



Joe Biden: Will He Oppose Trump in 2020?

Very early in President Donald Trump's term as president, former Vice President Joe Biden made a remark that he would have "beat the hell" out of Trump over alleged remarks that Trump had made years earlier about women. Predictably, Trump retorted that he could whip Biden in a fist-fight.



While a pugilistic contest between two septuagenarians would not be in the category of a Frazier-Ali tilt, it would certainly draw an interest in today's America. But while Americans are not likely to see fisticuffs between the two politicians known for their tendency to make unpolitic remarks, there is increasing speculation that Joe Biden might seek the 2020 Democratic Party presidential nomination.

That a 75-year-old man could be considered the probable front-runner certainly says something about the state of the Democratic Party, but Biden is adopting the route very similar to that of Richard Nixon in 1966. During those mid-terms, Nixon was the Republican Party's top draw in raising money for Republican congressional candidates across the country. This paid huge dividends for former Vice President Nixon in 1968, when he glided past Nelson Rockefeller and Ronald Reagan to win the Republican nomination for president.

Now Biden is the top draw for Democratic Party hopefuls seeking office in the 2018 mid-terms. While Biden did not attend the "World Famous" Fish Fry in South Carolina recently, considered a must for any Democrat with presidential aspirations, he did appear in a video message.

Representative James Clyburn (D-S.C.), the assistant House Democratic Party leader and the sponsor of the fish fry, appears ready to throw his backing to Biden, declaring: "If there were a primary here next week in South Carolina, and Joe Biden were in the primary, he would win it — going away."

But will Biden run? He has said only that he has not ruled it out, adding that he will make a decision only after the mid-terms.

In a Democratic Party that has clearly moved to the Left in the past few years, would Biden be acceptable to the increasingly liberal voters in the party? Biden thinks so, arguing, "I take a back seat to no one on my progressive values."

Indeed, Biden has strongly supported tougher gun laws, and it was he who caused President Obama to publicly support same-sex marriage earlier than he had intended. In May 2012 Biden said that he was "absolutely comfortable" with same-sex marriage.

Biden is "pro-choice" on the abortion issue, despite his claims that his personal belief is that life begins at conception. Biden's position has put him at odds with his own Catholic Church. Bishop Michael Saltarelli has previously held such views as Biden's with contempt, saying, "No one today would accept



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this statement from any public servant: ‘I am personally opposed to human slavery and racism but will not impose my personal conviction in the legislative arena.’ Likewise, none of us should accept this statement from any public servant: ‘I am personally opposed to abortion but will not impose my personal conviction in the legislative arena.’”

Biden holds a long legislative record, full of liberal votes, which would give the Trump campaign plenty of ammunition to expose him as pretty much in the same liberal camp as other party progressives. As with Bernie Sanders, Biden’s age would be an issue in any presidential race. By the time Biden would be sworn in as president in January 2021, he would be 78.

Two other issues could sidetrack a Biden candidacy: his tendency to “gaffes,” and his repeated problems with plagiarism.

Several examples of Biden’s tendency to say things that draw ridicule could be offered, but here are a few: First, in an interview a few years ago with CBS’s Katie Couric, Biden attempted to offer an example of “leadership” during an economic crisis by saying, “When the stock market crashed, Franklin D. Roosevelt got on the television and didn’t just talk about the, you know, the prince of greed.”

Of course, the stock market crashed four years before FDR was president, in 1929, and no TV sets even existed for several more years after that.

Secondly, despite Democrat attempts to appear the friend of immigrants, Biden once remarked, “In Delaware [his home state], the largest growth of population is Indian Americans, moving from India. You cannot go to a 7-11 or a Dunkin’ Donuts unless you have a slight Indian accent. I’m not joking.”

When running for vice-president in 2008, Biden urged Chuck Graham, a state senator in Missouri, to be recognized at a campaign event, by saying, “Stand up Chuck.” The problem was that Chuck was confined to a wheelchair.

Perhaps a more serious problem for the gaffe-prone Biden is his history of plagiarism, dating back to law school, where he was accused of plagiarizing five of 15 pages of a law review article. He later obtained his law degree, finishing 76th in a class of 85.

In 1987, Biden launched his first presidential campaign effort and adapted the words of a British socialist politician, Neil Kinnock, for his own campaign. In the plagiarized quotation, Biden not only used Kinnock’s claim that he was the “first” in a thousand generations to be able to get to university, he even pointed to his wife in the audience, as had Kinnock, as another example of someone who was first in her family to attend college.

This was not the first time Biden had lifted the words of other politicians and taken them as his own, having “borrowed” liberally from the Kennedy brothers and from Hubert Humphrey.

Biden’s campaign imploded in 1988, and did the same in 2008 after he finished fifth in the Iowa caucuses, unable to obtain a full one percent of the state’s delegates.

Now, however, Biden would be the early “front-runner” for the Democratic nomination, were he to choose to run. But the history of presidential “front-runners” has not been uniformly successful, or we would have had nominees such as George Romney, Hillary Clinton (in 2008, when she was surprised by Barack Obama), and Jeb Bush.

Of course, Biden would hope that his candidacy would follow the historical pattern of *former* and sitting vice presidents to capture their party’s nomination — Richard Nixon, Hubert Humphrey, Walter Mondale, George H.W. Bush, and Al Gore.



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