

Biden's a Great President. He Should Not Run Again.

Feb. 6, 2023

Based on an article by Michelle Goldberg

Opinion Columnist

NY Times

When President Biden gives his State of the Union address on Tuesday, he will have a lot to boast about.

He's presided over record job creation and the lowest unemployment rate in over 50 years. Whereas Donald Trump's infrastructure weeks were a running joke, Biden signed the largest infusion of federal funds into infrastructure in more than a decade. His Inflation Reduction Act made a historic investment in clean energy; the head of the International Energy Agency called it the most important climate action since the 2015 Paris climate accord. (And incidentally, inflation is finally coming down.) Biden rallied Western nations to support Ukraine against Russia's imperialist invasion and ended America's long, fruitless war in Afghanistan, albeit with an ugly and ignominious exit. His administration capped insulin prices for seniors, codified federal recognition of gay marriage and shot down that spy balloon everyone was freaking out about. He's on track to appoint more federal judges than Trump.

Biden can also take a victory lap for Trump's declining influence. Lots of pundits rolled their eyes when Biden sought to make the midterms a referendum on the MAGA movement's threat to American democracy. Voters didn't. Even more than Trump's defeat in 2020, the loss of Trumpist candidates like Arizona's Kari Lake and Georgia's Herschel Walker in 2022 convinced many Republicans they need to move on from their onetime hero.

In other words, Biden has been a great president. He's made good on an uncommon number of campaign promises. He should be celebrated on Tuesday. But he should not run again.

It's been widely reported that Biden plans to use the State of the Union to set up his case for re-election. There's a rift in the Democratic Party about whether this is wise for an 80-year-old to do. Democratic officials are largely on board, at least publicly, but the majority of Democratic voters are not. "Democrats say he's done a good job but he's too old," said Sarah Longwell, an anti-Trump Republican strategist who conducts regular voter focus groups. "He'll be closer to 90 than 80 by the end of his second term." Perhaps reflecting this dynamic, a Washington Post/ABC News poll showed that while 78 percent of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents approved of the job Biden has done as president, 58 percent of them wanted a different candidate next year.

The arguments for sticking with Biden are not trivial. In addition to his successful record, he has the benefit of incumbency. Primaries are expensive, exhausting, bruising affairs. If only Biden were just a few years younger, it would not be worth the Democratic Party enduring one.

But it's hard to ignore the toll of Biden's years, no matter how hard elected Democrats try. In some ways, the more sympathetic you are to Biden, the harder it can be to watch him stumble over his words, a tendency that can't be entirely explained by his stutter. Longwell said Democrats in her focus group talked about holding their breath every time he speaks. And while Biden was able to campaign virtually in 2020, in 2024 we will almost certainly be back to a grueling real-world campaign schedule, which he would have to power

through while running the country. It's a herculean task for a 60-year-old and a near impossible one for an octogenarian.