

Political issues revealed in Biden's advanced cancer diagnosis

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On May 18, spokespeople for 82-year-old former President Joe Biden confirmed that he has been diagnosed with an aggressive form of prostate cancer that has metastasized to his bones. Bone metastasis is not curable, but with advanced treatment it can be managed for several years.

According to the statement, Biden was examined by doctors the previous week and, on Friday, was diagnosed with prostate cancer with a Gleason score of 9, indicating abnormal, aggressive tumors that are likely to spread throughout the body.

The most obvious question arising from Biden's diagnosis is how long it has been known. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (Democrat–New York) was asked at a press conference on Monday why Democrats in 2024 “were not open to talking about President Biden's age.”

After offering his “thoughts and prayers” to Biden, Jeffries said “it seemed entirely inappropriate at this time” for “Republicans to peddle conspiracy theories.” He added, “As House Democrats, we are going to look forward.”

As much as the Democrats would like to “move on” and forget the past, the timing of Biden's cancer revelation deserves scrutiny. It is highly implausible that Biden—a high-level capitalist politician for over 50 years—only received his advanced and aggressive cancer diagnosis last week, and that Democrats were not aware of it well before.

Prostate cancer typically develops slowly, often taking years or even decades to produce noticeable symptoms. Since his first election to the Senate in 1973 at age 29, Biden has received annual medical exams and top-tier, taxpayer-funded healthcare. Throughout his political career, he has had consistent access to high-level medical care, regular physicals and specialist

consultations.

In an interview Monday with MSNBC's Joe Scarborough, Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel, an oncologist and adviser to both the Obama and Biden administrations, said Biden likely had cancer for “more than several years.” Scarborough asked if Biden had it during his presidency, to which Emanuel replied:

Oh, yeah. ... He probably had it at the start of his presidency, in 2021. I don't think there is any disagreement about that.

Likewise, Dr. Howard Forman, Professor of Diagnostic Radiology, Public Health, Economics, and Management at Yale, wrote on X following the revelation:

It is inconceivable that this was not being followed before he left the Presidency. Gleason grade 9 would have had an elevated PSA (prostate-specific antigen) test some time before this diagnosis. And he must have had a PSA test numerous times before. This is odd.

The announcement of Biden's diagnosis comes alongside a flood of previously suppressed reporting confirming his mental decline, which was obvious to everyone during the final period of his presidency.

In their upcoming book, *Original Sin: President Biden's Decline, Its Cover-Up, and His Disastrous Choice to Run Again*, CNN's Jake Tapper and Axios's Alex Thompson report that Biden's physical decline

became so severe in the lead-up to the 2024 election that internal discussions were held about placing him in a wheelchair. However, they write, “they couldn’t do so until after the election,” underscoring the deliberate effort to conceal his condition from the public.

The book reports that Biden’s physician, Dr. Kevin O’Connor, repeatedly urged aides to allow the president more rest, warning that further falls—like those in 2022—could force him into a wheelchair. O’Connor was reportedly so concerned that he joked to staff they were “trying to kill him,” while he was “trying to keep him alive.”

What emerges is a picture of the final year of Biden’s presidency in which Democratic Party insiders sought to cover over their candidate’s rapidly collapsing physical and mental health—exposed to the world in the disastrous June 27 debate—until after the election.

In terms of the political motivation, this is not hard to discern. Under conditions in which Trump was running for Führer, the Democrats’ main concern was to prevent a primary campaign which might become a focal point, even in the most distorted form, for opposition to the Biden administration and, in particular, its role in arming and financing the genocide in Gaza.

This cover-up demolishes claims that the Democratic Party, any more than the Republican Party, was defending “democracy.” Even as Biden’s popularity cratered—in the face of profit-driven inflation, the evisceration of COVID-19 social programs, the government outlawing of the railroad strike, and US support for imperialist war abroad—it wanted to ensure he remained at the top of the ticket.

The aim, to the extent that it was worked out consciously, was to get Biden “over the finish line” and set up a situation where his vice presidential candidate, the highly unpopular Kamala Harris, could take over once the inconvenience of the election was out of the way.

This would allow the Democrats and those factions of the ruling class that backed them to continue those elements of ruling class policy with which they differ with Trump—primarily the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

This strategy became impossible after the debate exposed Biden’s cognitive collapse. Even then, the Democrats sought to avoid a primary, instead selecting

Harris as the replacement candidate, a choice that was inevitably and universally proclaimed in the media to be “historic” due to her race and gender.

While Biden and Harris’s re-election campaign was partly marketed as a campaign to defend democratic rights against the fascist threat posed by Trump, this marketing served to conceal the right-wing, pro-war, pro-genocide policies of the administration. The primary concern of all those “in the know” was keeping Biden’s health concealed so that both parties could continue the aggressive imperialist war abroad, coupled with attacks on democratic rights at home.

In all of this, it should be noted that a particularly prominent role was played by the nominally “left” representatives of the Democratic Party, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders. Both were among the last holdouts backing Biden, even as calls began to emerge within the Democratic Party for him to step down.

The WSWS remarked at the time that this expressed “their particular nervousness over the crisis in the Democratic Party. They want to prevent any circumstance where popular opposition escapes from its control.”

The same can be said of the Democratic Party as a whole—prior to the election last year and after. As Trump engages in a systematic conspiracy to establish a dictatorship, the Democrats’ main concern is to buttress the political system (itself in a state of advanced “physical and mental” collapse) against popular opposition from below.

This conspiracy against the democratic rights of the entire population underscores that the defense of democracy is inseparably connected to the mobilization of the working class against both parties and the corporate and financial oligarchy they uphold.



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