

Democratic Party crisis intensifies as first senator calls for Biden to drop re-election bid

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Public opposition among Democratic Party officeholders to the renomination of President Joe Biden has continued to grow, despite efforts by the White House to suppress it. At least nine Democratic members of the House of Representatives have called on Biden to step down as the Democratic candidate for president, and on Wednesday night the first Senate Democrat issued a similar appeal.

Senator Peter Welch of Vermont, the junior senator to Bernie Sanders in the Vermont delegation, issued a statement that combined fulsome praise for Biden and his political record with regret that Biden appears incapable of defeating Republican ex-President Donald Trump in the November election after his disastrous performance in the June 27 nationally televised debate, which was watched by more than 50 million people.

Welch issued his statement only a few hours after Democratic Senator Michael Bennet of Colorado came close to calling for Biden's withdrawal. In an interview with CNN Tuesday night, Bennet said:

This race is on a trajectory that is very worrisome, if you care about the future of this country. ... Joe Biden was nine points up at this time—the last time he was running. Hillary Clinton was five points up. This is the first time in more than 20 years that a Republican president has been up in this part of the campaign.

“Donald Trump is on track, I think, to win this election,” he continued, “and maybe win it by a landslide, and take with him the Senate and the House.”

While Bennet stopped short of appealing to Biden directly to withdraw, his pessimistic assessment followed a closed-door meeting of Senate Democrats where numerous such comments were reportedly made.

Three more House Democrats joined the chorus appealing to Biden to step down: Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey, Pat Ryan of New York and Earl Blumenauer of Oregon. They join Lloyd Doggett of Texas, Raul Grijalva of Arizona, Adam Smith of Washington, Angie Craig of Minnesota, Mike Quigley of Illinois, and Seth Moulton of Massachusetts.

According to a running tally maintained by the *New York Times*, some 22 other House Democrats have voiced concerns about

Biden continuing on the ticket after the debate, in which he was frequently unable to complete a sentence, froze several times, and displayed limited understanding even of the words coming out of his own mouth.

Failing support among Democratic Party donors and high-profile supporters was given wide publicity Wednesday by the publication of an op-ed in the *New York Times* by actor and director George Clooney urging Biden to withdraw. Clooney professed his “love” for Biden and his full support for his policies but then went on to make a damaging revelation:

Last month I co-hosted the single largest fund-raiser supporting any Democratic candidate ever, for President Biden's re-election. ... It's devastating to say it, but the Joe Biden I was with three weeks ago at the fund-raiser was not the ... Biden of 2010. He wasn't even the Joe Biden of 2020. He was the same man we all witnessed at the debate.

The most significant indications of the intensifying political crisis came in responses from senior Democratic congressional leaders. House Democratic Conference Chair Pete Aguilar of California, after a closed-door meeting of the entire caucus Tuesday said, “Right now, President Biden is the nominee, and we support the Democratic nominee that will beat Donald Trump.” But he added, “Let's see. Let's see the press conference. Let's see the campaign stops. Let's see all of this, because all of it is going to be necessary.”

Aguilar was referring to today's expected open-ended press conference at the conclusion of the NATO summit in Washington, where the White House claims Biden will take a large number of unscripted questions from the media for the first time in nearly a year.

Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, still one of the most highly connected Democrats in the House, particularly with the intelligence agencies, raised the possibility of Biden withdrawing in comments Wednesday on the MSNBC program “Morning Joe,” which Biden himself called into on Monday to reaffirm his candidacy.

She urged Democratic elected officials to withhold any public comment on Biden's candidacy until after the NATO summit, citing the critical importance of the assembly for the ongoing US-

NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. Pelosi was making a joint appearance on MSNBC with Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, leader of a US-backed “dissident” movement in opposition to Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko, an ally of Vladimir Putin.

Ignoring Biden’s repeated claims that he has made his decision to remain in the campaign, Pelosi said, when asked, “It’s up to the president to decide if he is going to run. We’re all encouraging him to make that decision, because time is running short.”

When she was reminded by one interviewer that Biden had already decided, Pelosi persisted, declaring, “I want him to do whatever he decides to do,” in effect casting doubt on the finality of any of Biden’s statements up to now.

Former Obama political counselor David Axelrod said that Pelosi’s comments amounted to a rebuttal of Biden’s letter to congressional Democrats Monday, in which he vowed to remain in the race and demanded that further discussion on the matter cease. Axelrod, who has previously called for Biden to withdraw, said, “what she’s saying, delicately and respectfully, is ‘No, really the conversation isn’t over, and we still need to have this discussion.’”

Another apparent blow against Biden came in a report Wednesday night by *Axios* that Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer was speaking differently in private than his public declarations that “I’m with Joe.” Under the headline, “Schumer open to dumping Biden in 2024,” *Axios* reported that the New York senator “is privately signaling to donors that he’s open to a Democratic presidential ticket that isn’t led by President Biden.”

The news site went on to report: “Even before Biden’s dismal showing, Schumer was telling allies that the late June debate date—the earliest debate in modern presidential history—had two obvious advantages: It would give Biden time to recover if he performed poorly. Or it would give Democrats the option of finding a different standard-bearer if Biden’s candidacy wasn’t salvageable.”

Another well-connected news site, *Politico*, reported Wednesday night that the Biden campaign had begun actions that indicated mounting concern over an eruption of opposition at the upcoming Democratic National Convention. “Fearing a floor revolt against his nomination,” *Politico* wrote, “President Biden’s aides are telephoning individual delegates to next month’s Democratic convention to gauge their loyalty to the president, according to three delegates who received a call this week.”

Amidst all the backstabbing, plotting and political speculation, there is one consistent thread: None of the Democratic Party critics of Biden, public or private, has voiced any disagreement with the right-wing policies of this pro-war, pro-genocide administration. The concern is entirely with the fitness of the current occupant of the White House to continue directing the policy of aggressive imperialist war and attacks on democratic rights at home on which they all agree.

Particularly significant in this regard is the high profile taken by members of Congress the WSWs has described previously as the “CIA Democrats”—more than a dozen members of the House of Representatives who entered the House, mainly in 2018, directly from positions in the military-intelligence apparatus, whether military officers, State Department or National Security Council

officials or actual CIA agents.

Of the nine House members who have publicly called on Biden to withdraw, three—Mikie Sherrill, Pat Ryan and Seth Moulton—are from this group. Adam Smith, ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, has equally close ties to the Pentagon. A fourth CIA Democrat, Jared Golden of Maine, has publicly declared Biden will lose the election if he remains the Democratic nominee.

Two other CIA Democrats, Andy Kim of New Jersey and Elissa Slotkin of Michigan, are running for Senate seats, and both have issued statements detrimental to Biden in the last few days. Kim told the New Jersey *Globe* that he retains “concerns” about Biden’s fitness and said there is still enough time for Democrats to make “a switch” if need be.

Slotkin was more caustic, according to *New York Times* report of a fund-raising call with donors on Tuesday, suggesting that Biden’s poor performance was endangering her campaign as well. Biden was losing Michigan while her Senate race was now “a dead heat,” after polls had previously shown her in the lead.

The *Times* continued:

Ms. Slotkin also appeared to take a shot at Mr. Biden during the call by sarcastically noting that she was running for the seat only because Senator Debbie Stabenow, 74, was “doing a radical thing and passing the torch.”

The role of figures like Slotkin, Sherrill, Smith and Pelosi only underscores the fundamentally undemocratic character of the ruling class efforts to manage and manipulate the exploding political crisis. The Democratic Party, like the Republican, is an instrument of the corporate ruling elite. The main concern of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus is that nothing should be allowed to disrupt the main priorities of American imperialism: the ongoing war against Russia in Ukraine; full support from the Pentagon and CIA for the Israeli genocide in Gaza; and the continuing military-strategic buildup in the Indo-Pacific against China.



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