



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on June 12, 2020

## Republicans Announce Plans to Hold Its Convention in Jacksonville, Florida

The decision to move the Republican Party's National Convention from Charlotte, North Carolina, to Jacksonville, Florida, [was announced](#) with a flourish on Thursday night. Said Ronna McDaniel, the chair of the Republican National Committee (RNC):



We are thrilled to celebrate this momentous occasion in the great city of Jacksonville. Not only does Florida hold a special place in President Trump's heart as his home state [he and Melania officially moved there from New York City in November 2019], but it is crucial in the path to victory in 2020.

We look forward to bringing this great celebration and economic boom to the Sunshine State in just a few short months.

The state is crucial to Trump's reelection. He captured the state over Hillary Clinton in 2016 by just 113,000 votes, out of more than nine million that were cast, and Duval County, where Jacksonville is located, by just 6,000 votes. At the moment Real Clear Politics has presumptive Democratic Party candidate Joe Biden leading the president by a little over three points in the state.

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McDaniel explained why the party moved from Charlotte: "Governor [Roy] Cooper in North Carolina refused to work with us. It became very apparent that he was not going to give us guidelines so that we could hold our convention [there] and [so] we had to move the celebration to Florida."

She touted the economic benefits to a city of 900,000, nearly a third of whom are black: "We want to bring as much revenue to that city as possible [but] we had to scale it back.... We want to have the celebration portion in Florida where we can have a full scale convention with all of our delegates."

The venue, the VyStar Veterans Memorial Arena, holds up to 15,000 attendees and just hosted a UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) event there on May 13 without incident. The convention will be held the week after the DNC's convention, and the contrast couldn't be greater. Trump's convention will be real while the Democrats' could be virtual.

The selection of Jacksonville is a win for the mayor, Lenny Curry, who aggressively marketed his venue to Trump's people once he learned that Governor Cooper couldn't or wouldn't give them the promises they demanded. Curry, a former chairman of the Republican Party of Florida, was excited: "Clearly the RNC wants a large event with a lot of people. I want that too [but] if COVID-19 presents challenges, we will put the safety of people first."

McDaniel agreed, likely anticipating attacks from Democrats that she and her party won't follow safety guidelines:



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[Jacksonville wants] this to be a great event to show that their state is open. America is open for business. So we are going to have an arena.

We are obviously going to put safety checks in place to make sure the convention goers are safe. But we are going to have a packed arena.

True to form, and ignoring the obvious hypocrisy involved, Florida Democratic Party chairman Terrie Rizzo said: “I am deeply concerned that the impetus for moving their highest-profile event to Florida was because Donald Trump wanted to give a speech to a crowd of people not social distancing — and, given his previous public events, likely not wearing masks.”

Where was Rizzo during the riots? Where were his complaints and expressions of concern about their lack of social distancing while they were destroying businesses and creating mayhem?

With 29 electoral votes at stake — the largest of the five general-election battleground states (the others being Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, North Carolina, and Arizona) — Trump needs to make a big splash. The convention begins at VyStar Arena on Monday, August 24, one week after the Democratic Party’s convention.

And the Democrats’ convention, scheduled to be held in Milwaukee, might become virtual if the presumptive nominee has anything to say about it. Already pushed back to the third full week of August due to concerns over the virus Biden told ABC’s *This Week* back in April that his party “may have to do a virtual convention.... We may not be able to put 10, 20, 30,000 people in one place and that’s very possible.”

That the Republican convention would be held a week after the DNC’s is already a great advantage to the incumbent. Imagine the impact if the Democrat Party’s is virtual while Trump’s is real.

Image: Vitalii Abakumov / iStock / Getty Images Plus

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