# Trump replaces campaign manager as poll numbers plunge

**Patrick Martin**
**17 July 2020**

Donald Trump sacked his campaign manager Wednesday night, in the most overt indication yet of the political crisis wracking the White House and his reelection effort. Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner reportedly told Brad Parscale that he had been replaced as campaign manager and returned to the position of manager of digital operations, which he held during the 2016 campaign.

Bill Stepien, a former top New Jersey Republican who joined the Trump entourage in 2016, has replaced Parscale. Stepien was a two-time campaign manager for Chris Christie when he was the governor of New Jersey from 2009 to 2017, but was forced to resign as a result of the so-called "Bridgegate scandal," in which state officials caused traffic jams in the town of Fort Lee, near the George Washington Bridge, because the mayor had failed to support Christie's reelection in 2013.

Stepien was named political director at the White House in 2017, then became a consultant to the reelection campaign after the Republican defeat in the 2018 congressional elections. He was promoted to deputy campaign manager last month, in a move that was widely seen as an initiative by Kushner to put a potential replacement for Parscale in place.

The Trump inner circle has come to view Parscale as a suitable scapegoat for the president's dismal polling numbers. The last straw apparently was the rally held by the Trump campaign on June 20 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where Parscale boasted ahead of time that 1 million people had signed up to attend. He was so confident of a huge turnout that Trump and Pence were booked to give two speeches each, one indoors and one to anticipated "overflow" crowds outside.

In the event, the outdoor appearances were cancelled and the arena in Tulsa was not even one-third full, with 6,200 attending in a venue that seats 19,000. Even this turnout, mostly without masks and not observing social distancing, was enough to produce a significant outbreak of coronavirus in the Tulsa area, with an estimated 500 new cases.

A follow-up rally, set for July 11 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, was cancelled, allegedly because of a near approach by Hurricane Fay, although the storm actually missed the area entirely. Some accounts suggest that the storm was seized on as a pretext by the Trump campaign because turnout was again likely to be embarrassingly low, a further indication of the deep unpopularity of the candidate and his party.

In making the announcement of Parscale's replacement by Stepien, Trump tweeted that polls were moving in his favor. His reelection in 2020 would not be the tight race of 2016, he boasted. "This one should be a lot easier as our poll numbers are rising fast, the economy is getting better, vaccines and therapeutics will soon be on the way, and Americans want safe streets and communities!," he wrote.

Aside from the delusional description of the US economy and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, Trump grossly distorted the trend in the polling numbers, which have shown him trailing his presumptive Democratic opponent, former Vice President Joe Biden, by double-digit margins nationally. Trump also trails by significant margins in nearly every one of the states regarded as "battlegrounds" in the fall: Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Florida, and Arizona, and his campaign is also struggling in states that were not competitive in 2016, including Iowa, Ohio, Georgia and Texas.

Firing campaign managers is a traditional last resort for a struggling capitalist political campaign in the United States, and particularly for Trump, who fired

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Corey Lewandowski and Paul Manafort in succession in 2016, before settling on Kellyanne Conway as campaign manager, and the fascistic Stephen Bannon as campaign chairman.

The reality, according to most press accounts, is that Trump acts as his own campaign manager, with his son-in-law Kushner playing an increasingly important role, in what amounts to a family cabal centered on the Trump persona, not the Republican Party as such.

Trump's huge deficit in surveys of registered or likely voters, as high as 15 percentage points in the most recent Quinnipiac Poll released Thursday, has sparked fears in Republican Party circles that Trump will not only be soundly defeated for reelection, but that he will drag down Republican candidates for the US Senate and the House of Representatives with him, as well as candidates at the state and local level, costing the Republicans control of the US Senate and of many state governments.

The Democratic Party leads in generic party preference for the House of Representatives, with 49 percent to 40 percent for the Republicans, slightly more than the margin in 2018 when the Democrats won 40 Republican-held seats and took control of the House. Incumbent Republican senators are trailing in the polls in Colorado, Arizona, North Carolina and Maine, and within the margin of error in Montana, Iowa and two seats in Georgia. Even top Senate Republicans, like Majority Leader Mitch McConnell in Kentucky and his former deputy John Cornyn in Texas, hold only narrow leads in their reelection efforts.

The dire state of the Trump reelection campaign, from an electoral standpoint, is seen in the fact that Trump has been scheduling rallies and media advertising in states like Georgia, which he won easily four years ago. At the same time, the First Action Super Pac, which supports the campaign, has decided not to advertise in Michigan. Trump won by a narrow 10,000-vote victory there in 2016 but is well behind in polling this year.

Besides his 15-point overall deficit to Biden, the Quinnipiac Poll also found that Trump trailed on every significant issue, including the economy, the coronavirus crisis, and race relations. Other polls have found Trump's job approval rating at a record low both nationally and in six of the battleground states: Florida, North Carolina, Arizona, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan.

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