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The Race to the Oval Office

Hudson Bryne, Volunteer Reporter

With election season drawing near, candidates are attempting to solidify themselves as early favorites. Despite Donald Trump's record disapproval rates before leaving office, the former head of state continues to be the projected frontrunner in the Republican primaries.

With Trump refusing to participate in the first few Republican debates, other candidates are slowly cutting down on the former president's lead. Vivek Ramaswamy, a multimillionaire entrepreneur who is known for his pro-capitalism rhetoric, has had the largest jump in the polls.

One of Ramaswamy's campaign promises is to slash government programs, putting 75% of government employees out of work. According to Hanna Trudo, a political correspondent for The Hill, Ramaswamy has garnered approval with the Republican Party, polling 5% higher than he did in July. The 38-year-old Ramaswamy still trails behind Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

DeSantis is known for his conservative policy agenda and gained national attention for his COVID-19 response, advocating for a more open and business-friendly approach, which includes resisting lockdowns and mask mandates. He has also focused on education reform, controversially supporting a ban on certain curricula that Florida Republicans deem unfit for the classroom. Polling at around 13%, DeSantis still sits far behind Trump who polls at 53%.

Mathew Patrick Thomas, chairman of the King County Republican Party, said Trump's defeat is likely. Despite Nikki Haley polling outside the top four, Thomas believes Haley and DeSantis have the best chance at winning the primaries.

When prompted on why Seattle citizens should vote for Republican candidates, Thomas alluded to the city's legislation around drug consumption and homelessness, which he believes that Democrat leaders have done an insufficient job of addressing.



Kay McHugh

“Look out your window,” Thomas said.

A candidate who can potentially affect the Republican nominee is Independent Robert F. Kennedy. Robert started his career as an environmental lawyer and first gained political traction through his stance on vaccination, believing they can cause mental defects.

Kennedy, the son of former Attorney General Bobby Kennedy, and nephew of former President John F. Kennedy, polls as high as 14%, which is almost unprecedented in modern politics. An independent candidate has not polled this high since Ross Perot in the 1996 presidential election.

This trend of interest in third party candidates has seemingly grown since the 2016 election. Cornel West, who recently renounced his bid for the Green Party, is another independent candidate to look out for. The self-proclaimed Socialist has gained traction with the youth of the country. As a founder of the Democratic Socialists of America and a leading thinker of the Christian left, West is well respected by many looking for an alternative to America’s binary political system.

Sarah James, an organizer for Socialist Alternative, believes West’s presidency is the only way to implement a “real meritocracy.” She describes a future of change that is “only possible through a radical approach.”

“The two party system is failing us, choosing the lesser of two evils is a losing battle,” James said.

Despite his popularity on the left, West is unlikely to take many votes from the incumbent Democrat Joe Biden.

The current president is coming off of a polarizing four years, with his popularity within the Democratic Party dropping. Since August 2021, Biden has not seen an approval rate of over 50%. Reports reflect that Americans are not pleased with the Biden administration.

Patrick Schoettmer, associate professor of political science at Seattle University, offered some perspective on what could potentially damage President Biden’s chance of reelection.

With a potential recession looming, President Biden’s ability to mitigate the impact of an economic downturn will be closely scrutinized, as it could significantly affect his chances of re-election.

“Signs of a recession could be disastrous for the Democratic Party,” Schoettmer said.

The way the administration handles this economic downturn, and the outcomes of these decisions will have far-reaching implications for the Democratic Party in the upcoming election.