

Memorandum Re: RFK Jr.'s Failed Spoiler Campaign

To: Interested Parties

From: Ramsey Reid

Date: August 23, 2024

Overview

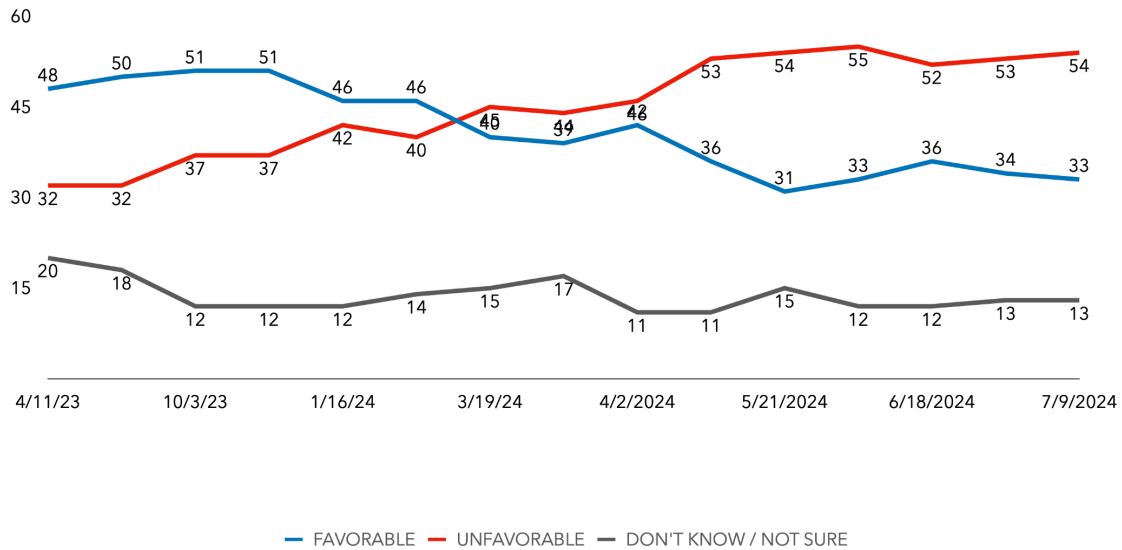
From day one, RFK Jr. had one role: to be a spoiler for Donald Trump. He was recruited into the race by MAGA Republicans like Steve Bannon, his candidacy was propped up by Trump's largest donor, and he parroted MAGA attacks on President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

MAGA Republicans elevated RFK Jr.'s sham candidacy as a tool to mislead voters and hurt Democrats, and RFK Jr.'s exit is an admission their gambit failed.

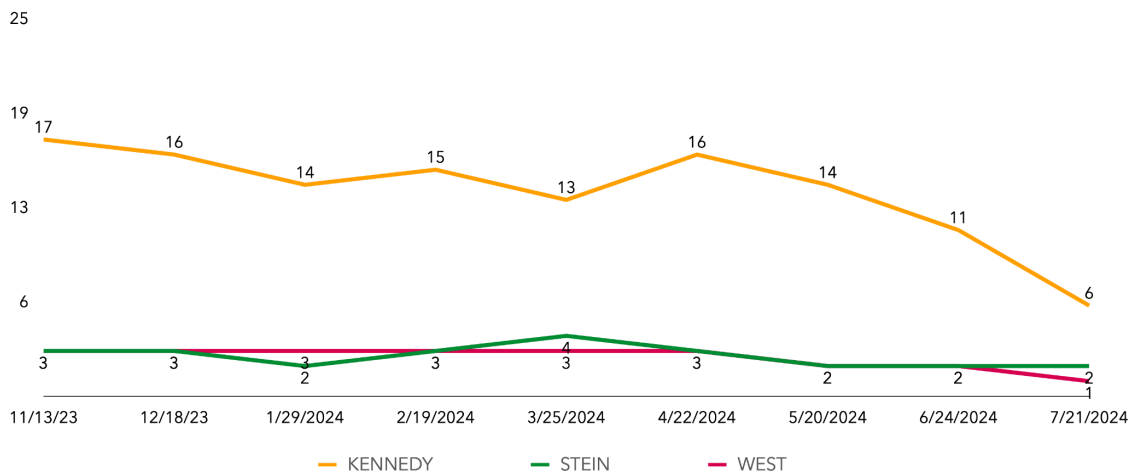
The Numbers Don't Lie

Here's what RFK Jr.'s endorsement of Donald Trump would change: nothing. Once around 15%, RFK Jr.'s support has been in free fall – now under 5% – and he's not positioned to deliver any electoral benefit to Trump. Polls show the handful of voters who still support RFK Jr. are splitting between Harris and Trump, and [election analysts](#) agree that the [impact](#) of his exit would be [negligible](#) by Election Day.

In January, as our effort to define him was getting under way, RFK Jr. was viewed in a generally positive light, largely gifted from his famous last name. In early 2024, data showed RFK Jr. supporters were about 50% more likely to be Biden 2020 voters than Trump 2020 voters. But after relentlessly exposing voters to RFK Jr.'s right wing positions, MAGA associations, and general unfitness, his net favorability declined steadily, going from +14 in January to -21 now. The favorability decline was especially precipitous with Democrats and potential third party voters open to Harris, but not Trump.



The favorability drop translated into declining support overall. This decline has been steady since April when we began ramping up our communications to educate more voters about RFK Jr. – in Quinnipiac, going from 16% in April to only 6% in late July. It has continued to drop in August.



This large decline has been evident across public polls, including:

- *New York Times*: 9% in June, 5% in August
- *Marquette*: 17% in May, 6% in August
- *Wall Street Journal*: 9% in February, 4% in August
- *Fox News*: 14% in December, 6% in August

As voters have learned about RFK Jr.’s unsavory and reckless past, ties to MAGA donors, and MAGA-lite positions on abortion bans and January 6th pardons, his support has dwindled to make him a near-negligible factor. The little support that remains is soft, split across ideologies,

and disproportionately among lower propensity voters. With no meaningful base of support and sky-high negatives among Democrats, RFK Jr.'s threat to VP Harris was neutralized.

Nothing More Than a MAGA-Recruited, MAGA-Funded Chaos Agent

After realizing that he was headed nowhere fast in the Democratic primary, RFK Jr. pivoted to an independent campaign. MAGA Republicans relished the switch as a new opportunity to fracture the vote, push pockets of Democrats to RFK Jr. through misinformation, and give Trump a clearer opportunity to win without reaching 50%.

Throughout the election cycle, Trump handled RFK Jr. as an asset. Recruited to run by [Steve Bannon](#) and other MAGA Republicans, Donald Trump's largest donor, Timothy Mellon, propped up his candidacy with [\\$25 million](#) in Super PAC contributions. Throughout the cycle, Trump [considered RFK Jr. as a potential running mate](#), and even RFK Jr.'s own campaign staff admitted that their [top goal was to hurt Democrats](#).

Now, with RFK Jr.'s [campaign hemorrhaging cash](#), failure to achieve [ballot access](#) in all 50 states, rock bottom trajectory in polls, and deeply diminished prospects of peeling votes from VP Harris as planned, Trump has decided to deploy RFK Jr. as a chaos agent outside of this race instead. There is no doubt RFK Jr. will continue to echo MAGA attacks on VP Harris to provide political cover for Donald Trump on glaring vulnerabilities like January 6th and abortion.

Trump Set To Own RFK Jr.'s Heavy Baggage

If he endorses Donald Trump, RFK Jr. would formally join the ranks of unsavory characters like Alex Jones, Michael Flynn, and Steve Bannon. RFK Jr. may be betting on Trump to do the one thing Trump never does: keep his promises.

Simultaneously, Donald Trump would not only own all of RFK Jr.'s baggage - he would presumably have to appoint him and that baggage to a major position in his government.

- Saying he would sign a [national abortion ban](#);
- Pushing [conspiracy theories about 9/11](#);
- Opposing all vaccines, including for [polio](#) and [measles, mumps, and rubella](#);
- Engaging in erratic and reckless behavior like [staging a bike accident with a dead bear in Central Park](#), setting off a media and public safety firestorm;
- Refusing to disclose basic medical history and leaving voters to learn via the press that he had a [parasitic worm eating his brain](#);
- Baselessly and repeatedly [accusing](#) two men of color of a murder they didn't commit – and then profiting off of it in book and TV deals.

- Hiding a long, disturbing [history of misogyny and predatory behavior](#) towards women.

Like RFK Jr., Donald Trump is at a low point and acting out of desperation. Embracing RFK Jr. now – when he has nothing to offer but months of disqualifying revelations – is not a decision a campaign makes when they’re acting from a position of strength.

The DNC Campaign to Take RFK Jr. Head On

The DNC made a commitment early to define RFK Jr. and set the terms of his role in this race, the first time in history a major political party dedicated a war room to holding third party candidates accountable. As a result, RFK Jr.’s stalking horse campaign imploded, and voters have woken up to the binary choice they will face in November. Some of our efforts included:

- **Aggressive Earned Media Strategy:** Democrats saw what happened in 2016 when we didn’t engage with third party candidates, and those candidates were left to eat away at the margins with no serious challenge. Some critics argued that engaging ran the risk of elevating and legitimizing spoiler campaigns. We remained focused and strategic - never losing sight of the fact that we needed to define RFK Jr. before he defined himself. Although polling would remain in flux throughout the race, our message needed to remain the same. Through constant monitoring of rapid response to RFK Jr.’s words and actions, we could educate voters via the press that RFK Jr.’s campaign was a MAGA prop to help Donald Trump.
- **Organic Digital Content:** We knew that the more Democratic-leaning voters learned about RFK Jr., the less they would like him – so we presented an unvarnished look at RFK Jr. with a constant barrage of video across platforms. The rapid response content moved hand-in-hand with the earned media strategy to reinforce his MAGA associations and right wing positions. We also saw that RFK Jr.’s penchant for the bizarre and off-putting was tailor-made for viral digital content. We worked with non-political content creators to caricature and meme-ify his oddities and expose his true character and unfitness to the population most at-risk of third party defection: younger and lower propensity voters who were overwhelmingly open to Democrats, but not Trump.
- **Accountability for Ballot Access Rules:** RFK Jr.’s campaign relied on a pattern of [shortcuts](#) and [deception](#) with [right wing third parties](#), [shady deals](#), and outright [fraud](#) to try and make it on the ballot. The DNC opened its legal strategy with an [FEC complaint](#) to stop a MAGA-funded, illegal ballot access scheme to skirt campaign finance laws. Democrats also brought forward [challenges](#) across the country to expose RFK Jr.’s ballot access schemes, including in [Georgia](#), [Nevada](#), [Texas](#), [New York](#) and others. When RFK Jr. opened himself up to legal woes, we were there to hold him accountable and protect the integrity of the ballot. Recent reporting [exposing fraud in Arizona](#) that was connected to our FEC complaint, and a [disastrous trial in New York](#) litigating more fraud charges

brought by Democrats, reinforced how in peril RFK Jr.'s campaign was when it came to ballot access.

With RFK Jr.'s departure, we will continue to hold other third party candidates accountable and educate voters about the clear choice between VP Harris and Donald Trump.