

## 2024 Presidential Candidates so far

[00:00:06] **Ron Hansen** Believe it or not, about a year from now, Arizonans will begin voting in the 2024 presidential election. The single most likely scenario at the moment suggests a rematch between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump. But much about the race remains up in the air as we record. There were 13 GOP candidates on the Democratic side. There are three. Professor and social activist Cornel West is running as a third party candidate, and others, such as Senator Joe Manchin, could still make a White House run. So how do Arizonans view the race? The state voted for Trump in 2016, then flipped to Biden in 2020. It's one of maybe four true swing states at the moment. Welcome to The Gaggle, an Arizona politics podcast by The Arizona Republic and azcentral.com. Each week we put the magnifying glass on the biggest political issues that affect you. I'm Ron Hansen. I covered national politics for the Republic. My co-host, Mary Jo Pitzl, is out of the office this week. Today I'm sitting down with fellow reporter Ryan Randazzo. Ryan has been covering the presidential race for us. Ryan, thanks for coming back.

[00:01:32] **Ryan Randazzo** Thanks for having me today.

[00:01:33] **Ron Hansen** Okay. So there is a presidential race next year in 2020, President Joe Biden won Arizona by the narrowest margin of any state that he carried. What do Arizonans think of him these days?

[00:01:47] **Ryan Randazzo** Well, he's not particularly popular in Arizona or nationwide. He's facing quite a few headwinds as president these days. Currently, there's a huge gas price spike nationwide. And while presidents don't have a huge hand in setting gas prices, he's taking blame for that. And his age has come up as a frequent topic of criticism.

[00:02:06] **Ron Hansen** The gas prices issue is something that is of special resonance, I'm sure, with a lot of Arizonans and inflation generally. Arizona has stood out on that front, hasn't it?

[00:02:16] **Ryan Randazzo** Sure. And that's going to be a weak spot for him regardless of who he faces next year because of our inflation that we've seen in this state being among the highest nationwide.

[00:02:24] **Ron Hansen** So Arizona is one of the few swing states on the map at the moment. How does Biden's standing in Arizona compare to the other states that figure to be in play next year?

[00:02:35] **Ryan Randazzo** I would anticipate Biden facing stronger headwinds in Arizona than other swing states like Georgia, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

[00:02:43] **Ron Hansen** Biden will be in Arizona this week for a fund raiser and to honor the late Senator John McCain, who was a personal friend of his. What's this visit all about?

[00:02:54] **Ryan Randazzo** Well, we first learned of the visit from Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego and Representative Greg Stanton, who had invited him here to participate in a fundraiser. And later on, the president added this speech that he is supposed to give honoring John McCain. I think the interesting thing here is that McCain was a frequent target of President Trump who lost the state of Arizona, and he was also frequently criticized after he had passed away by the losing gubernatorial candidate, Carrie Lake. So

with both of those people losing the state of Arizona after criticizing Mr. McCain, now we have the incumbent president coming here to honor Mr. McCain. And it feels an awful lot like a campaign opportunity.

[00:03:33] **Ron Hansen** Interesting you should note, Carrie Lake, she is, as always, rumored to be considering a Senate bid as well. So it's at least possible she will also be on the ballot in 2024 in Arizona again. Let's shift gears for a moment. Biden is the incumbent, but he does have at least nominal competition for the nomination. Robert F Kennedy Jr is running for the Democratic nomination. He has made an appearance at Arizona's southern border already. Are there any signs that he would have any special appeal here, especially given Biden's narrow win in 2020 or his recent unpopularity with voters writ large?

[00:04:13] **Ryan Randazzo** Well, the Kennedy name is always going to draw some attention and border issues are always going to draw some attention here. But I don't think that there's really any chance that Mr. Kennedy presents a threat to the incumbent president in the primary election.

[00:04:26] **Ron Hansen** Okay. So let's turn to the Republicans. Donald Trump is certainly the frontrunner nationally. How is his standing in Arizona? Is he the frontrunner here? And if so, why?

[00:04:38] **Ryan Randazzo** Trump's not only the frontrunner here, but he has really outperformed fundraising in Arizona. He continues to far and away be the favorite candidate for Arizonans to donate to far ahead of the election. So I predict that in Arizona, Trump will come out of the Republican primary, although we're still a ways out. And polls in other states are changing and showing some of the other candidates at least have a fighting chance.

[00:05:04] **Ron Hansen** Yeah, he has definitely had a hand in shaping the Arizona Republican Party. As with other factions of the GOP nationally, it seems like his hold in Arizona is not to be trifled with at the moment.

[00:05:18] **Ryan Randazzo** Yeah, it's just especially strong here, I would say.

[00:05:21] **Ron Hansen** Now let's turn to some of the other Republicans running in this race. One of them is former South Carolina governor and ambassador to the U.N., Nikki Haley, who Trump put in that position. She appeared at the first Republican debate. And let's take a listen to what she had to say there.

[00:05:39] **Speaker 3** Positioned to turnaround this economy that we've heard all of these voters talking about tonight. Then Mr. Ramaswamy, who is a successful entrepreneur nationally right now, he's beating you in the polls. Well, I don't care about polls. What I care about the fact is that no one is telling the American people the truth. The truth is that Biden didn't do this to us. Our Republicans did this to us, too, when they. They passed that \$2.2 trillion COVID stimulus bill. They left us with 90 million people on Medicaid, 42 million people on food stamps. No one has told you how to fix it. I'll tell you how to fix it. They need to stop the spending. They need to stop the borrowing. They need to eliminate the earmarks that the Republicans brought back in. And they need to make sure they understand these are taxpayer dollars. It's not their dollars. And while they're all saying this, you have Ron DeSantis, you've got Tim Scott, you've got Mike Pence. They all voted to raise the debt. And Donald Trump added 8 trillion to our debt. And our kids are never going to forgive us for this. And so at the end of the day, you look at the 2024 budget,

Republicans asked for 7.4 billion in earmarks. Democrats asked for 2.8 billion. So you tell me, who are the big spenders? I think it's time for an accountant in the White House vice president.

[00:06:53] **Ron Hansen** Now she's running against Trump and she's the only woman running in the GOP field at the moment. What does she bring to the table?

[00:07:01] **Ryan Randazzo** Well, her message during the first debate seemed to be that she would bring some honesty about the policies the Republican Party could actually enact while not saying anything that would alienate the party's ultra faithful the way, say, Chris Christie has by constantly bashing Trump. I think the takeaway from her first debate performance was that she also was a fighter. I've seen some analysis that she commanded more of the spotlight than her rivals, and that seems to have paid off. Her poll numbers in Iowa have shot up, bringing her into third place behind Trump and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. So when we see that happen in these other states, it wouldn't be out of the question that once she starts to focus on a state like Arizona, that she could find some appeal here as well.

[00:07:40] **Ron Hansen** Okay. You mentioned Governor DeSantis from Florida. He was expected to be sort of the nominee in waiting if there were no Trump candidacy. How is his standing in Arizona? Is there anything either that he has been talking about or any signs that his campaign has any special strength in Arizona or weakness?

[00:08:01] **Ryan Randazzo** Well, he's obviously focusing a little bit on the state because one of his campaign platforms is that he would use violence at the border to turn back migrants. And considering that Arizona is a border state and it's a hugely important topic here, I have to imagine that he crafted that with people from Arizona and Texas in mind.

[00:08:19] **Speaker 3** You have said stone cold dead.

[00:08:23] **Ryan Randazzo** When these drug pushers are bringing fentanyl across the border. That's going to be the last thing they do. We're going to use force and we're.

[00:08:30] **Ron Hansen** Going to leave them stone cold.

[00:08:32] **Ryan Randazzo** Dead.

[00:08:32] **Speaker 3** Would you commit U.S. troops to taking out these Mexican cartels?

[00:08:38] **Ryan Randazzo** We are going to lean in and we are.

[00:08:39] **Ron Hansen** Going to defend our country.

[00:08:41] **Ryan Randazzo** So I was at the border in Arizona.

[00:08:43] **Ron Hansen** So there was one part where there was a stretch, a wall. These guys are.

[00:08:45] **Ryan Randazzo** Working on the base of the of the of the wall. I'm like, what are you doing?

[00:08:48] **Ron Hansen** They're like, well, we're repairing.

[00:08:50] **Ryan Randazzo** And I like what happened that the.

[00:08:51] **Ron Hansen** Cartels can cut through. I mean, these are big steel beams and they're cutting through and yet they're being allowed to come in to our country.

[00:08:57] **Ryan Randazzo** They got backpacks on with fencing.

[00:08:59] **Ron Hansen** And all this stuff. So in those.

[00:09:01] **Ryan Randazzo** Situations, yes, we will have deadly force. Force authorized.

[00:09:05] **Speaker 3** Would you send missiles into Mexico?

[00:09:07] **Ryan Randazzo** We would use all available.

[00:09:09] **Ron Hansen** And the tactics.

[00:09:10] **Ryan Randazzo** I think, are can be debated. If you have something you want to accomplish, people would brief you on the different ways to be able to do it. So that would be dependent on the situation. But I think your total.

[00:09:19] **Speaker 3** Military forces into Mexico is a much different standard. That's why.

[00:09:23] **Ryan Randazzo** Well, but but the reality.

[00:09:26] **Ron Hansen** Is they are.

[00:09:28] **Ryan Randazzo** Overrunning our border, their sex trafficking.

[00:09:30] **Ron Hansen** They're human.

[00:09:31] **Ryan Randazzo** Trafficking.

[00:09:32] **Ron Hansen** And they're bringing in.

[00:09:33] **Ryan Randazzo** Massive quantities of drugs. But again, Trump far and away, appears to be the favorite Republican candidate at the moment in the state of Arizona. DeSantis has fallen off in polling in other states, maybe because he's such a frequent target of President Trump, who has gone out of his way to criticize DeSantis over any of his other GOP rivals. So I'm not especially confident in Mr. Desantis's chances here in Arizona.

[00:09:58] **Ron Hansen** There is another Republican debate this week as Arizona voters listen to that matter. Is there anything that they should be thinking of in terms of issues that the Republicans are expected to talk about that might have special relevance to people here?

[00:10:15] **Ryan Randazzo** We've already mentioned inflation, which has hit Arizona harder than other states. And then the border is something that I think all Arizonans are going to be very keen to listen in on. And Arizonans are not naive about the border. So I think they're going to want to hear realistic solutions. The violence at the border topic

might play well in some circles, but I have my doubts about how broad of an audience is going to respond to something like that.

[00:10:40] **Ron Hansen** There are other parties trying to get on the ballot in Arizona. No Labels has certainly made noise and qualified for the ballot. Democrats have cast this as an effort to siphon votes from Joe Biden and hand Republicans a win in 2024. So where do things stand with third party presidential campaigns in Arizona at the moment?

[00:11:03] **Ryan Randazzo** Third party candidates can threaten to tilt the race by drawing votes from one party or another. There's a threat that Cornel West would run as a Green Party candidate that would likely pull votes from Biden. And then I think we have to consider that because Biden only won by about 10,000 votes in Arizona. A third party candidate would not have to draw an especially large number of votes to tilt the race. It's probably worth noting that back in 2020, the Libertarian candidate, Joe Jorgensen, got more than 51,000 votes in the state of Arizona. But also during that election, the Green Party candidate only got about 1500 votes. So probably not enough to really sway things.

[00:11:39] **Ron Hansen** There's another wild card that could possibly have potentially a bigger impact than a third party candidate. There is a ballot measure affecting abortion rights that could be on the ballot in Arizona. Talk about that and what its possible impact could be.

[00:11:53] **Ryan Randazzo** Well, they're gathering signatures now, and it appears that they have the finances and wherewithal to get that measure on the ballot. It's certain to face legal challenges. So that's the first question, is does the abortion access measure get to the 2022 ballot? Assuming it does, I would predict that that would give a tailwind to the incumbent President Biden. I think that's something that would draw more Democrats out to the polls. Certainly, it's an issue that is important to Republicans as well. But my sense is that the Republicans who care about that issue already are probably more dedicated or reliable voters, whereas having abortion on the ballot in Arizona and other states where this issue might come up is probably going to dry out new first time voters, young people and Democrats. And I would predict that helps the Democratic Party.

[00:12:44] **Ron Hansen** And one thing that we've already seen across the country is that even in conservative states, abortion rights has really sort of gone in one direction, has it not?

[00:12:52] **Ryan Randazzo** Yeah, it does appear to be a winning issue. So if Ohio or any of these other states are to be taken as an indicator, if abortion access makes it to the Arizona ballot, it is likely to pass. And that means that it is likely to have more left leaning voters come out and vote for it and of course, likely vote for president while they're doing that.

[00:13:14] **Ron Hansen** Polling is one measure of how the political races are unfolding. Campaign contributions are another. You've taken a look at what we've seen on the presidential fundraising front. How does that picture look for both party candidates?

[00:13:31] **Ryan Randazzo** Well, as of the last quarter, President Biden had outraised Trump and DeSantis 2 to 1, 3 to 1. So nationally, Biden was doing fine on that front, although he hadn't even started to fundraise in states like Arizona. This event that he's doing with the mayor and Representative Stanton is sort of his beginning to do that now. So he should have the finances to run a very competitive campaign.

[00:13:56] **Ron Hansen** I want to tackle one last idea here. In the 2024 race at the moment, maybe the biggest issue hanging over the race is the unpopularity of both of the major party frontrunners. We saw that in 2016 as well when Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton turned off a lot of voters. How unpopular are Biden and Trump and what kind of dynamics does that present as this race starts to unfold?

[00:14:23] **Ryan Randazzo** Well, I'll take it in reverse order. I mean, the dynamic you have there is that you can get a surprise result when people are voting on their distaste for people, which for 2016 was a bit of a surprise that Clinton lost that race. And we have pretty much the same dynamic setting up now. So a CNN poll over the summer found that most voters don't want either Biden or Trump specifically. That poll found that 33% of voters favor Trump and 32% were opting for Biden. But that 36%, a larger percentage view neither positively that held among registered voters as well. So we have two candidates who most voters actually don't want in office, and that could definitely create a wild card outcome.

[00:15:07] **Ron Hansen** All right. Well, we will have to leave it there. Ryan Randazzo, thank you again for coming on The Gaggle. Listeners, be sure to check out all of Ryan's reporting on [azcentral.com](http://azcentral.com). And if people want to follow your work on social media, where can they find you?

[00:15:21] **Ryan Randazzo** I am @utilityreporter.

[00:15:34] **Ron Hansen** That is it for this week Gaggle listeners. Do you have questions about today's episode or topics you'd like us to cover on the show in the future? Send us a message at 602-444-0804. Or a voice memo to [thegaggle@arizonarepublic.com](mailto:thegaggle@arizonarepublic.com). This episode was edited and produced by Kaely Monahan. Scriptwriting and research by myself and Kaely. News Direction from Kathy Tulumello. Additional audio support by Amanda Luberto. Music comes from Universal Production Music. Never miss an episode of The Gaggle by subscribing to us wherever you listen. If you learn something new today, be sure to share this episode with a friend. You can also leave us a review and rate us five stars. You can follow the gaggle on social media @azcpodcast. I'm at Ronald J. Hansen. The Gaggle is an Arizona Republic and [azcentral.com](http://azcentral.com) Production. Thanks again for listening. We'll see you next week.