

America's looking for fresh programming

Contenders of 2020, both angling for a 2024 rematch, oftentimes look like spent forces

Andrew Jackson and John Quincy Adams did it. So did Martin Van Buren and William Henry Harrison. Grover Cleveland and Benjamin Harrison, too. Also William Jennings Bryan and William McKinley. And of course, Dwight D. Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson.

Presidential-election reruns are not unknown in our history; they happened frequently in the nation's early years. But there hasn't been one in two-thirds of a century, though we may be approaching one in 2024. Joe Biden versus Donald Trump: The Sequel.

We may yearn to see the oldest hitter (Albert Pujols, 42) face the oldest pitcher (Justin Verlander, 39) this season, and if the Cardinals end up facing the Astros in the World Series, we may have the chance. We would have loved to see the two oldest Grand Slam champions (Ken Rosewall, 37 at the time, and Roger Federer, a youthful 36) face each other, but they are of different eras and, in a way, different eras of men's tennis. And what might you give to see the two ancient hockey mariners from Saskatchewan, Gordie Howe (52 in his last outing) go up against goalie Johnny Bower (45 in his) once more?

Biden and Trump? Not so much. Despite their efforts at appearing youthful and exuberant, the president and the pretender look tired right now. And in truth, the American people are tired of both of them.

Seldom if ever — reliable public-opinion polls aren't even a century old — have two leading politicians been so poorly regarded by the public. Biden's approval rating is 43%, according to YouGov. Trump's favorability rating is 38%. (Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stood at 67% among Americans in a poll taken before his poignant remarks to Congress more than two weeks ago.)

Ballotpedia's polling average indicates that Biden's ratings are about 7 percentage points above Trump's at this point in their respective presidencies. But that is hardly good news for the president. The rate of Americans who believe the country is going in the right direction is about the same for both leaders.

Biden at least has the chance to improve his ratings; Ronald Reagan stood at about the Biden level just after the midterm congressional elections of 1982, but by the eve of his reelection in 1984, he stood at 58%.

Trump has fewer opportunities for boosting his approval ratings, and in historical terms he is in dangerous territory — far worse than the last two presidents who were defeated for reelection.

At this relative point after his presidential defeat, Jimmy Carter — the president to whom Trump ardently resists comparison — recorded a 54% favorability, according to the Los Angeles Times poll. George H.W. Bush — a figure Trump reviles with special enmity — stood at 76% in the Times Mirror poll. That is exactly twice the figure Trump receives from a public he hopes will return him to the presidency. (Both defeated presidents gracefully left politics, Carter becoming the personification of good works, and Bush becoming the personification of a good man.)

Bryan was 48 the third time he ran for president; Richard Nixon was 59 the third time he sought the office, and Henry Clay was 67. Trump would be 78. Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York is less than half his age. GOP Rep. Madison Cawthorn of North Carolina, who argues Trump prevailed in 2020, won't even be 30 in 2024.

Age, of course, is no deterrent to greatness in leadership; Winston Churchill was 65 when he became British prime minister and was 80 when he finally left office, the same age of Nelson Mandela when he left the presidency of South Africa.

But the contenders of 2020, both angling for a 2024 rematch, oftentimes look like spent forces.

The American public may like the policy Biden is pursuing with regard to Ukraine, for example, but they like the man less. (Though his ratings have inched up since the war there began, he is not experiencing the rally-round-the-flag phenomenon that customarily occurs during crises; both President Bushes enjoyed robust poll ratings after Desert Storm and the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, respectively.) Trump is attracting smaller crowds at his rallies, and many of the candidates he has endorsed in Republican primaries have dim prospects to be nominated. This is especially true in Alabama, Georgia and Michigan.

There is in all this a distinct advantage for Republicans. The Democrats may control both houses of Congress, but their high-profile bench is thin. Quick: Name four Democrats, besides the 80-year-old Bernie Sanders of Vermont and the 72-year-old Elizabeth Warren, who could plausibly run a strong presidential race. You might come up with Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, who is 40. And of course Vice President Kamala Harris, 57. And Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota. She is 61. Who's the fourth? I write about politics for a living and I can conjure up only a few others. President Gretchen Whitmer? Commander in Chief Mitch Landrieu?

The Republicans are loaded, as envious Big Ten college football coaches say when they contemplate a conference rival with 17 returning starters. (This year that's Iowa, whose nine returning offensive players include quarterback Spencer Petras.) There are six plausible GOP nominees under the age of 60: governors Ron DeSantis of Florida and Chris Sununu of New Hampshire, senators Ted Cruz of Texas and Marco Rubio of Florida, former Gov. Nikki Haley of South Carolina, and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Former Vice President Mike Pence is 62.

But presidential campaigns are factories of familiarity. Who outside Indiana had heard of Buttigieg before his 2020 campaign? Who — again outside Indiana, though you could add Wall Street — had heard of Wendell Willkie in 1939? (He was the 1940 GOP presidential nominee a year later.) Who outside Georgia had heard of Jimmy Carter? (He was the "mystery guest" on television's "What's My Line?" two years before he was elected president.)

Now consider the case of Illinois state Sen. Barack Obama, defeated in a congressional primary. He cadged a cheap ticket to Los Angeles for the Democratic National Convention and presented his credit card at the rental-car desk. It was rejected. Eight years later, he was elected president of the United States.

DAVID M. SHRIBMAN is the former executive editor of the Pittsburgh Post Gazette. His email is dshribman@post-gazette.com.



Letter Policy

We welcome letters to the editor. All letters must be submitted with the author's name, address and telephone number. We reserve the right to reject or edit letters on the basis of libel, poor taste or repetition. Submit letters online at kpcnews.com/site/forms/online_services/letter. Read letters online at kpcnews.com/opinions/letters. Currently, our offices are open Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

The News Sun
102 N. Main St.
P.O. Box 39
Kendallville, IN 46755
Email: sgarbacz@kpcmedia.com

The Star
118 W. Ninth St.
Auburn, IN 46706
Email: abarrand@kpcmedia.com

The Herald Republican
107 N. Martha St.
Angola, IN 46703
Email: mmarturello@kpcmedia.com

Letters to the Editor

It is time to wake up

To the editor:
It's time to wake up from your nap, Joe. Four million illegal immigrants have invaded our country while you were sleeping.
It's time to wake up, Joe. Inflation has increased from 2% to 7% while you were asleep.
It's time to wake up, Joe. Gas prices have increased from \$2.50 to \$4 while you were asleep.
It's time to wake up, Joe. The liberties and due process rights of American citizens are being taken away while you were asleep.
It's time to wake up, Joe. The Russian government has committed war crimes and genocide in Ukraine while you were asleep.
It is clear that the Biden administration's policies are not designed in the best interest of American citizens and future generations. Let's put America first!
It's time for the American people to wake up and demand that our government govern in the best interest of the American citizens. We need to rise up and make our voices heard now, strongly and loudly. It's no longer a time to be the silent majority. We can't wait for the midterm elections.

Rick Baker
Auburn

The emperor has no clothes, folks

To the editor:
The emperor has no clothes, folks.
Neo-Marxist educators, administrators, school board members, teacher unions, departments of education, and activist groups including BLM/Antifa are attempting to indoctrinate K-12 students into woke ideology.
The Biden administration and Democrat party share their Neo-Marxist goals. Indoctrination into this ideology ensures their party dominance.
Woke indoctrination includes critical race theory, gender ideology, and sexually explicit materials.
Indiana needs to pass legislation prohibiting this. A common claim maintains indoctrination isn't occurring.
The claim is often expressed like "Critical race theory isn't being taught in K-12 schools. It's an academic theory associated with law school."
The truth? The phrase "critical race theory" may never be used, but the underlying Neo-Marxist worldview and concepts are communicated in many school districts. They are embedded in programs like Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI).
Indianapolis, Carmel and South Bend/Elkhart area public schools are strongly affected by woke ideology.
A Goshen middle school teacher submitted an application for a youth drag show event during Goshen Gay Pride Week.
School administrators in the South Bend/Elkhart area have participated in anti-police rhetoric.
Indiana school library collections have included sexually explicit literature. A list of these books and associated school systems (including East Noble and DeKalb), along with excerpts, is available upon request (sparkmanrl@mediacombb.net).
It's not always easy to identify wokeness in education. Neo-Marxists hide the true nature of indoctrination programs using noble-sounding terms like "social justice", "diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI)" and "anti-racism."
"Social justice" is basically Neo-Marxism. Neo-Marxists love to tack justice onto words to hide their true nature. Social justice focuses on equal outcomes, with any differences between ethnicities automatically attributed to racism and injustice. A higher prevalence of fatherless households, for example, is not viewed as a legitimate cause of poverty.
"Diversity, equity, inclusion" is a deceptive phrase. Neo-Marxists hate biblical Christianity and are not inclusive in this regard. Equity means "equal outcomes" to a Neo-Marxist. Any disparities are always chalked up to racism or bigotry, not other factors involving personal responsibility.
"Anti-racism" vilifies "whiteness." Anti-racism is a racist worldview claiming to be anti-racist.
Wokeness is a cultish secular ideology. Orthodoxy is defined by the writings of various woke gurus. Converts with white skin tone must

become enlightened ("woke") and admit they are oppressors of minorities, privileged by virtue of skin tone. They must renounce their "white privilege" and engage in converting others to the movement.

Woke educators consider children to be their mission field.

Gender ideology is an important component of wokeness. Woke educators

- scrutinize children to determine whether their gender aligns with their biological sex.
- groom innocent, vulnerable, developing, awkward children into transgenderism, hiding the process from parents.
- refer to them by "preferred pronouns" based upon this determination.
- encourage them to use the restrooms and dressing rooms of the opposite sex.
- encourage them to compete in sports with the opposite sex.

Female athletes experience demoralization from "transgender" competitors due to biological advantage.

I recommend a booklet by Jack Richardson IV titled "Hey! Teachers, Leave Those Kids Alone." Jack is a Christian lawyer who participated in creation of anti-woke education legislation.

He was interviewed by Jon Harris of Conversations That Matter Youtube channel in an episode titled "Crafting Good Legislation Against Teaching CRT." Details for obtaining a copy are in the episode description.

"Race to the Bottom" by Luke Rosiak is a good book, too. He discusses wokeness in education, including dodgy financial and other incentives motivating key players.

I recommend Real News Michiana webpage to track local woke activities.

Indiana House Bill 1134 didn't pass, but the need for legislation prohibiting Neo-Marxism in education remains.

Communicate with your state congressmen, asking them to vote for well-worded legislation against this indoctrination. Futures of American children depend on it.

William (Lia) Thomas is not a woman. Richard (Rachel) Levine is not a woman.

The emperor has no clothes. Don't participate in woke delusions.

Robert Sparkman
Rome City

Candidate's dedication has been exemplary

To the editor:
I am writing this letter to show my full support of Ms. Jennie Short for DeKalb County coroner. Jennie has served with the DeKalb County coroner's office since 2012 and has served under Mr. Jeff Warner and Michael Gerber.

As my term limit is up and I am not able to run again, Ms. Short will have the best interest as serving as coroner for the residents of DeKalb County. I have had the privilege of Ms. Short serving under me for the last eight years, and during this time, her dedication has been exemplary. Jennie has a great working relationship with all the local first responders and law enforcement officers that will allow her transition into the role of coroner and easy task. Her knowledge with extended care facilities will also allow her to help educate and update the local extended care facilities with any new updates or policies the state has in regards to deaths at their facility.

Jennie's best interest will not only be the decedent, but also to assist the family in their time of grieving during the loss of a loved one. Jennie has helped many families through a difficult time and has had nothing but their best interest. I have experienced this dedication, compassion and sympathy when she assisted with a family member of my own. Jennie also works hard to assist families make contact with Indiana Donor Network for organ, tissue and cornea donation.

Her best interest will also be towards the taxpayers of DeKalb County. She will ensure to limit spending to the necessity that the department will need and not make purchases unless absolutely necessary.

Michael P. Gerber
DeKalb County coroner 2012-2022
Auburn