

# THE ECONOMIC CLUB

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O F W A S H I N G T O N, D. C.

## **Signature Event**

### **Election Panel**

#### **Panelists**

**Nikole Killion**

**Congressional Correspondent, CBS News**

**Kasie Hunt**

**Anchor & Chief National Affairs Analyst, CNN**

**Ben Smith**

**Co-Founder & Editor-in-Chief, Semafor**

**Amy Walter**

**Publisher & Editor-in-Chief, The Cook Political Report with Amy Walter**

**Peter Baker**

**Chief White House Correspondent, The New York Times**

#### **Moderator**

**David M. Rubenstein**

**Chairman**

**The Economic Club of Washington, D.C.**

**Washington, D.C.**

**Monday, October 21, 2024**

DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN: Just to reintroduce briefly our all-star panelists. We have, on my far left, Nikole Killion, who is with CBS News and chief congressional correspondent, previously with Hearst; Peter Baker, who has covered five presidents for The New York Times, and is now chief White House correspondent currently; Kasie Hunt, who is with CNN and has her own show in the morning, and she is – she’s covered Congress as well; and Ben Smith is the editor-in-chief of Semafor, previously at The New York Times; and Amy Walter, who is in charge of the most reliable, I guess, indicator who’s going to win elections, the Cook Report with Amy Walters. Thank you all.

OK, so – [applause] – can any of you recall a time when it was more difficult to predict who the person who’s going to be elected president would be this close to the election?

KASIE HUNT: That’s you, Peter. [Laughter.]

PETER BAKER: As the permanent White House – no, I was just saying that to somebody last night. I cannot remember two weeks out not – having it be as close as this, to the point where we are – and Amy knows this to better than I do – we are talking about change of a point here or a point there, as if somehow that matters. I mean, every other election in our lifetime we’d have thought, well, three-to-five-point change might mean something. We are so tight in this race. And I wouldn’t make a prediction if you paid me.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So you ever seen anything like this before?

MS. HUNT: The way that that this one feels, where it is an absolute true toss up, with no sign that the ball is rolling in one direction – especially right here at the end, which is how in the campaigns – I covered Romney’s campaign on the campaign plane. I was with Trump, and then Bernie Sanders, and Hillary in 2016. I mean, this one has a very unique feel in how tight it is.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. You ever seen anything like this?

BEN SMITH: Well, I mean, in 2016 we were all very confident that Hillary Clinton was going to win. And that in 2020, we were confident that it would be a Biden blowout. And those were both totally wrong. So I don’t know. I mean, it’s all – I guess we’re always – [laughter] – like it turns out in retrospect we never knew what we were doing. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right, but, Amy, you know –

AMY WALTER: You are definitely keeping it real. That’s why I love having Ben –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Amy, you know every congressional and every Senate seat, and presidential?

MS. WALTER: Yeah, we’ve got it all figured out.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right.

MS. WALTER: It's all done. Just can't tell anybody yet. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK, can you explain polling data, for example.

MS. WALTER: Yeah.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Explain how, if you have 1,500 people that you poll – which is, let's say, a nationwide poll – why is that enough to represent 330 million people? How can 1,500 people represent three 330 million?

MS. WALTER: Well, so – that's an excellent question. Thankfully, I don't have to do that. I'm not an actual pollster, and I was not always great at math. But here's what I do know. Is that you have to weight these polls. And this is going to be really the key question as we're coming into election night, why I think nobody feels comfortable – or, for a couple of reasons. One, to Ben's point, everybody felt really comfortable in 2016 and 2020 and learned that lesson. So nobody's feeling comfortable now.

I think pollsters are also. There's not a pollster out there who feels completely confident that the data that they have in front of them is how it's going to actually turn out. And so what you're doing is we have two things happening at the same time. We have a polarized and calcified electorate, more so than we've ever had. So people committed to their vote, regardless of what happens. And then a sliver of people who are deciding this election. And trying to figure out who that sliver is, is almost impossible. And polling can't pick that up.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So there was a thing in 1982 called the Bradley effect, where people – where Tom Bradley, an African American mayor of Los Angeles, was running for governor of California. He was widely predicted by the polls to be elected. But he didn't win. And people said that was because some people being polled didn't want to admit that he wouldn't vote for a Black person. You think there's a similar kind of thing with Trump, some people don't want to admit they're going to vote for Trump? Or you think that's not a factor?

MS. WALTER: No. I think the hardest thing about Trump is finding people who don't traditionally vote who show up, but they show up for Trump. And finding those people is really hard because they don't want to talk to people like us. They are against most of what institutions stand for. They're going to be much less engaged in politics in general, but also have a pretty cynical view of how the – how this – all of this works.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. How many people here have been called in this past – this recent election cycle from a pollster and asked your views? How many have been called?

MS. WALTER: Or texted.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Really? Not that many.

MS. WALTER: Or sent an email.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: How many of you wanted to be called, but were not? [Laughter.] OK. How many of you took a half hour to give your views to somebody? [Laughter.] Yeah, I always wonder who does the half-hour polling sort of stuff, but OK. So right now you're going to finish the election on election night. By 10:00 a.m. you'll be done, you think? [Laughter.] When do you think – you're on a shift from 12 midnight to 6:00 a.m., or something?

MS. HUNT: Yes. So we – I mean, we at CNN are preparing for round the clock coverage all week, if necessary. So our anchor teams are set up. And as – you know, since I usually am on in the mornings, my shift will begin earlier than it normally does but run through – run through the morning. And there are all sorts of scenarios that we're all gaming out in terms of the timing of election night. If there is a surprise in the polling that, especially if it were to go for Harris, there might be some signs early in the night that that's where we were going that you could pick up more easily, because some of the states that come in early – Georgia, North Carolina – would be Trump states.

If those come in for Trump, then we're still going to be looking at what we've all been staring at, and what you may notice, that there is always one of the major presidential or vice presidential candidates camping out in Pennsylvania, right? If we're looking at Pennsylvania, we – it's hard to know. Again, if it's as close as we expect it will take longer to know. It could come in at 6:00 a.m. on Wednesday. It could come in at noon. It could potentially be a little bit longer. So I certainly know that the people that are telling me what to do would be surprised if we know on election night. [Laughs.] So that's kind of where I am as well, since they're the ones who are having those conversations. But I'm preparing for a long – a long week.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. But, Peter, when did President Biden decide not to run? And how long after that did he tell the vice president he was going to support her?

MR. BAKER: [Laughs.] Well, I mean, as we've reconstructed it – and my guess is we'll learn more after he leaves office and memoirs get written and reported story – books get written.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: You mean, the reporters now don't know all the things? I thought you –

MR. BAKER: We try to know everything, and we're doing the best – Saturday before the announcement, he, in theory, basically had come to the conclusion that that was where it was heading, right? So he announces on Sunday at 1:46 p.m. He told his staff at 1:45 p.m. He told the vice president in the morning, maybe – or, around 9:00 in the morning. Actually, about an hour earlier than that, probably.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: And who was the most influential person persuading him not to run again?

MR. BAKER: I think for him, the calculation was, can she win, OK? He understood at that point that he was in trouble. They were telling him that he could still win the nomination, but that to win the nomination he would have to go scorched earth against other Democrats – which, of course, goes against the grain for a lifelong Democrat who spent his life building the party. They told him he'd have to – he'd have to actually go after the people who were pushing him the other direction. And he didn't want to do that. And then he kept saying to them, but can she

win, right? And this is something he had doubted for a long time. A lot of them doubted. A lot of Washington doubted. A lot of people this room probably doubted. And they came to him and finally said, yeah, we think the polling indicates she at least –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So is he happy with the decision now? Satisfied that he made the right decision?

MR. BAKER: [Laughs.] No, of course not. He wants to be president. [Laughs.] But I think he – you know, my guess is – and I – you know, he hasn't called me. So but my guess is he has a mix of feelings, as you might imagine, which is, on the one hand resigned to, you know, this is where we are, and resentful that this is where we are.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. Nikole, you've been on the campaign trail with Donald Trump recently. What is that like? [Laughter.]

MS. KILLION: [Laughs.] It's a lot of fact checking. I will say that. You know, what I would say is that he has certainly built – I mean, he prided himself on building a brand. And he has certainly built a following in terms of the MAGA base. So when you go to his events, they're almost cultlike in the sense that, whether you are in North Carolina or Pennsylvania or Las Vegas, Nevada, everybody is dressed in red. You know, the make America great hats, the American flag, you know, cheering on Trump, waiting in line for hours. I mean, it's – you don't have to rewrite the script at any rally.

So he certainly has built that loyal following. And I think, if anything, that is kind of what to watch come election night, because this is going to be a turnout election. And so it will be critical for both sides to turn out their base. But I think that type of following that he is able to attract, trying to fill all of these different arenas – some fuller or less fuller than others – [laughs] – is just really part of his schtick.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right. Were you at either of the Butler, Pennsylvania, events?

MS. KILLION: I was not at Butler, but – either event – or the incident in Mar-a-Lago. But I will say, you know, from the congressional standpoint covering the investigations, you know, there I do think that there is a genuine sense of bipartisanship around this issue in terms of getting to the bottom of what happened. I think there's a lot of acknowledgement that the Secret Service is stretched thin. I mean, we even saw that with the report released from the House committee just today. But there certainly is unanimity in making sure – whether it is the former president, the current president, any of these top leaders – that they are adequately protected. And I think there's universal – a universal sense among many that they're just – the Secret Service needs to chart a different path.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: And Elon Musk, what is he being trotted out for? Because people like electric cars, or whatever it is? What is it – what do they think he brings to the table?

MS. KILLION: [Laughs.] Well, money. [Laughs.] Most importantly. You know, certainly he is a major backer of the former president. Interesting that he was campaigning for the former

president recently in Pennsylvania. I think it will also be interesting to watch, if the former president is to win, what role Elon Musk will play in that because he has certainly talked a lot about it on the trail. I know he has talked about even making him part of some entity that would, you know, make the federal government more efficient, but I think it could go well beyond that given their close relationship.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. Amy, is there any evidence that either vice presidential candidate is helping the ticket that much, or as much as they thought it was going to help? Or think either candidate is completely happy with the one they picked?

MS. WALTER: I think that vice presidential candidates are an interesting conversation to have, while we're waiting for other interesting things to happen. [Laughter.] And then they get picked, and then it doesn't really have much of an impact on the race. Now, look, there's no doubt that if Harris loses, especially if she loses Pennsylvania, there will be – among the many things that will be discussed is should she have picked Josh Shapiro? Would that have tipped us over? But, you know, the would-a, could-a, should-a for every campaign after this is going to be quite something.

I think this is essentially a race about – if you're the Harris campaign, it really was less about who was your vice president, and it was more about – and continues to be more about – can we make this race a referendum on Donald Trump? Not on J.D. Vance, but make this all about Donald Trump? And, you know, Walz does that in his own rallies and events, but really it has to be the campaign itself making Trump the center.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: And when the vice president picked as her candidate the governor of Minnesota, she chose not to pick the governor of Pennsylvania. Think that made a big difference in terms of how this election will go?

MS. WALTER: No.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: You don't think it'll make a difference?

MS. WALTER: No. Now, as I said, if she loses Pennsylvania by half a point, people will say, well, of course she did because she could have had Josh Shapiro there. And he does have an ability to outperform the national ticket. He did in 2016 when he was running statewide. He did in 2020 when he was running statewide. So he does have an appeal that goes beyond whatever the national Democratic label is. I just don't know that he could put that onto his –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So, Ben, you have a lot of international subscribers. And who do you think outside the United States the major countries that are our allies really want to see win the president?

MR. SMITH: I mean, I think it's not as uniform as it was, right? I mean, I think the Western Europe – in Western Europe they obviously are terrified that Trump is going to burn down NATO, and eastern – and even more so, you know, in Poland and the Baltics. Like, they're very, very concerned. But he also has new allies in places – in Hungary, in India. Their leaders who –

in Israel, who are pulling for him. And then I think there is – you know, we launched in the Gulf recently.

And out there, there was this sense of people saying – I mean, I definitely had a couple of conversations with senior foreign policy, you know, parts of a couple of Gulf governments where they're, like, why don't you guys want Trump? Everyone's so afraid of him out here. Like, that's a huge asset to you, don't you realize that? And I was sort of, like, well, a lot of American voters also are afraid of him. And that's the challenge. [Laughter.] But there – I think it's – I think it's a lot more mixed than it was four or eight years ago.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: What about Asia? Where – Japan, China?

MR. SMITH: I mean, you know, it's been reported that the Chinese government would rather not have him, but I don't think there's a sense – I mean, I think they feel like the U.S. is – regardless, the direction of American policy is going to be more isolationist, more protectionist whoever wins.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So the last presidential election we had some consternation about early decisions about certain states going a certain way – not on your network, but some other networks. [Laughter.] Can you tell us the process by which you can go on the air and say: Arizona – to cite one state – is going a certain way? Do you have teams of people back somewhere? Or where do you actually get this information? Then you can go on and say, this state is going for Trump or Harris?

MS. HUNT: Sure. Well, and Amy should weigh in on this too, because she's really done – she's sat on – you've been on decision desk?

MS. WALTER: Decision desk, yeah.

MS. HUNT: So it's – it is – each network has – and they vary in how they're set up from network to network – a decision desk that is stacked with people who are experienced at looking at how these numbers come in and making predictions about, OK, well, we know this, we can tell that we're still waiting for this area, so we know at this time that the state is going to go this way, even though all of the votes have not yet been counted. And that it is – there's some science, but there's also some art.

And for me, in an anchor chair or as a reporter in the field covering it, they are – [laughs] – each network also has their own opinions about how closely they want to hold that data from the people that work for them. So depending on where I've worked, I've had more or less information about where the decision desk is in its decision making process. But it's something that every single network – you know you really have to apply the very highest version of your ethical standard to dealing with it. But –

MS. WALTER: And keeping the editorial – there is a firewall between the editorial and the decision desk. So the editorial is not calling up and saying – [makes noise] – we need to – when are we going to have Pennsylvania? They are shielded from that. A lot of that came out of 2000,

and what happened after the – during the call for the race for president in 2000. And the feeling that there was some pressure put by editorial.

So what you have – there are a lot of guys who do this once every four years. And I say guys, because they usually are. They're political scientists. They are data scientists. And they put together models. And the modeling will tell you how close we are to being able to call it. Now the closest – a state like Arkansas, they're going to have a lower threshold, right? Because they're, like, we can be confident at this level in that it's going to be red. You have a very, very high threshold to hit for those toss-up states.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So it used to be I think the networks wanted to be out there, the first person, or first network to call a state.

MS. WALTER: That's right.

MS. HUNT: Yes.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Now they want to be the last one to call? [Laughter.]

MS. HUNT: I don't think anyone wants to be last. But I will say that the sort of imperative to make sure that you are prioritizing being right over being the fastest is even higher now, especially because there was a lot of political blowback – those early calls that you talked about, one call specifically from Fox for Arizona early in the week in 2020, that created a ton of pressure from Trump's campaign, in particular. And so that – you know, they ended up being right, but I think if you talk to people who kind of looked at how they analyzed that data, they would say they took a risk by making that call at the time that they did.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, Peter, is the president able to do very much to help the vice president in her campaign now, in the remaining couple of weeks? And what is the president's highest priority between now and January 20th? What does he want to get done, either legislatively or administratively, in addition to what he might do in the next two weeks to help her?

MR. BAKER: Well, I think he wants to do by January 20th is to be able to hand over the presidency in a peaceful and calm way without riots in the streets. I think that's number one priority for him. [Laughs.] Look, is there anything he can do for the vice president? Not really. Probably not very much, honestly. I mean, she's trying to create distance. That's the one – you know, she's had a pretty flawless 90 days of campaign, for somebody who hadn't done this before at the level that she's doing it. It's really actually quite impressive. And yet, of course, it's still a tie race, which tells you a lot.

But the one thing where I think she has struggled the most, in some ways, other than perhaps Gaza, is trying to distinguish herself from Biden. I have nothing – I can't think of anything I would have done differently, but I'm going to be very different than he is, OK? OK. Reconciling those two has been a struggle for her. She hasn't figured out the way she wants to address that. So they're keeping him on the sidelines, for the most part.



He's not out there campaigning. He's going to do a stop in New Hampshire this week and a stop in Arizona. And that's about it, which two weeks out from an election is stunning. The truth is, he's not a draw for her and she wants to be an independent person. If she wants to be the change agent, which is what she's positioning herself to be, you can't emphasize that you're the second coming of the guy you're working for.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Who is the biggest draw for her now? Third party draw? Is that President Obama?

MR. BAKER: I think Michelle Obama is going to be out there this week. I would – I would put her –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Is she a bigger draw than President Obama?

MR. BAKER: Among Democrats, right? If you're – if your point is you got to get your people out, Michelle Obama probably has the highest draw rate, I think, among Democrats. But you got the other presidents. You've got Obama and Bill Clinton both out there doing their thing. And she's got governors, and she's got surrogates, and so on. Which is different than him, because he doesn't have former presidents, he doesn't have former Republican nominees. He doesn't have a lot of the top Republicans out there really excited about him, even if they are campaigning for him, a few of them.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: I noticed they haven't asked any private equity people to campaign. [Laughter.] Is that because they're not big draws? No private equity people are out campaigning, I guess.

MR. BAKER: Well, you know, there's Glenn Youngkin. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So today, Nikole, what would you say is the key state in the entire election? Is it Pennsylvania? Everything's Pennsylvania? Whoever wins Pennsylvania will win the election, you think?

MS. KILLION: I think it will be critically important. Again, I think that blue wall – between the blue wall and the Sun Belt states are kind of the two areas to watch. I mean, clearly Trump's strategy is to try to pierce that blue wall. So whether it's taking Pennsylvania or Michigan, Wisconsin. One of them really puts him on a strong path to victory. Similarly, though, I think in the Sun Belt, you know, states like North Carolina and Georgia are equally important. I mean, as somebody who covered Georgia during the midterms, you know, I still think that one could potentially go either way. And I do think that is one state to watch. But between those two regions of the country I would –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So if she were – if the vice president were in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, everything else being equal, she would be elected? And if he were to be win Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Arizona, he would be elected? Is that really true, pretty much, the arithmetic?

MS. KILLION: I think that puts either one of them on –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Assuming North Carolina doesn't shift.

MS. KILLION: Yeah, exactly.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So Pennsylvania is the key. And Pennsylvania, where is the key for her to get the vote out? Is it – is it in Philadelphia suburbs? And the key for him is in central Pennsylvania?

MS. HUNT: I mean, so I grew up in Chester County, Philadelphia, which is where Kamala Harris is today with Liz Cheney. And then she's going to – I was born in the suburbs of Detroit – and she's going to be going to a county out there.

MS. WALTER: So you're the – really, it is all about you really, Kasia. [Laughter.]

MS. HUNT: [Laughs.] As a suburban mom of two young children who, you know, perhaps once had a country club membership, but doesn't really know what to do with Donald Trump? Yeah. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: They can consult you on the schedule about where they should go.

MS. HUNT: To be clear, I don't have a country club membership. [Laughter.] But she –

MR. BAKER: That's not a negative in this room. It's OK. (Laughter, applause.)

MS. HUNT: My sister is a scratch golfer, but. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK, so Pennsylvania.

MS. HUNT: So Pennsylvania. [Laughter.] So honestly, it's the suburbs. It's the collar counties. It's the collar counties of Philadelphia. There are also suburban counties in Pittsburgh that are for Kamala Harris. They are absolutely central. Pennsylvania is a unique state. And part of the reason why it has gone more favorably – I mean, I remember when Romney was campaigning there in 2012, kind of in the – when they thought they were going to win the election because they had a lot of erroneous data, they spent some of the final days of the campaign in western Pennsylvania, and they had no hope of winning there.

Trump, by contrast, has a very real chance of winning there. And it's because a lot of the factors that have driven his rise – the populism, the collapse of the industrial Rust Belt – have really driven politics in the state. I mean, if you talk to people who live there they will refer to “Pennsylvucky,” which are the areas kind of around. The politics, the shape of the electorate, the shifts in working class voters, the Latino voters in Reading, Pennsylvania, right? If the Latino vote moves the way it could, it seems, for Donald Trump, in a state where the margin is so – I mean, any one of those little sets of communities could really turn things one way or the other.

So Harris needs – and this is what she’s doing – their campaign is looking and seeing that they have identified that suburban women who are uncomfortable with Trump, but perhaps voted for Nikki Haley in the primary, are still persuadable at this stage of the game. And that’s what you’re seeing her execute today.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK.

MS. WALTER: And I think another part of that, going to the suburbs, is the state itself has been moving rightward since Democrats had been winning it time after time after time. And, obviously, the first time we saw the blue wall crack was 2016. But it has shifted. It’s probably two points to the right of wherever the national vote is because of all the things that Kasie pointed out. The only part of the state that’s actually – is a new factor that is in the benefit of Democrats is that south central part, like, around Harrisburg, Lancaster, that – York. You’ve got new growth in there, like exurban growth. Those are probably Republican leaning voters who may be in that Nikki Haley category. So we don’t – we don’t talk as much about them, but there’s also a really competitive House race there, so.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So Nikki Haley, Donald Trump has been importuned, I gather, to campaign with her, but he seems to be a little reluctant. Is that happening? Or why did – why do his advisers say you should campaign with Nikki Haley?

MS. WALTER: Because it makes a whole lot of sense. If your opponent’s biggest asset, or the – is with some of these women who are maybe not totally sold on Harris, but don’t think they can pull the lever for you. Why wouldn’t you go get somebody to help you with that? That makes perfect sense, but that would mean that you have to agree to campaign with her, and agree to –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: He hasn’t agreed to do it yet, I guess. I don’t know.

MS. HUNT: He was asked on Friday on Fox News. And his response was not terribly charitable toward her in terms of feeling as though the way she campaigned against him was not appreciated, shall we say.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: I see. So, international events have been important in the headlines, but are they having any effect on the election? So Israel-Gaza, Russia-Ukraine, do you see any impact on the election?

MR. SMITH: I mean, when voters are asked to rank those, they rank extremely, extremely low, you know, among, among people’s priorities, you know, except for certain really key slices of the electorate, particularly Arab American voters who are really important in Michigan, who put – some of whom are putting Gaza as the number one issue. Which is really, really unusual for any slice of voters to care that much. And again, you know, we’re talking – if we’re talking about really small numbers of voters, that could matter a lot. Elon – a group tied to Musk is also running, like, the most cynical thing that I’ve ever seen in American politics. Which is, like, saying a lot. I came up covering local politics in New York. [Laughter.] But they’re running ads targeting Jewish voters on how Kamala Harris is pro-Palestinian, and simultaneously running

ads targeting Arab voters on how Kamala Harris is pro-Israeli. So they're certainly trying to exploit that.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, speaking of ads, we often recall that there are some ads that are so memorable, the famous Lyndon Johnson flower ad, and so forth, the nuclear threat. Are there any ads in this campaign anybody remembers, in your view?

MR. SMITH: The Trump campaign's huge bet this campaign – in some ways, the biggest bet – is that the question of transgender issues is going to be the killer issue of the campaign. And they're putting – for whatever he is saying day to day on the stage, the thing they're putting most of their money behind is this ad saying that Kamala Harris sort of is with they/them and that Trump is with you. That was a strategy. I mean, that was a strategy that Republicans tried in 2022, spent a lot of money on. And it really failed then. And there was a sense of like, oh, we misread how much people care. But that is a huge bet this cycle.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So do both campaigns have enough money to do what they want? I mean, there's a rumor or their story that she has much more money than Trump, and Trump is importuning people to give him more money. Do you think that he has enough money to do what he wants?

MS. HUNT: My sense is that they are going to have enough to do what they want to do. I also – you know, we watched the Jeb Bush 2016 campaign light, you know, hundreds of millions of dollars on fire, right? There is an argument to be made that a paid media strategy, in particular, is not worth what it used to be. I will say that now, especially with – in such a close election, where it's such a cliché to say that turnout is all that matters, but it is incredibly important. The Harris team is committing more money, and they have enough money to do what they want to do on the ground. And there are very serious questions about the Republican version of that.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Peter, who's really running the campaigns for each candidate? In the Republican side, the Trump side, there have been couple people running it, but then Corey Lewandowski came in and said, well, he was going to audit what they were doing. And is he still involved? And then on the Democratic side, Biden had some people and then I guess they're still involved, but who's really running both campaigns? Can you say?

MR. BAKER: Yeah. I think that's really interesting. So Kamala Harris got into the race so late, of course, she had to basically adopt and keep the Biden team. She calls Jen O'Malley Dillon, who's Biden's chief campaign person, on the day that he drops out – within hours of him dropping out, saying, I want you to stay on in charge. But she's layered on her own people, right? And she's brought in some Obama people, like David Plouffe. And I think that it's been a – you know, it's been – there have been moments of awkwardness there. And I think that you can see the awkwardness between the West Wing and her campaign just the other day when the president decided to come down to the briefing room and talk to the press. Which, by the way –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Is that the first time he's ever done that?

MR. BAKER: Yeah, first time he'd ever done that. And why he chose to do it the exact same moment she was going on stage was a question that was asked a lot in the office of the vice president and her campaign. So they had – somehow didn't fully coordinate there, and there were some sore feelings about that. So that's, that's a complicated thing for them. And they didn't really have time to create a new, you know, structure. She had to take the structure she had and, on the fly, adapt it as she went.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Nikole, when the history of this campaign is written, will the most consequential event be the early debate in July? Because, in effect, the early debate prompted Biden to probably leave the field, and helping Trump at that point. But then, if she becomes the winner, it will turn out to have been the biggest mistake he agreed to – Trump – by agreeing to the early debate. So how consequential do you think that history will show that the early debate was for both sides?

MS. KILLION: Well, I think there's no doubt that it was a gamechanger. I mean, it flipped the election into a completely different dynamic, having the former president basically booted and, you know, the vice president moving to the top of the ticket, in addition to a couple of weeks later having that assassination attempt against the former president. I mean, I don't think any of that was on our bingo cards for this particular election. [Laughs.]

But, you know, I think for me – to me I think when we look back on this moment, I think that this is really a misinformation and disinformation election. And I think the role that that plays in the outcome, and subsequently – whether it takes two days or a week or a month – I think that will really be a determining factor in how we view this election. But in terms of a pivotal moment, absolutely consequential.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So and let me ask you this. Today, as you look at the campaign, would you say that the most important issue will turn out to be, what? The transgender issue, the economy? Usually the economy is important. War and peace? What would you say is the consequential issue – the most consequential issue in this campaign?

MR. SMITH: I mean, the default answer is supposed to be the economy, which is – I mean, you are – you know more about this than I do, but which sure looks great and does not seem to be propelling the incumbent party to an easy re-election. And, I mean, I think it's – it feels to me like it's this broader populism, tribalism up against an establishment, in a way that is mirrored around the world, by the way. But I don't think – I don't really think it's a campaign about issues.

MS. WALTER: Yeah, I don't either.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So let's talk about the Senate and the House for a moment, which you know great deal about. So who is going to win the Senate? Can tell us right now?

MS. WALTER: Well, the Senate is more Republican – more likely to go Republican. And a question right now is by how many seats? So to understand that – and, again, if you're thinking about election night, what we're watching, Ohio, the Senate race there where it's neck and neck,

but where the incumbent, Democrat Sherrod Brown, has to overcome a very big downdraft from the top of the ticket, in Biden. If he holds on, that suggests that Republican gains are going to be very small – probably just a Montana and a West Virginia, something like that.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Now, Democrats have been fantasizing recently that Ted Cruz is going to lose.

MS. WALTER: That's right.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Is there any truth to that?

MS. WALTER: I mean, they're going to – they're finally putting money – now, when you put money into Texas in the last two weeks, remember Texas – in case you didn't know this – it's a really big state. [Laughter.] And a couple million dollars doesn't really go that far. I mean, to move numbers in Texas, it's like you need \$50 million, you need \$100 million just to move the slightest. I think, what – you know, if you look back at 2020, remember Texas was closer at the presidential level than Ohio was. And think about all the money that's going into Ohio right now. So I think it is going to reflect the fact that Texas is not an overwhelmingly red state, but it is still a reddish state.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: What about Florida? There's rumors that Rick Scott's in trouble. Is there any truth to that?

MS. WALTER: Yeah. I think that that's a much tougher state for Democrats.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: What about Nebraska? There's a rumor that the incumbent is in trouble.

MS. WALTER: There is. It's not just a rumor. It's actually out there now. There's polls kind of showing – unfortunately, nobody is polling Nebraska, who's a nonpartisan observer of this, right? Nobody's, like, you know we should do? Where should we spend our next \$100,000? Should it be on Pennsylvania, or should it be on Nebraska? [Laughter.] But I think the challenger has benefited from a number of things. One, sort of leaning into this populism piece, leaning into the outsider piece.

The fact that his last name is Osborn, which, if you've been to Nebraska the Osborn name is a very big deal because he was a former coach of – football coach for the Cornhuskers. Now, his name was spelled differently. He has an E at the end of his name, and this Osborn does not. But if you say, do you like Osborn? Like, sure. I love Osborn. [Laughter.] I think there's something – I'm not even kidding. But I do think he's run a very smart outsider – he's run against this outsider, I'm going to shake up the system. There is an appeal to that. And the incumbent, Deb Fischer, I think got a very late start and wasn't taking him seriously, until she realized, uh-oh.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: In our own neighborhood, Maryland, is there any doubt who will be there winner there?

MS. WALTER: I think this will be a – it will be closer than it should be, given how much the state –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. What about the House? What is your prediction on the House?

MS. WALTER: That is the one we're going to be waiting for weeks. So if Kasie is still going to be on air for, like, a month, it'll be we're still waiting for the results from, you know, two counties in California. California, Alaska, Oregon, Washington, all take a long time to count their ballots. And they have, what, like eight or so House races?

MR. RUBENSTEIN: I think your publication said there are 27 House seats that are up for grabs either way. Twenty-seven. So it could take a couple weeks to resolve all that?

MS. WALTER: Yeah, because of the fact that California is such a big piece of that 27.

MS. HUNT: And New York doesn't have a great track record either lately.

MS. WALTER: Well, that is a good – that is a good point too, especially that Hudson Valley –

MS. HUNT: Yeah.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Now, one of the House seats has a candidate running who's in jail, in Alaska. Is that going to be a big determination? [Laughter.]

MS. WALTER: Well, it's ranked choice voting in Alaska. It's only the second time. So, yeah. If there are enough votes for that candidate's votes that people don't give a second choice that's the Democrat, yeah, you can be –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: He's not even from Alaska.

MS. WALTER: There we go. You don't have to reside in your district. That's the great thing about the House.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: I know. OK. So Kasie, in Pennsylvania today is that the state that your network is probably going to put the most coverage in? Would you expect that's where you're going to focus on?

MS. HUNT: Well, I mean, I think sitting here right now that is the place where all of the focus is on, right? How are they counting? You know, what's it going to look like early? What's it going to look like later? You know, do we – want to make sure that we're not portraying that there's some – that you're taking a, quote/unquote, "mirage." Our team does not really like to use that word, but this sense that when the votes come in early they look like they're one thing, but we're expecting them to change as the night goes on. So there is a ton of focus there in Pennsylvania. I will just say, like, every single election that I have covered since probably 2012 has been defined by the things that we didn't see coming. And I just am convinced that the night – that election night is going to again be defined by that.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: What about artificial intelligence? Are you using artificial intelligence at your network to figure out who's going to win? Or you don't use that?

MS. HUNT: That is above my pay grade, David. [Laughter.] I personally am not. [Laughs.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. All right. So when does Pennsylvania begin to count absentee ballots? Is it the next day?

MS. HUNT: So they have this rule where they cannot start – I believe, Amy, you probably – they can't start until the polls close on Tuesday night. Which is going to put them – again, this is part of why we don't expect, assuming it's as close as we think it's going to be, that the call is going to – isn't going to come till 6:00 a.m. or noon the day after the election. And again, if there's a Harris blowout we're going to know that earlier. The states that are coming in earlier are, by and large, Trump places. So if they come in for Trump, we're going to have to win in Pennsylvania. That's going to push the call out.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right. Peter, when President Trump was president, I think he said, I don't want you to vote absentee or write in. Go to the ballots, go to the voting booth, and so forth. He seems to have changed his mind. Why did he change his mind?

MR. BAKER: Because he lost. [Laughter.] And it was a disastrous idea. The Republicans had done very well – and, again, you guys know this better than I do, probably. But had done very well with early voting for many cycles, particularly in certain places. And he was sabotaging their efforts by undercutting it. Now this time around, he's saying you should vote earlier and absentee, except when he's not. Like the other day he said again it was evil and pernicious and corrupt. So, you know, he floats by the day.

I want to come back, though, to your point about the Senate, just to emphasize a little bit about why it's important who wins the Senate more than the House. If Kamala Harris were to win the presidency and the Republicans win the Senate, as Amy just told us they probably will, it will be the first time since 1884 that a Democratic president has come in with a Republican Senate. Why does that matter? Why does it matter? Because she's got a Cabinet she's going to want to confirm and a whole lot of other people as well. It's not going to be that easy. What does that matter? Well, she has Joe Biden's Cabinet still in place. So what you could see here is a Cabinet of retreads or holdovers, in effect, into February or March, depending if the Senate causes her all kinds of grief about who she wants to put up. And whoever she does eventually put up obviously can't be too far to the left, so it'll have an impact on who she chooses.

The flip side is also true. Quickly, I'm sorry. But Trump, if he wins, he will have a presumably Republican Senate. But if it's a narrow Republican Senate, a 51-49 Senate, he's not going to have an easy time with some of these picks as well, right? Attorney general, watch for that because whoever he puts in attorney general obviously, is the vehicle of his persecution complex, where he wants to go after his enemies. And even some Republicans are going to have a hard time putting in some of the harder people. And he won't have Senate-confirmed people in other jobs to move in there as acting people, as he did later in his first term.



MR. RUBENSTEIN: All right, for any of you – I don't know who might be the expert on this – but in the last presidential election it was said that the House did not have to – the House speaker didn't have to certify, let's say, the electors. But then when it went to the Senate, the vice president of the United States, the presiding officer of the Senate, didn't have to approve the count. Now the law has been changed so there's not much discretion for the vice president. But there's been stories recently that the speaker of the House might not have to certify the electors as being legitimate electors. Is that any – a realistic risk? Does anybody know whether that's a problem, or?

MS. HUNT: So if someone wants to weigh in on the very specific question of the speaker, my understanding is the changes to the Electoral Count Act have made it much less likely that an issue that is happening in the United States Capitol is going to cause the kinds of questions that we saw on January 6th. However, what that has meant – and if you kind of start digging into some of the layers, and if you watch closely some of the interviews with various secretaries of states in the critical places – there are a lot of questions about what – basically, the electors that arrive in Washington are going to have to be counted.

And there's not very many opportunities to many opportunities to challenge them in Washington. But how they get from the state capitol to Washington is a piece of the system. And many of these capitols are not as well prepared, necessarily. I mean, there's a big, you know, range of expertise and experience in these places. There are different cultures in different states. Michigan is a place I'm very interested in. This becomes more of an issue, candidly, if Harris wins the election, especially narrowly. But that is where, when you're asking those kinds of questions, I would put my focus.

MS. KILLION: And I think Kasie raises is a good point too, having just been in Georgia last week where we saw state election board. You know, they – a very controversial board. You know, conservative leaning, but one where the former president has certainly been very vocal in expressing his support for some of those Republican members on the board. But where we saw a judge in Fulton County, in essence, invalidate all of these new controversial rules in Georgia – you know, to hand count the ballots on election night and, you know, rules that would make it much tougher for local election officials to certify the election, where they have a little bit more wiggle room. So those rules got thrown out. Obviously, it's still engaged. There's a lot of litigation around it. But to Kasie's point, I think, it just goes to show in each state they have their own nuances that could throw a monkey wrench into the election process.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: But in – after the last presidential – after the last presidential election, two states – I think Georgia and Texas, among others, maybe Florida as well – changed the laws, have made it more difficult to drop in your write-in ballot – or, cast your ballot, and so forth. Like, in Texas, I think, in Houston, you have to actually go to one place where you have to drop your ballot in, if it's a write-in, or something like that. Have many of those laws been overturned? Or all those laws that went into effect were passed a couple years ago? They are still in effect and there's no protest against them right now, or legal challenges? Does anybody know? You know what I'm talking about, those –

MR. BAKER: Yeah. I don't know that – I don't know the detail. I think they're mostly in place. And I think that you know what challenges have happened have happened, and have been dealt with one way the other.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Amy, there is a theoretical possibility of a 269-269 vote. Can you explain why two states can't figure out whether they want to give all their votes to one candidate or not?

MS. WALTER: One candidate or the other? Because they are just those – they're that unique. We're supposed to celebrate, you know, uniqueness in this country, celebrate that. The thing that, again, if Kasie's right and it's something we don't prepare for, it is preparing America for what a 269-to-269 tie does. And that would, of course, come to the United States Congress. And then each delegation gets one vote. And even if Democrats take the House, they're not going to be able to win enough delegations to be able to have enough votes to put Kamala Harris over the top. So a 269-to-269 tie is still essentially a Trump win.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: But if it's – but if it's 269-to-269 it goes to the House, and you vote by delegations, and there's more Republican delegations in the House than the Senate?

MS. WALTER: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK.

MS. WALTER: And then –

MR. BAKER: Senate does the vice president.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So, Ben, it's widely thought in Washington – I think, rightly or wrongly, and certainly thought in certain Republican circles – that the press is more liberal than conservative. And how do you, as an editor, try to get your reporters to be balanced and make sure they're not tilting to the left or maybe tilting to the right? Is that a bias that you have to worry about?

MR. SMITH: Yeah. I mean, I think it's something that journalists for – you know, the Republican Party has often rightly criticized the media for, for generations. I think in some ways it's more extreme now because the biggest skew in American politics is education level, and the media draws a lot from the college educated people. But I mean, so I think there's actually much more pressure, appropriately, on the press now to really separate the facts from opinions, try to be transparent. It's what we try to do.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, let's go through this for each of you. What is the biggest surprise you expect we'll see – predict the surprise you'll see on election night. The biggest single surprise in the Senate, House, presidential race?

MS. WALTER: You know, so this – we were discussing this backstage. But one of the interesting things, as we talk about this blue wall and Sun Belt states, why Harris is doing better in blue wall not doing as well in Sun Belt states, is that where she seems to be slipping from

Biden is with voters of color, which means that that's why the Sun Belt states are tilting Trump, but is holding her own with White, non-college voters from where Biden was. Now, what if that were actually – just you don't have to shift that much – but if she actually does get those voters of color to come home, the shift is not as pronounced.

But yet, what we see is that White, non-college voters are not – that polling was off, and so that our map kind of flips, right? So that a North Carolina could flip and, to Kasie's point, we would say, wow, North Carolina flipped. That's a good chance that Harris wins. But then Pennsylvania goes to Trump. And you go, well, what happened – I thought they were all going to go in the same direction. It would be that.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So biggest surprise you expect?

MR. SMITH: I mean, hard to predict surprises. [Laughter.] But, I mean, I think a surprise to prepare for is that – is that at 10:30 –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, for the considerable – for the considerable pay we're paying you to do this, right? [Laughter.]

MR. SMITH: [Laughs.] Yeah. I mean, I think – I guess, I think people will be surprised if and when at, like, 10:30 p.m. the thing is over. Kasie is – like, nobody's watching Kasie's show. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. What's the biggest surprise?

MS. HUNT: I mean, I think that that's – I think – because in that scenario, we'd probably feel like we'd have to look at the numbers, but it might be considered a landslide. And considering right now all – the only thing we can all 100 percent agree on is that this is an extremely close election, if it's not that would be a huge, huge surprise.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Peter, biggest surprise you expect.

MR. BAKER: [Laughs.] You know, I can be the fourth one answering and I still don't have a good answer. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK.

MR. BAKER: I don't really –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Nikole.

MS. KILLION: I mean, I agree with Ben. I think if we know that night, and maybe I just have a little bit of PTSD from 2020. But I really – I am concerned that we just will not know for a while. And, you know, we have had active conversations about, like, we need to prepare the viewers for this. You know, everybody thinks we're going to know, and we just may not. So if we know, yes, and it's 9:00, 10:00 at night, for me, at least, that will be a surprise. [Laughs.]

MS. WALTER: I think the earliest we've had, though, in the last 20 years is – like, it was 2008, and that was probably at 11:30. But it's –

MR. BAKER: I mean, I think that our guys did a – our guys did a study of how off polls have been in the last couple elections, right? And they took the error rate of 2020 and applied it to current polls and said, OK, if we are as wrong today in the direction we were wrong in 2020, that we were then, then Trump wins all seven battleground states. And if we were as wrong today as we were in 2022, which we under assumed on Democrats, then Harris would win six of seven battleground states. I mean, that tells you how, you know, incredibly unpredictable this is. And therefore the notion of surprise – everything's going to be a surprise. Anything that happens could be a surprise.

MS. KILLION: I guess I will say one other surprise. If the former president concedes, if he were to lose. [Laughter.] That might also be –

MR. BAKER: That would be a surprise. Are you predicting that?

MS. KILLION: It would be a surprise, given, you know, 2020 we're – I mean, 2024, we're still litigating the outcome of the 2020 election. So I – you know, I'll just leave it there. [Laughs.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So why did President Trump not want to have another debate with Harris?

MS. KILLION: Well, I mean, he said at one of his rallies, I guess this was back in mid-September, that he thought it was too late in the process, right? But certainly, talking to a lot of voters – I mean, we did a focus group after that first debate – everyone wanted a second one, at least those voters that I talked to. And I think, you know, that was a sentiment from a lot of people. But, you know, obviously we've seen with the former president, even with some interviews, he's backed out of them.

So from that standpoint, I don't know. Maybe he didn't necessarily feel it was an effective strategy or use of his time. Because, as I said, you know, with respect to a lot of the rallies, that really is his bread and butter – getting out there, being in front of his voters. And, as we've seen with both campaigns, a lot of it is talking to these niche audiences, right? So really, from the perspective of both campaigns, I don't know, at least from him, maybe it just doesn't really give him much more of a boost.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: When President Trump is campaigning recently, for example, he seems to not make his speeches that he's supposed to make. He does music and dancing and other kinds of riffs. Is that something –

MS. HUNT: It's the weave, David.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right, the weave. Do his staff people get upset with that? Or they just say, that's the par for the course. They're OK with it.

MS. KILLION: No, well, I think a couple of things. I mean, I think in terms of what we saw in, you know, I think, Pennsylvania over the weekend, with respect to the diatribe with Arnold Palmer, you know, his campaign – this is the time to give your closing arguments, right? And I think, from the perspective of his campaign, that’s where they want to be. They want to be delivering that final argument. Because people are voting now. So, you know, if you haven’t sold them by now, this is really your last, last, last opportunity. [Laughs.]

So I think to get off message there is frustrating, right? But I think, you know, last week, in terms of the music, at least, what we were told is, obviously there were some medical emergencies in the audience. So some of that was to just pause and let those situations be handled. But, you know, I think from the campaign’s perspective – any campaign’s perspective – you want your candidate on message. So but we know but we know Trump is going to be Trump, so. [Laughs.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: There was a report recently – there was a report recently that President Trump apologized to somebody, which is rare, because he usually doesn’t do that. Why does he not like to ever say, “I’m sorry” or “I made a mistake”? Why does he feel so that’s a sign of weakness? Do you know?

MR. BAKER: David, it’s because he doesn’t make mistakes. [Laughs.] Trump is always right. That’s a direct quote from him, using a third person. He says, “Trump is always right.” And that’s just who he’s been for 78 years. He’s not going to change now. You know, it’s absolutely a sign of weakness. If he lost – it’s not just – you know, he says, oh, it’ll be rigged if I lose. This is not new. This shouldn’t surprise us. He has been saying that his entire life. When he lost the Emmy Award for *The Apprentice*, he said it was a rigged contest. I mean, he will say anything he loses is rigged by somebody else.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: You’ve covered five presidents the United States. Who was the smartest of them?

MR. BAKER: [Laughs.] I think, actually, they were all smart in their own ways, OK. But I think that – I think people tend to think of Obama, obviously. He’s a very intellectual guy, very smart, linear thinker. I think Bill Clinton thinks it a different way, but a very creative way, which is kind of – when he was at his peak in the ’90s he managed to see connections on different issues in ways that most people, most politicians, didn’t. It was very, very, very smart. And I think he is unique in that way.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So let’s wrap up and say your final prediction. The next president of the United States, are you willing to say, Nikole, who you think it will be?

MS. KILLION: Oh, gosh, I’m going to keep a big question mark. [Laughs.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Peter, do you have a view on who the next president’s going to be?

MR. BAKER: No. I mean, I would say that I think that Harris has more potential than Trump does to grow her vote, even now in the last couple of weeks. We’re only talking about a small

number of people. If she – his vote has not changed. His vote – and Amy knows better – his vote is static. It hasn't moved. He hasn't gained votes. He hasn't lost votes. For her, the question is can she get those Biden 2020 voters back who didn't like Trump by reminding them how much they didn't like Trump, even though they're not pro-Democrat?

MR. RUBENSTEIN: What would you say?

MS. HUNT: Yeah, I would get myself in very big trouble if I were to say one way or the other. But I will say that my – the way I sort of follow my instincts and gut in the final days is to figure out just which direction the ball is rolling. Which is it – because it tends to pick up speed for one candidate or the other in the final days. I would say last week, everyone I was talking to felt like Donald Trump was really starting to pick up that kind of speed. I think there's still – I mean, there's only 15 days left. But remember, the Comey letter was 11 days out from the election in 2016.

So and this election has just been marked by – I mean, somehow I think we've all gone through so much that perhaps we forget just the enormity of the things that happened this summer with this election. The idea that we're just going to watch this go to the finish line without something happening, it just feels – I feel very afraid of getting comfortable in that space. So I think there is still space, but wherever that momentum is swinging, I think momentum is really a very real thing. Wherever that is rolling in the last week, I think, is going to tell us who wins.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Where do you think it is now?

MS. HUNT: You know, again, last week I thought Trump. I woke up today, and, you know the conversations I'm having, like, through the weekend, watching the events of the weekend, it feels a little more balanced. But I also would say still probably with Trump. I haven't – I don't know that she has really managed to swing the momentum yet, but I think she still could.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Who's going to win?

MR. SMITH: I'm also going to avoid your trap. [Laughter.] But I – but I do think there's a thing happening in which Trump's message right now is, I'm going to win. And Harris's message is, panic, he's going to win. And both of those are strategic rather than based in reality. And it does – it does create this sense that he's going to win, which they're both trying to create right now.

MS. WALTER: Well, the panic is to get her people to come out.

MR. SMITH: Right, yeah.

MS. WALTER: Which goes to Peter's point.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right. Amy, who's going to win?

MS. WALTER: Which is – which is why I’m with Kasie, where it has felt like – and you’re seeing it in the data too – where he’s – Harris did her best at the end of September, and it’s been kind of narrowing since then. All of those swing states. And yet, I don’t feel 100 percent confident that this is where we’re going to end up. But it’s where – he’s definitely been able to turn this from a race that was Harris just on the upswing and the momentum with her, to one where her – that momentum has not just stalled, but where he’s been able to narrow the gap.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. And, well, I want to thank all of you for a really interesting conversation. And now we know who going to be president. [Applause.]



**Nikole Killion**  
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Nikole Killion is a congressional correspondent for CBS News based in Washington, D.C. Killion reports for all CBS News broadcasts and platforms, including the CBS EVENING NEWS WITH NORAH O’DONNELL, CBS THIS MORNING and CBSN, the 24/7 digital streaming news service.

Previously, Killion was a correspondent for CBS News and played a key role in the Network’s 2020 political and election coverage, reporting from around the country, including Wilmington, during the final stretch of the campaign and throughout the Biden transition. Killion joined CBS in 2018 as a correspondent for CBS Newspath, the Network’s 24-hour television newsgathering service for CBS stations and broadcasters around the world.

At CBS News, Killion landed one of the first interviews with both Senator Bernie Sanders and Representative Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, following the congresswoman’s endorsement of him for the 2020 presidential election. Killion has also contributed to CBS News coverage on a range of topics including the State of the Union and Virginia’s political crisis in early 2019. She also led Newspath’s coverage of the impeachment inquiry, the Democratic debates, the Mueller Report, the partial government shutdown and the nomination of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh. She has traveled to major breaking news events including Hurricanes Michael and Dorian in Florida and the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting.

Killion joined CBS News from Hearst Television’s Washington bureau, where she was a correspondent. A veteran D.C. journalist, Killion has covered every presidential campaign since the 2008 election and interviewed countless newsmakers, including former President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama. She reported on the papal visits of Pope Francis and Pope Benedict to the United States. Her reporting on the opioid crisis was also featured in a special for Hearst’s syndicated program “Matter of Fact with Soledad O’Brien.”

Prior to her years at Hearst, Killion covered the capital region as an anchor/reporter for WJLA-TV and NewsChannel 8 in Washington, D.C., and an anchor for WHAG-TV in Hagerstown, Md. She began her career at NBC News in New York.

Killion graduated from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. She is a member of the White House Correspondents' Association and the National Association of Black Journalists.



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**Anchor & Chief National Affairs Analyst**  
**CNN**

Kasie Hunt is a CNN anchor and chief national affairs analyst. She hosts *CNN This Morning with Kasie Hunt* weekdays from 5-7am ET on CNN and CNN Max. Hunt appears on and reports for CNN US, covering national and breaking news.

Most recently, she hosted *Early Start with Kasie Hunt* from 5-6am ET and *State of the Race with Kasie Hunt* weekdays from 11am-12pm ET on CNN International, also available on CNN Max.

Hunt joined CNN in 2021 after more than eight years at NBC News where she most recently anchored *Way Too Early* and served as a regular contributor to *Morning Joe* after anchoring *KasieDC* on Sunday nights. Hunt also served as NBC News Capitol Hill Correspondent and played a lead role in 2020 election night coverage for the network. She joined NBC News as an off-air reporter and producer covering Congress and politics and started appearing regularly on MSNBC as a political reporter and later a political correspondent before becoming an anchor. At NBC News, Hunt covered insurgent and establishment candidates on both sides of the aisle in 2016 and 2020. She sat down with Donald Trump in Iowa back in 2013 — and was the first correspondent to interview him after he announced his presidential bid in 2015, where she pressed him in his Trump Tower office about his incendiary claims about Mexican immigrants bringing drugs and crime across the border. In 2020, she interviewed now-President Joe Biden live on the air from South Carolina at a critical moment in his bid to regain momentum and come back from behind to win the 2020 nomination.

In 2018, Hunt led the NBC News investigative team that was awarded the Joan Shorenstein Barone Award for its reporting on sexual harassment allegations on Capitol Hill.

Prior to NBC, she was the lead Associated Press reporter aboard Mitt Romney's campaign plane in 2012 and was a health policy reporter for National Journal's CongressDaily, writing about the passage of the Affordable Care Act. She also wrote for Politico covering the 2010 midterm elections. Hunt started her career in journalism as an intern in the political unit of NBC News.





**Ben Smith**  
**Co-Founder & Editor-in-Chief**  
**Semafor**

Ben Smith is the former media columnist of the New York Times. He was previously the founding editor-in-chief of BuzzFeed News. Smith covered American politics for more than a decade at Politico and the New York Daily News, among other outlets, and launched a number of political blogs.



**Amy Walter**  
**Publisher & Editor-in-Chief**  
**The Cook Political Report with Amy Walter**

For more than 25 years, Amy Walter has built a reputation as an accurate, objective, and insightful political analyst with unparalleled access to campaign insiders and decision-makers. One of [Washington's Most Powerful Women in 2023 & 2021](#), she is the Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of the Cook Political Report with Amy Walter, where she provides analysis of the issues, trends and events that shape the political environment.

A contributor to the PBS NewsHour, she provides weekly political analysis for the popular “Politics Monday” segment and is a featured contributor for their Election and Convention special coverage events. She is also a regular Sunday panelist on NBC’s Meet the Press and CNN’s Inside Politics and appears frequently on Special Report with Bret Baier on Fox News Channel. From 2017 until early 2021, Walter was the host of the weekly nationally syndicated program Politics with Amy Walter on The Takeaway from WNYC and PRX. She’s also the former political director of ABC News.

Amy was an inaugural fellow at the Institute of Politics at the University of Chicago, where she now serves on the Board of Advisors. She graduated summa cum laude from Colby College, earned an honorary degree as a Doctor of Letters, and serves as a Trustee to the Board.



**Peter Baker**  
**Chief White House Correspondent**  
**The New York Times**

Peter Baker is the Chief White House Correspondent for *The New York Times* and a political analyst for MSNBC.

He has covered the last five presidents for *The Times* and *The Washington Post*. At *The Post*, he also served as Moscow Co-Bureau Chief and reported from the ground during the opening months of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

He is an author of seven books, including the best-selling *The Divider: Trump in the White House, 2017-2021*, and *The Man Who Ran Washington: The Life and Times of James A. Baker III*, both with his wife, Susan Glasser of *The New Yorker*. He is a frequent panelist on *Washington Week* on PBS.