

TURMOIL IN AMERICA: THE 2020 ELECTION

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EVENTS SURROUNDING THE 2020 ELECTION

July 2019

On July 25 US president Donald Trump pressures Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky to announce an investigation into Hunter Biden, son of Joe Biden, who Trump anticipates will be his major opponent in the 2020 election.

February 2020

On February 5 the Republican-controlled US Senate votes to acquit Trump on the impeachment charges

On February 29 Joe Biden takes the lead for the Democratic nomination by winning the South Carolina primary.

August 2020

On August 19 Senator Kamala Harris is nominated at the Democratic National Convention as Biden's running mate in the fall election.



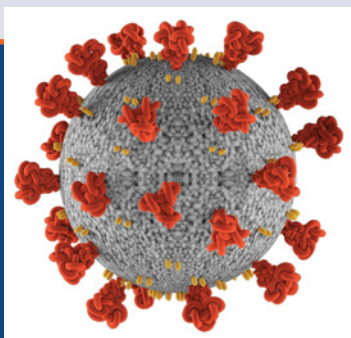
2019

2020

December 2019

On December 18 the US House of Representatives votes to impeach Trump, finding that the president violated the law as well as the duties of his office in pressuring Zelensky.

On December 31 authorities in China acknowledge that they have treated numerous citizens of the city of Wuhan for severe flu-like symptoms; the disease, later named COVID-19, would soon emerge as a global pandemic.



May 2020

On May 15 the Trump administration announces plans for Operation Warp Speed, a \$10 billion program to develop a vaccine for COVID-19.

On May 25 George Floyd, a Black man, dies during his arrest in Minneapolis, Minnesota, when a White police officer presses his knee into Floyd's neck; the incident touches off national protests against racial injustice.



President Donald Trump meets with Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelensky (left) in 2019. Months earlier, Trump had pressured Zelensky to announce an investigation into Joe Biden's son for his possible connection to fraudulent activity at a Ukrainian company in order to undermine Biden's candidacy.

whether an impeachment vote should be taken. Impeachment is a process outlined in the US Constitution that gives Congress the power to determine whether a US president has violated the responsibilities of the office or has broken the law. Hearings were held in the House that included testimony from White House foreign policy experts who, as part of their duties, listened to the call between Trump and Zelensky. On December 18, 2019, the House voted to impeach Trump. No Republicans in the House voted for the impeachment.

Trump Survives Impeachment

The measure then moved to the US Senate, which held a trial on the charges. Several Democratic members of the House served as prosecutors, laying out the case before the Senate. To find the president guilty and remove him from office would take a two-thirds majority—sixty-seven votes—to convict the president. After

listening to the evidence, however, the February 5, 2020, vote in the Republican-controlled Senate fell far short of sixty-seven votes to convict the president. All but one Republican member of the Senate, Mitt Romney of Utah, voted to acquit the president on the charge of abuse of power. On a second charge approved by the House—obstructing the House investigation—all Republican senators voted to acquit the president.

Trump remained in office and prepared now for the campaign ahead. But he was running now as a president who survived an impeachment—a factor that did not help his standing among many voters. He immediately went on the attack, attempting to paint the impeachment as a “witch hunt” orchestrated by his political opponents. He also mocked Biden, calling him “Sleepy Joe”³—clearly a reference to his opponent’s age. (Shortly before the impeachment vote in the House, Biden had turned seventy-seven. Trump was not that much younger—at the time, he was seventy-three.)

Biden girded for a tough campaign ahead. As the months progressed, numerous attacks against the former vice president were lobbed by Trump. Several Democratic candidates also entered the presidential race, seeking their party’s nomination. In the coming months the divisiveness that exists in American society would be exposed during the very bitter 2020 campaign for the presidency.

CHAPTER ONE

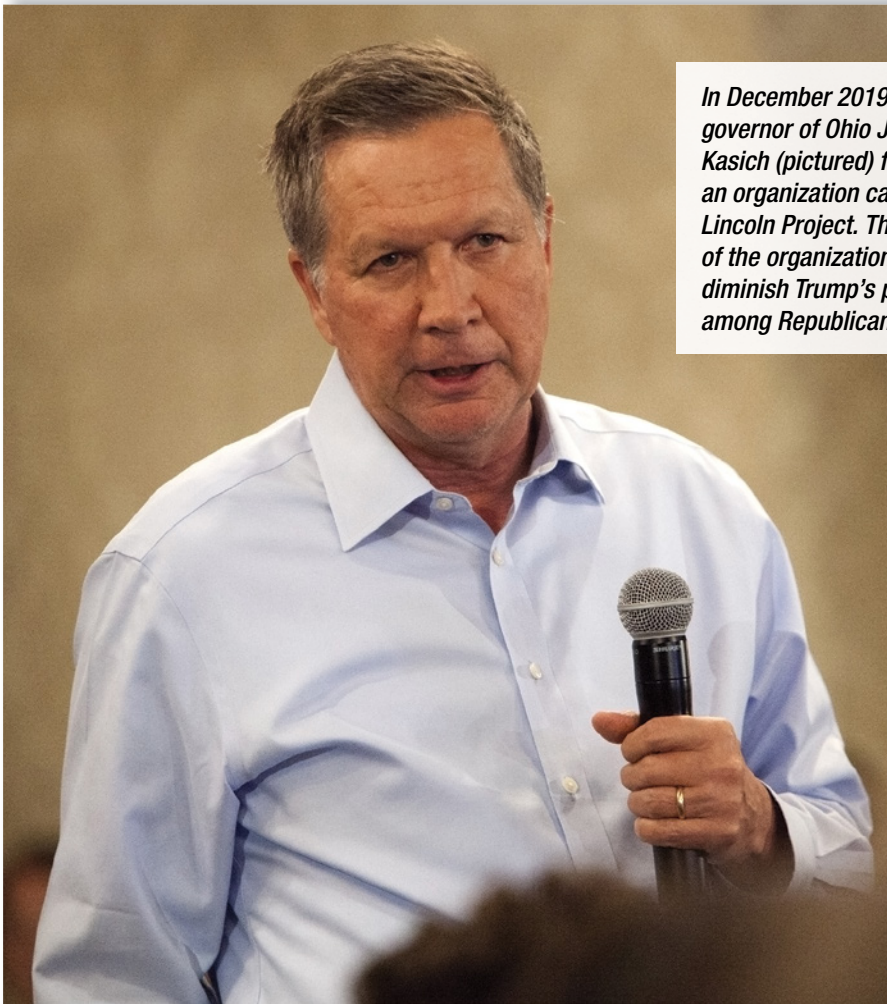
The Candidates

Although Donald Trump was acquitted in the Ukraine scandal by his Republican allies in the US Senate, some Republican leaders were incensed by his actions with regard to Ukraine. They also found fault with some of his other policies and decisions over the previous three years of his presidency. In fact, a group of Republican leaders formed an organization they named the Lincoln Project, through which they sought to undermine Trump's popularity among Republican voters. "Patriotism and the survival of our nation in the face of the crimes, corruption and corrosive nature of Donald Trump are a higher calling than mere politics," wrote the founders of the Lincoln Project in December 2019. "As Americans, we must stem the damage he and his followers are doing to the rule of law, the Constitution and the American character."⁴ Among the founders of the Lincoln Project were John Kasich, a former governor of Ohio; Steve Schmidt, who managed the 2008 presidential campaign of Arizona senator John McCain; and George Conway, a prominent Washington, DC, attorney.

Trump faced opposition from other Republican leaders as well. In fact, by early February 2020, three opponents announced intentions to challenge Trump for the Republican nomination. They included William Weld, a former governor of Massachusetts; Mark Sanford, a former governor and member of Congress from South Carolina; and Roque De La Fuente, a wealthy entrepreneur from California. Trump promptly labeled his challengers the "Three Stooges"—a reference to the slapstick comedy trio that made numerous

movies over a span of several decades. “They’re a joke,” Trump said of his opponents. “They’re a laughingstock.”⁵

Despite efforts by the Lincoln Project and his Republican opponents, Trump remained extremely popular among his core Republican voters. In early February voters started going to the polls to cast ballots in the presidential primaries and caucuses—the elections in each state that ultimately serve to select the nominees of the two major political parties. For example, in the New Hampshire primary, which was held on February 11, Trump scored 85 percent of the vote. His nearest challenger, Weld, received just 8 percent of the vote. Within the coming weeks, Weld and the other Republican challengers dropped out of the contest, clearing the way for Trump to easily win renomination as the Republican Party’s candidate for president.



In December 2019, former governor of Ohio John Kasich (pictured) formed an organization called the Lincoln Project. The goal of the organization was to diminish Trump’s popularity among Republican voters.

Clinton Urges Women to Run

While Trump cruised toward renomination on the Republican side, a much different contest was shaping up in the Democratic primaries and caucuses. By the time the voting commenced in early 2020, many Democratic candidates were well along in planning their campaigns. They had spent months raising money to finance their campaigns, purchasing commercial time on local and national TV broadcasts, and giving speeches laying out their positions on key issues.

“Sometimes, the road to progress can feel like it’s two steps forward, one step back, particularly when it comes to advancing the rights, opportunities and full participation of women and girls.”⁶

—Hillary Clinton, 2016 Democratic nominee for president

Early on, the two main contenders were expected to be Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders, a US senator from Vermont. Both were veteran politicians, well known among voters and party leaders. Biden had served for thirty-six years in the US Senate representing his home state of Delaware before serving as vice president for eight years during the administration of President Barack Obama. Sanders was a former mayor of Burlington, Vermont’s largest city. In 1990 he won election to the US House of Representatives, and in 2006 he

won his first term in the US Senate. In 2016 Sanders campaigned for his party’s nomination for president. Sanders waged a spirited battle, winning many primary contests, but he ultimately lost the nomination to Hillary Clinton, a former First Lady, US senator from New York, and secretary of state in the Obama administration.

Clinton was the first woman to be nominated by a major party for a presidential contest. And although she ultimately lost the 2016 race to Trump, shortly after the contest Clinton said she hoped her candidacy would help ignite the desire in other women to seek the nation’s highest office. She said:

Sometimes, the road to progress can feel like it’s two steps forward, one step back, particularly when it comes

to advancing the rights, opportunities and full participation of women and girls. It can seem discouraging, whether you've been on that road for a long time or you're just starting out. But think how different the world would be today if the people who came before us had not just gotten discouraged, but because of that, had given up.⁶

In fact, several women did enter the 2020 race. Among them were four members of the US Senate: Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Kamala Harris of California, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, and Kirsten Gillibrand of New York State. Also declaring her candidacy was Tulsi Gabbard, a member of the US House of Representatives from Hawaii.



Several women from the Democratic Party entered the race for the presidential nomination. Among them was Kamala Harris (pictured), who would eventually go on to become the first female vice president of the United States.

A Diverse Field of Democratic Candidates

The list of Democratic candidates also reflected the various ethnicities, age groups, and sexual orientations that are found in the American electorate. There were two African American candidates: Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey and Deval Patrick, a former governor of Massachusetts. An Asian American businessman, Andrew Yang, entered the contest. A Latino, Julián Castro, entered the contest as well. Castro was a former mayor of San Antonio, Texas, who had served as secretary of transportation in the Obama administration.

A millennial, Pete Buttigieg, was among the early field of contenders. Millennials are members of a generation born from 1981 to 1996. (The name is applied to the generation because its members started reaching adulthood in the year 2000, the dawn of the new millennium.) Born in 1982, Buttigieg was serving as mayor of South Bend, Indiana, when he entered the presidential contest. In addition to being a member of a generation that is

Bernie Sanders: Democratic Socialist

Senator Bernie Sanders has twice made spirited campaigns for the Democratic nomination for president even though he is not a member of the Democratic Party. Rather, Sanders regards himself as a democratic socialist.

Socialism is a political philosophy that grew in appeal following the Russian Revolution of 1917, when the country's royal family was overthrown by activists who believed that all citizens should benefit equally from the nation's industrial output. The philosophy developed into communism, which endured for decades in what became the Soviet Union but eventually proved unworkable and collapsed in the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Democratic socialists have very much moderated the notion of modern socialism. Still, they contend that the economy should benefit all citizens, not just a wealthy few. Democratic socialists call for higher taxes on the wealthy and higher wages for working people. Sanders has also advocated for a health care system in which the government, rather than individual Americans, is responsible for most of the costs. Says Sanders, "We must recognize that in the 21st century, in the wealthiest country in the history of the world, economic rights are human rights. That is what I mean by democratic socialism."

underrepresented in most political offices, Buttigieg is gay and was very open about his sexual orientation.

There were many other candidates. By mid-2019, no fewer than twenty-nine prominent Democrats had announced they were at least exploring campaigning for the presidency. Among the candidates were two billionaires: Michael Bloomberg, a former mayor of New York City, and California environmental activist Tom Steyer. Both candidates announced they would devote portions of their significant wealth to financing their campaigns.

And so, as Democratic voters prepared to start casting their ballots in the presidential contest, they could choose among a very diverse field. Political analyst Harry Enten pointed out that the field of Democratic candidates reflected the ethnic and gender makeup of the voters of the Democratic Party. Polls around this time showed that about 25 percent of Democratic voters were straight White men, about 58 percent were women, about 10 percent were non-White, and nearly 10 percent were members of the LGBTQ community. “In other words,” Enten said, “the Democratic field is so diverse compared to other years past because this year’s field is reflective of its party’s voters for the first time in a very long time.”⁷

“The Democratic field is so diverse compared to other years past because this year’s field is reflective of its party’s voters for the first time in a very long time.”⁷

—Harry Enten, political analyst

The Voting Begins

Still, despite the wide array of candidates entering the race in the weeks leading up to the early primaries and caucuses, Biden and Sanders were regarded as the front-runners. In January 2020 a national poll commissioned by the cable TV network CNN found Sanders leading the field with 27 percent and Biden close behind at 24 percent. Their nearest competitors were Warren at 14 percent and Buttigieg at 11 percent.

But then voters started casting ballots, and the results were hardly reflective of the early polls. The first test was on February 3, when the Iowa caucuses were staged. Iowa as well as other states stage caucuses rather than primaries—in caucuses, voters show up at school gymnasiums and similar venues where they publicly declare their support for candidates. In primaries, voters cast their votes as they do in general elections—in private voting booths. When the caucus votes were tallied in Iowa, Buttigieg emerged as a very narrow winner over Sanders. Warren finished third. Biden finished in fourth place. The next contest occurred two weeks later when New Hampshire voters cast ballots in their state's primary. This time, the winner was Sanders; Buttigieg finished a close second. Klobuchar and Warren followed. Biden finished fifth with just 8 percent of the vote. Clearly, the Biden campaign was in trouble.

Analysts blamed Biden's poor showing in Iowa and New Hampshire on mediocre campaigning. Biden failed to spend much time in either state in the weeks leading up to the elections. In the case of New Hampshire, aides to Biden acknowledged that the former vice president had long since conceded the primary to either Warren or Sanders, who represent neighboring states in the Senate. Said *Washington Post* political analyst Dan Balz, "If he truly wants to be president, he doesn't have to look far for answers as to what happened. His organization certainly failed him, but he contributed significantly to what happened [in Iowa and New Hampshire.]"⁸

Biden Takes the Lead

Starting with the next primary—South Carolina on February 29—the Biden campaign found new life. Biden finished first in South Carolina with nearly 49 percent of the vote. Sanders finished second with just 20 percent of the vote, well behind Biden. Steyer, who had poured \$18 million of his own money into his campaign in South Carolina—most of it going into TV advertising—finished a distant third at just 11 percent.



US senator Bernie Sanders campaigns in Los Angeles for the 2020 presidential bid. A poll of voters in January 2020 showed Sanders as the frontrunner in the Democratic race.

Political analysts attributed Biden's victory to endorsements by several of South Carolina's African American political leaders. Most notable among this group was Jim Clyburn, a veteran member of the US House of Representatives and one of the state's most influential political leaders. In endorsing Biden, Clyburn cited the former vice president's long record of supporting civil rights legislation that had improved the lives of Black Americans. Black citizens make up a significant portion of South Carolina's Democratic voters, and their support is regarded as vital to a candidate's chances in the state. In endorsing Biden, Clyburn said, "I know his heart. I know who he is. I know where this country is: We are at an inflection point. I am fearful for the future of this country. I'm fearful for my daughters and their future, and their children and their children's future."⁹

"I know [Joe Biden's] heart. I know who he is. I know what he is. I know where this country is."⁹

—Jim Clyburn, member of the US House of Representatives from South Carolina

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