Opinion
NCR Voices



Attorney and businessman Hunter Biden, left, and lawyer Abbe Lowell are surrounded by reporters asking about Biden's potential testimony before the House of Representatives about his foreign business dealings. (Wikimedia Commons/CQ Roll Call/Tom Williams)



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The GOP nominating process officially starts on Monday, Jan. 15, with the Iowa caucuses. According to the latest numbers at Nate Silver's 538 dashboard, former President Donald Trump is leading both the national polls, with 61.3%, and in the Iowa polls, too, with 51.8%. Even though former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley has closed in on Trump in New Hampshire, it is hard to see how she can overtake him and win the nomination.

It is worthwhile noting, however, that almost 40% of Republicans nationwide name someone other than Trump as their preferred choice. We can expect most of those voters to "come home" to the GOP nominee. Still, their hesitance currently is not rooted in a lack of information about Trump, which might have explained the 2016 polling at this stage in the contest. Everyone knows Trump, what he stands for, what are his strengths and his weaknesses. Surely, some of those GOP voters, maybe even just a sliver of them, might be persuaded to vote for President Joe Biden or will decide to stay home on election day entirely.

These are the voters who lined up behind Trump's most relentless critic, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who dropped out of the race Jan. 10. The 538 summary shows Christie only polling 3.6% nationwide. This year's presidential contest will likely be decided, as the last two were, by a few thousand votes in a few key swing states, so 3.6% of Republican voters staying home or voting for Biden might be decisive.

When you listen to Republican voters who are backing someone other than Trump during focus groups, what they don't like about him is all the drama, his immaturity and self-centeredness, the lack of gravitas they want in a president.

That is why Democrats need to exercise profound discipline. And, the first person who needs to exercise such discipline is President Biden's son, Hunter. Like many people who suffered from addiction, Hunter made some large mistakes. We can sympathize with his situation. We can hope and pray he succeeds in staying sober.

Our hearts rightly go out to him and to his father, whose love is so unflinching, but Hunter also has to take responsibility for whatever misdeeds he committed.

Hunter Biden has refused to honor a subpoena from the House Oversight Committee, which may or may not land him in additional legal trouble. He is not wrong to think it will be a political show aimed at hurting his father or that an appearance might expose him to further legal jeopardy. But his decision to show up at their meeting this week was pure political theater. It was drama. It blended in perfectly with the drama coming from the various courtrooms where Trump and his lawyers are keeping busy.

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Fox News could scarcely contain their glee. "America Reports" hosts John Roberts and Sandra Smith only cut away from their show to go to the White House briefing when questions about Hunter were raised. Laura Ingraham said the president's son turned the hearing into "a complete circus." She dubbed his appearance "a political stunt." Jesse Watters began his show with a segment on Hunter's appearance at the hearing. They know what they are doing. The Hunter circus blends in with the Trump circus and some voters will think it's all six of one or half a dozen of the other.

Another "stunt" that makes the Democrats look terrible is the effort by some state secretaries of state to remove Trump from the ballot, citing the insurrection clause of the 14th Amendment. I have written about this effort previously. The problem is not with the meaning of the text and whether or not it applies to a president. The problem is that it is outrageous to think a secretary of state is empowered to determine guilt or innocence on such a consequential charge as insurrection without benefit of a jury verdict or a vote in the U.S. Senate to convict an impeached president. On what basis did they determine Trump committed an act of insurrection? Because Anderson Cooper said so?

I do not doubt Trump did commit an act of insurrection against the U.S. Constitution. Still, to quote Lt. Daniel Kaffee in "A Few Good Men," "It doesn't matter what I think, it only matters what I can prove."

Fox News does its best to confuse people about Trump's legal troubles. His lawyers and children appear on the prime time talk shows and complain that the legal cases

against Trump are unprecedented, which is true. But the lack of precedence is not because Attorney General Merrick Garland is on a banana-republic-quality witch hunt. It is because we have never before had a former president who was so indifferent to the rule of law.

The hosts and "experts" on Fox News, however, don't point out such idiocies. They repeat them as sound, even thoughtful, arguments. And Republicans watch Fox News. The key issue in this race is the degree to which Trump is a unique threat to American democracy. Allowing Trump's acolytes to paint all politicians with the same brush hides the uniqueness of the threat he poses. If a sliver of GOP voters is going to be persuaded not to vote for Trump, Democrats, all Democrats, need to stop giving Fox News any grist for their mills.