthy, at the 1968 convention, left that convention so*

*embittered by what they saw as Hubert Humphrey stealing the nomination.*

*Hubert Humphrey did not run in a single primary, and Gene McCarthy heroically did run and did win primaries, enough primaries that McCarthy voters angrily then stayed home in November.*

*And Richard Nixon won the presidency by one percent of the vote. That is why ever since 1968, the Democratic Party has always been trying to design the smoothest, most predictable, least dramatic conventions that they possibly can.*

*And that's why both parties turned the conventions into what have usually been dull television shows, because the last time a convention wasn't smooth and predictable, there was blood in the streets and blood in the convention hall and bitterness on Election Day, enough bitterness to lose the election for the Democrats.*

*All of the people who suggest that Biden should step aside because they want the Democrats to win are basing that strategy on the notion that Joe Biden is just too old.*

*And the notion that Joe Biden is too old is based on a complete and utter misunderstanding of the work of the presidency.*

*The job is to make decisions, not speeches.*

*History writes about the decisions.*

*That's what matters.*

*If you have worked in government, you know that because speechmaking is the only thing that the news media is allowed to watch in a presidency.*

*The news media insists that that must be important.*

*It's just like the Super Bowl.*

*You can remember what Patrick Mahomes did on the field, but you can't remember a word of his speech.*

*And that's for very good reason.*

*The job is on the field.*

*Everyone who sees Joe Biden doing his job behind closed doors believes he is fully capable to do that job and his is good at that job, including former Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who, though he disagreed with Joe Biden, always thought President Biden was fully capable when he was in the room negotiating with him last year, last year when Joe Biden managed to do what seemed impossible and convince the Republican speaker of the House to go along with a deal that would prevent the United States of America from defaulting on*



*its debt for the first time in history and violating the debt ceiling.*

*It looked impossible at the outset, but Joe Biden did it.*

*Jon Stewart asked a question recently that makes sense in the age of the ubiquitous camera.*

*We all have one in our pocket.*

*He asked, did anyone film that?*

*And he was referring to all of those reports that are out there from people who have been in private meetings and negotiations with President Biden and have seen him perform flawlessly.*

*Did anyone film that?*

*That's the problem with the presidency.*

*We only film the parts that don't matter.*

*We are not allowed to film the real job.*

*We are not allowed to film the real governing discussions in the Oval Office that might or might not include classified information, but will definitely include statements about senators and congressmen, possible strategies, details of policy dilemmas that no one in that room wants to be made public at that time.*

*Every meeting I was in in the Oval Office when I worked in the Senate involved legislative strategies that we did not want made public and would have failed if they were made public.*

*I was never once in a meeting in the Oval Office or the Cabinet Room or in the Senate Majority Leader's Office or the Speaker's Office or anywhere where real governing occurred with the door closed where cameras could possibly be allowed, not for one minute.*

*The thing to know about cameras in government is if the camera is rolling, nothing really important is happening.*

*What you're watching is the theater.*

*The governing will not be televised.*

*And by the governing, I mean the very moments when the president makes a decision.*

*I was in the Oval Office where I saw President Bill Clinton make a presidential decision on extremely high stakes, high pressure tax legislation that ultimately passed by one vote.*

*And that decision involved the president having to change his very public position on a very important piece of the legislation.*

*And I was more impressed with the speed and authority and confidence with which Bill Clinton made that decision in seconds in the Oval Office than I ever was by any Bill Clinton speech.*

*I cannot remember a single line from any Clinton State of the Union address, but I can remember every word he said in the Oval Office that day where the actual work of the presidency was done.*

*Politico's latest entry in the genre under the headline, Democrats might need a plan B, at least admits this at the outset, because of procedural and political hurdles, it would not be easy to simply swap him out.*

*The likeliest outcome is that Biden stays on the ticket.*

*And after correctly describing the likeliest outcome, the Politico piece goes on in two pages of fantasy about what could happen at a contested convention.*

*Ezra Klein has written the very smartest entry in the genre in The New York Times.*

*Ezra Klein is smarter than I am on just about everything.*

*And I've learned a lot from Ezra.*

*Ezra Klein lists all of President Biden's more than impressive accomplishments with a Senate divided almost 50 50.*

*But Ezra does not think that Joe Biden should step aside, does think that Joe Biden should step aside and let the Democrats figure it out at the convention.*

*Ezra Klein writes, I am convinced he is able to do the job of the presidency.*

*He is sharp in meetings.*

*He makes sound judgments.*

*I cannot point you to a moment where Biden faltered in his presidency because his age had slowed him.*

*I like Biden.*

*I think he's been a good president.*

*I think he is a good president.*

*And then, as your client says, the age of 81 doesn't mean anything.*

*It's the impression Biden is giving of age, of slowness, of frailty.*

*The presidency.*

*Is a performance.*

*That is what television did to the presidency.*

*Made it a performance.*

*The political press only knows how to cover the performance like theater critics.*

*They have no idea how to cover the job and they make no real attempt to cover the job.*

*Most of them will always make the lazier choice to cover the*

*performance and never attempt to actually inform voters about what really matters in the presidency.*

*The names you always see at the top of the lists of greatest presidents, including Roosevelt, Lincoln, Washington, would all have failed in the television age on what is expected in the version of performance of the presidency.*

*Franklin Delano Roosevelt was 19 years younger than Joe Biden when he was running in his last reelection campaign.*

*He was slowly dying during his last campaign and his doctors knew it. And in fact, he died just over two months after his inauguration in 1945. But during that last year of his life, when he would fall asleep at his desk, sometimes in the middle of signing his name.*

*He was also personally strategizing with consulting with Winston Churchill, General George Marshall, General Dwight Eisenhower.*

*About the single largest military operation in history, the D-Day invasion in France in the middle of his reelection campaign.*

*President Roosevelt had overruled the generals at various stages of World War Two prior to that.*

*And as history shows, he chose a better course than they recommended when he was overruling them.*

*They urged a D-Day invasion two years before the American military was actually capable and ready to do it.*

*And old Franklin Roosevelt, nodding off, sometimes overruled those younger minds, those military experts, those generals.*

*And he saved American soldiers lives in the process.*

*Franklin Roosevelt was secretly managing the development of an atomic bomb and what they thought was a race with Nazi Germany to develop an atomic bomb.*

*It was FDR who built the flawless structure of secrecy around the work Robert Oppenheimer was leading at Los Alamos to develop the most powerful weapon in history.*

*Franklin Roosevelt was designing the United Nations for the post-war period, calling it the United Nations, deciding which countries would be members of the Security Council, which countries should have veto power.*

*He was calculating every day how to deal with the Soviet Union's dictator, Joseph Stalin, as an ally then in combat against Nazi Germany, and how he would have to deal with Stalin as a potential adversary after World War Two.*

*Nuclear weapons, the Soviet Union, the creation of social security system, which Franklin Roosevelt had done 10 years earlier, were all issues far more complex than every issue that passed through George Washington's mind or Abraham Lincoln's mind in the presidency.*

*Franklin Roosevelt was making decisions about those issues, sometimes in bed, sometimes when he was nodding off, always in his wheelchair when he was out of bed, sometimes after long naps, sometimes when just speaking itself took every bit of strength he had.*

*And whenever President Roosevelt had to be awakened in the middle of the night with the latest battle news in World War Two, even as his physical energy was seeping out of him, he was always ready.*

*He was always ready to do his job in the middle of the night, in the middle of the day.*

*He was always ready to make the next decision.*

*And no, we don't have any film of that*