

George Clooney: I love Joe Biden. But we need a new nominee.

By George Clooney, *The New York Times*, July 11, 2024

I saw Biden three weeks ago at my fundraiser for him. It's devastating to say it, but he is not the same man he was, and he won't win this fall.

I'm a lifelong Democrat; I make no apologies for that. I'm proud of what my party represents and what it stands for. As part of my participation in the democratic process and in support of my chosen candidate, I have led some of the biggest fund-raisers in my party's history. Last month I co-hosted the single largest fund-raiser supporting any Democratic candidate ever, for President Biden's re-election. I say all of this only to express how much I believe in this process and how profound I think this moment is.

I love Joe Biden. As a senator. As a vice president and as president. I consider him a friend, and I believe in him. Believe in his character. Believe in his morals. In the last four years, he's won many of the battles he's faced.

But the one battle he cannot win is the fight against time. None of us can. It's devastating to say it, but the Joe Biden I was with three weeks ago at the fund-raiser was not the Joe "big F-ing deal" Biden of 2010. He wasn't even the Joe Biden of 2020. He was the same man we all witnessed at the debate.

Was he tired? Yes. A cold? Maybe. But our party leaders need to stop telling us that 51 million people didn't see what we just saw. We're all so terrified by the prospect of a second Trump term that we've opted to ignore every warning sign. The George Stephanopoulos interview only reinforced what we saw the week before. As Democrats, we collectively hold our breath or turn down the volume whenever we see the president, who we respect, walk off Air Force One or walk back to a mic to answer an unscripted question.

Is it fair to point these things out? It has to be. This is about age. Nothing more. But also nothing that can be reversed. We are not going to win in November with this president. On top of that, we won't win the House, and we're going to lose the Senate. This isn't only my opinion; this is the opinion of every senator and congress member and governor that I've spoken with in private. Every single one, irrespective of what he or she is saying publicly.

We love to talk about how the Republican Party has ceded all power, and all of the traits that made it so formidable with Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, to a single person who seeks to hold on to the presidency, and yet most of our members of Congress are opting to wait and see if the dam breaks. But the dam has broken. We can put our heads in the sand and pray for a miracle in November, or we can speak the truth.

It is disingenuous, at best, to argue that Democrats have already spoken with their vote and therefore the nomination is settled and done, when we just received new and upsetting information. We all think Republicans should abandon their nominee now that he's been convicted of 34 felonies. That's new and upsetting information as well. Top Democrats — Chuck Schumer, Hakeem Jeffries, Nancy Pelosi — and senators, representatives and other candidates who face losing in November need to ask this president to voluntarily step aside.

All of the scary stories that we're being told about what would happen next are simply not true. In all likelihood, the money in the Biden-Harris coffers could go to help elect the presidential ticket and other Democrats. The new nominee wouldn't be left off ballots in Ohio. We Democrats have a very exciting bench. We don't anoint leaders or fall sway to a cult of personality; we vote for a president. We can easily foresee a group of several strong Democrats stepping forward to stand and tell us why they're best qualified to lead this country and take on some of the deeply concerning trends we're seeing from the revenge tour that Donald Trump calls a presidential campaign.

Let's hear from Wes Moore and Kamala Harris and Gretchen Whitmer and Gavin Newsom and Andy Beshear and J.B. Pritzker and others. Let's agree that the candidates not attack one another but, in the short time we have, focus on what will make this country soar. Then we could go into the Democratic convention next month and figure it out.

Would it be messy? Yes. Democracy is messy. But would it enliven our party and wake up voters who, long before the June debate, had already checked out? It sure would. The short ramp to Election Day would be a benefit for us, not a danger. It would give us the chance to showcase the future without so much opposition research and negative campaigning that comes with these ridiculously long and expensive election seasons. This can be an exciting time for democracy as we've just seen with the 200 or so French candidates who stepped aside and put their personal ambitions on hold to save their democracy from the far right.

Joe Biden is a hero; he saved democracy in 2020. We need him to do it again in 2024.

- **Read this article and prepare an account for the rest of the class, using the following prompts:**
 1. Who is the author of the text and what does he say about himself?
Actor George Clooney published this op-ed in The New York Times, from his position as one of the largest contributors to the Democratic Party's funding.
 2. What does he think about Joe Biden?
He first expresses his love for the incumbent president, calling him a hero, but acknowledging his advanced age at the same time.
 3. What is he predicting?
Because of that, Clooney is announcing that Democrats will lose the election if Biden doesn't step down, given all the faux pas he's been accused of.
 4. What is he suggesting as a solution?
The actor thus advocates for the nomination of a new presidential candidate, to be done quickly and peacefully, without damaging the appearance of the party. He evokes the recent French general election to say when democracy needs saving, politicians can put aside their differences.
- **Once both texts have been accounted for: what is the common point between these two texts?**

Both are showing the impact celebrities can have on politics. Some might help voters make a decision, while others will have a direct influence on politicians, through fundraising for example. Famous people are likely to use their public platforms to sway voting in an important election.

- **Research and quick presentations (homework or in class): find another example of a celebrity who has spoken out in favour of a candidate, or against another one.**