

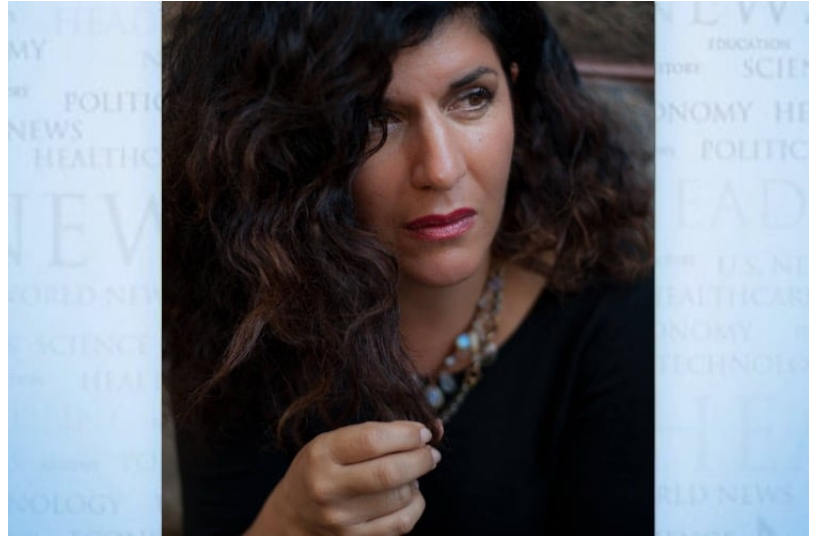


Written by [Salena Zito](#) on June 28, 2023

GOP Voters Weary of Trump's 'Airing of the Grievances'

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, Pennsylvania — Alex Anastasio voted for Donald Trump for president twice, attended Trump rallies, organized events for him and placed signs in front of her home. And she was deeply hopeful in the early days following the 2020 election that once all of the votes were counted, he would serve a second term — so hopeful, indeed, that she was initially involved in a voter recount effort in support of that.

Weeks later, when it was clear he lost, Anastasio, a grassroots Republican dynamo who was a delegate for Trump, said she was disappointed but went about the business of life. Three years later, she said she has no doubt his indictment is politically motivated, but that does not mean she is supporting him in 2024.



Salena Zito

“We need someone with Trump’s policies without all of the drama,” she said, adding that drama cost Pennsylvania a lot in the midterms. “He should have stayed out of the U.S. Senate race and the governor’s race; both of those candidates cost state house and senate seats and congressional races.”

Anastasio said: “People may not understand this, but I lived and breathed Trump, so this isn’t something that comes lightly. I took a lot of heat for supporting him in 2016 when no one thought he would win, and I am prepared for heat for not supporting him now, but it is time to look forward, not relive the past.”

“No one owns me,” Anastasio added. “That is the beauty of being in the grassroots.”

One week after Trump’s indictment stemming from his alleged mishandling of classified documents, a new poll conducted by CNN shows that while 71% of voters say politics played a role in that charging decision, that doesn’t mean 71% of them back him, let alone 71% of Republican primary voters.

In truth, Republican voters are all over the place. Overall, 47% of them say Trump is their first choice for the party’s nomination for president, which is 4% lower than in last month’s CNN poll.

Trump’s favorability among Republican voters also has dropped from 77% in May to 67% now; at the same time, the share of Republican-leaning voters who said they would not support him under any circumstances has jumped from 16% in May to 23% now.

In talking with Republican grassroots activists such as Anastasio and regular Republican-leaning voters across Pennsylvania after they watched Trump’s interview with Fox News anchor Bret Baier earlier this week, two sentiments emerged as to what is eroding his support among former die-hard supporters. These Republicans are tired of his fixation with talking about only himself and not about the voters, a trait that they did not perceive him to possess in 2016, and his refusal to accept that he lost in 2020.



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In the Monday interview, Baier asked Trump how he would win back independent female suburban voters who were turned off by Trump's election lies and his criminal cases.

"First of all, I won in 2020 by a lot, OK? Let's get that straight. I won in 2020," Trump answered, then peeled off a list of arguments to insist that he won.

Baier was having none of it: "You lost the 2020 election," he said, adding there were several recounts in all of the swing states, and none of them produced evidence of significant widespread fraud, nor did any of the subsequent lawsuits.

Voters also said they do deeply empathize with Trump over the unfairness of how they think he was treated by numerous institutions within the government and the press, but that should not be why they should vote for him.

They watch each interview and each rally and see a montage of an airing of the grievances, akin to the "Festivus" celebration on the TV show "Seinfeld," which is not the same man who once keenly understood that people were looking for an aspirational path for everyone to be part of.

That aspirational sense is what made it so brilliant for Trump to swipe Ronald Reagan's old "Make America Great Again" slogan.]

In today's polling, Trump is still comfortably ahead of the other primary contenders, but polling is a snapshot of today, not the future. The other Republican candidates have barely begun to make their argument to GOP primary voters, and none of them have been on a debate stage to amplify that argument.

It's way too early to say who the Republican presidential nominee will be.

After spending several days interviewing those voters, one can see there is a nuance that many reporters and strategists are missing. Namely, you can still have loved Trump for what he did as president, still think his policies were good for the country, still appreciate his willingness to go to the mat for the country, still think he is a victim of a political witch hunt — and yet still *not* want to vote for him in 2024.

Anastasio said reporters and strategists shouldn't just assume they understand how a voter's mind works, especially Republicans. "Voters can walk and chew gum at the same time," she said. "I can't believe I have to say that to get my point across."

Salena Zito is a CNN political analyst, and a staff reporter and columnist for the Washington Examiner. She reaches the Everyman and Everywoman through shoe-leather journalism, traveling from Main Street to the beltway and all places in between. To find out more about Salena and read her past columns, please visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com.

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