

Charlie Sykes *Firing Line* Interview (w / The Incredibly Comely Margaret Hoover)

Aired on PBS 20 May 2023

Do Conservatives Who Do Not Support Donald Trump Have A Plan, Or A Prayer In 2024? This Week, On Firing Line. After An Insurrection On Jan. 6th, Bruising Midterm Elections For The GOP, A Civil Judgment, An Indictment, And Multiple Criminal Investigations...

Trump: I Just Want To Find 11,780 Votes.

... Donald Trump Is Still The GOP Frontrunner, And A Repeat Of 2020 Seems All Too Possible. But Does It Have To Be This Way? [Ed. Note: Yes, It Does. "Democrats For THE DONALD."

Sykes: Joining Me On The Line Is The National Republican Frontrunner. Good Morning Sir.

Trump: Hi Charlie...

Charlie Sykes WAS A Prominent Conservative Talk Radio Host...

Sykes: Well, Welcome To Wisconsin. And I Know That You Realize That Here In Wisconsin, We Value Things Like Civility, Decency, And Actual Conservative Principles...

... Who Took A Stand Against Trump, And Launched The Bulwark, An Anti-Trump Centrist News Site, Showing That There Is Room In The Media Ecosystem For Independent Voices

Sykes: The Word Conservative In The Modern Context In The Age Of Donald Trump In The Age Of MAGA Certainly Doesn't Mean Conserving Anything.

What Does Charlie Sykes Say Now?

'Firing Line' With Margaret Hoover Is Made Possible In Part By: Stephens Inc Robert Granieri, Charles R Schwab, The Fairweather Foundation, The Margaret and Daniel Loeb Foundation, The Assess Family Foundation, Jeffrey And Lisa Bewkes, The Beth And Ravenel Curry Foundation, Peter And Mary Kalikow, Craig Newmark Philanthropies And By: The Rosalind P Walter Foundation, Damon Button, The Center For The Study Of The International Economy, Inc, The Pritzker Military Foundation On Behalf Of The Pritzker Military Foundation And Library And The Marc Haas Foundation.

Charlie Sykes, Welcome To Firing Line.

Thank You.

You Grew Up A Democrat. You Became A Prominent Conservative Talk Radio Host, And Then You Started “The Bulwark,” An Anti-Trump News Site And Podcast, Quote, “Free From The Constraints Of Partisan Loyalties Or Tribal Prejudices.” How Do You Describe Your Politics And Political Affiliation Today?

That’s A Surprisingly Tough Question Because I Describe It As Being A Political Orphan. I Knew That We Were Going To Be In The Political Wilderness After The Election Of Donald Trump. I Didn’t Realize That The Wilderness Was Going To be Such A Tiny Island And There Would Be So Few People On It. But, This Is An Interesting Question Because I Don’t Want To Go From One Tribe To Another Tribe. So I Am Politically Homeless And Politically Agnostic On Many Things.

Do You Still Consider Yourself A Contrarian Conservative?

I Still Consider Myself A Contrarian. The Problem With The Word — This Is A Surprisingly Difficult Question Because I’m Not Sure What It Means To Be A Conservative Anymore. The Word Conservative In The Modern Context, In The Age Of Donald Trump, In The Age Of MAGA, Certainly Doesn’t Mean Conserving Anything. And You Look Back To What American Conservatism Was Since William F Buckley Founded National Review. And, You Know, There Are Elements Of It There, But It’s A Rejection Of Much Of The Intellectual Tradition. I Mean, Conservatism Has This Very Rich History Going Back To Edmund Burke, Very Thoughtful Individuals. And Now What Is It? It’s A Series — Gone Back To A Series Of Irritable Gestures And Tribalism. I Understand What The Right Wing Is Right Now, But I’m Not Sure That The Right Wing Is Conservative.

When You Announced Your Departure From Milwaukee Talk Radio In 2016 After 23 Years Of Hosting, You Said It Was To Pursue Other Opportunities. But You Have Admitted That You Would Have Lost Audience If You Had Remained As A Principled Anti-Trump Host. Explain Why You Couldn’t Have Remained A Talk show Host That Came From A Principled Anti-Trump Perspective.

Well, I Would Have — If I Had Stayed I Would have Lost My Audience. But I Also Think I Would Have Lost My Mind, Which Was Actually My Main Concern Here. And I Think It’s Important To Understand What The Economics Of Right Wing Media Are. Not Just Radio, I Mean Talk Radio, But You See With Cable Television, You See It In All The Other Media That, You Know, In Many Ways They Are Chasing Their Audience. So They Say Things, And They Feel They Must Do Things In Order To Keep That Audience. But After A While, That Becomes A Vicious Circle. That Becomes A Doom Loop.

Did You Leave Because You Could See That That Would Be Demanded Of The Person Who Stayed As The Host?

Well, You Know, I've Done This For 20 Years. And I Really Thought I Understood Who Our Audience Was. I Thought I Understood What Conservatism Was. I Thought I Knew Who My Fellow Conservatives Were. And Up Until 2016, I Was Pretty Comfortable With That. Donald Trump Comes Along. And People That I've Known For Two Decades, I Had Been Friends With For Two Decades, Suddenly, You Look In Their Eyes And You Go, Oh My Gosh, It's Like Invasion Of The Body Snatchers, You Know, One After Another, And You Make These Compromises.

Paul Ryan Is A Very Good Personal Friend Of Mine. And Watching Him Go From being Solidly Anti-Trump To Saying, 'Well, Maybe I Can Compromise. Maybe I Can Make A Deal With Him.' And Watching The Whole Party Go In That Direction, I Just Realized That, You Know, I Was No Longer In Sync With Audience, That I Didn't Want To Play That Role With hem Anymore. The Republican Party Changed And The Conservative Movement Changed Into Something That Was Almost Unrecognizable For Me.

You Launched the Bulwark In 2018 And You Said, Quote, "We Have To Truly Find Out If There Is A Market And A Need For Non-Trumpian Conservative Voices.

Exactly.

Five Years Later, What Have You Found?

Five Years Later, We Found Out That It's Still An Experiment. It's Still A Work In Progress To Believe That There Is Still Room For A Vital Center In American Media And Politics. Right Now, Where Were Sitting In 2023, Are Things Getting Better? Are Things Moving Toward The Center Or Are They Spinning Out Of Control? We Don't Know The Answer To This. So, I Mean, Some Of Our Folks Are Center Left And Some Of Them Are Actually Quite Left. And We Also Have People On The Center Right. But What We're To Doing Is Having This Continuing Dialog, And We Share One Principle. We Share The Principle That We Need To Defend Democracy, That Donald Trump And What He Represents Is An Existential Threat To Our Democracy, And That We Need To Raise That Alarm. But We're Also Trying To Defend The Concept Of Being, Not Just Liberals, Or Being In Favor Of Democracy, But Understand That What we're Talking About Is Liberal Constitutional Democracy. And If We've Learned Anything In The Last Few Years, It's Those Are Much More Fragile Than We Ever Imagined Before.

Liberal In A Classical Sense?

Liberal In A Classical Sense. Yes, Exactly. I Mean, We Thought That America Was Immune From History. We Thought That All Of Our Institutions Would Hold. We Thought Of All These Checks And Balances. And So This Has Been A Vertiginous Time. I Mean, A Disillusioning Time. And We Want To talk To One Another, You Know, About, Okay, You Know, Have We taken The Crazy Pills? [Ed. Note: Methinks The *Only* Question Here Is... *How Many?*] Have We Lost Our Minds? Or Is America, You Know, On The Wrong Track Here?

You Cited William F Buckley, Jr, And Just Now You Were Talking About The Unifying Theme Of Defending Democracy. When Buckley Launched National In 1955, In His Famous Cover Initial Edition, He Wrote That The Magazine Would, Quote, “Stand Athwart History Yelling Stop” Is The Bulwark In It’s Own Way —

Oh Yes.

— Standing Athwart History Yelling Stop?

I Actually —

Standing Athwart The GOP And Yelling Stop?

Yes. I Was Thinking Of That Exact Quote When We Wrote Our First Statement Of What The Bulwark Would Be, That We Would Be Standing Athwart History Saying, ‘You Can’t Be Serious.’ That Was Our Thing. You Can’t Be Serious. Are You Really Going To Take This Seriously? Are You Really Going To Engage In This Kind Of Conduct? Very Much Inspired By That Moment.

COVERING TRUMP

Former President Trump Continues To Present A Unique Threat To The Country, But He Also Presents A Unique Challenge To The Media. And To How The News Media And Print Media Cover Him. He Is The GOP Frontrunner Right Now For The Republican Nomination. He Consistently Lies. He Degrades Our Political Discourse. He Displays Dangerous Authoritarian Tendencies, Including Invoking An Attack Against The Capitol In Order To Overturn The 2020 Election. What Does The Media, Such As It Is, Get Wrong About Covering trump?

Well, And Add To This, I Mean, He Tried To Overthrow The Government, Has Been Indicted Now, And A Jury Has Found That he Sexually Abused A Woman And Then Defamed Her.

I Mean, There's So Much I Have To Put It In Multiple Questions.

Well, And The Reason It's Important, Because The Fundamental Point, Though, Is That He Is Not A Normal Candidate. [Ed. Note: He's Not A Normal [Anything.](#)] He Is Not A Typical Candidate. And If The Media Sets Out And Says, 'We're Going To Cover Him Like Any Other Candidate. Well, He's The Front Runner. Why Don't We Apply The Same Rules That We Apply To Everybody Else?' He Is Not Like Everybody Else. That Is The Fundamental Problem, Not To Understand That Donald Trump Is Not Normal, That He Is Unique, And You Cannot — Journalism Was Broken, I Think, In Many Ways By Donald Trump. And, Unfortunately, I'm Not Sure That Many Media Outlets Have Figured Out, Even After All These Years, How To Deal With Somebody That Lies With The Fluency Of Donald Trump, Who Will, If You Turn The Camera On, Will Subject You To A Firehose Of Disinformation. And I Think We Saw That With The CNN Town Hall —

COLLINS AND TRUMP: Mr President, Can I Just Follow Up On That...

— Which Was Predictable. And This Is Going To Be An Ongoing Problem To Deal With Donald Trump. But I Think The Key Thing Is That You Cannot Apply The Normal Rules Of Journalism To A Figure Like Donald Trump Because That Will Create A Radical Asymmetry.

One Of The Pioneers Of Conservative Talk Radio, Or The Pioneer Of Conservative Talk Radio, Was Rush Limbaugh, Who, Of Course, You Admired Earlier In Your Broadcast Career. He Fundamentally Changed And Created The Medium And Then Ultimately Changed The Modern American Conservative Movement. He Was On The Original Firing Line With William F Buckley, Jr In 1992.

I Didn't Know That.

Take A Look At This.

My Success Is Not Determined By Who Wins Elections, And My Success Is Not Determined By What Issues Dominate. My Success Is Determined By How Many People Listen To My Radio Show And How Many People Watch The Television Show. There Is An Entertainment Characteristic Here. And I Am — I View Myself As Courageous. I'll Go Against The Tide. Many People View My Radio Program As The Only One Of Its Kind.

BUCKLEY: As A Purgative, Yes. [Ed. Note: Not Too Proud To Say That I Was Compelled To Search The Word 'Purgative.' I Nearly Pissed Myself From Spontaneous Convulsed Laughter. Rather Than Divulge Its Definition Here, You're Cordially Invited To Do Your Own Search. Another Quick Search Revealed That Buckley's Been Dead Now For Over Fifteen Years. Strange The Details That One Remembers In Life. Buckley Died, Literally, Working At His Desk. I Seem To Also Recall That His Son, Christopher, Reported In The Aftermath Of His Passing That In Their Last Conversation He Said He Was In The Most Awful Pain. Out Of The Regard And Respect In Which I Held Mr Buckley, If The Above Is Not Completely Accurate I Would Very Much Appreciate Being Corrected To The Extent Necessary.]

What Is Your Reaction Watching Buckley And Limbaugh Together?

My Main Reaction Was Watching Buckley Watching Him, Because I Wonder Whether He Realizes This Is The Future Of Conservatism, Or This Is The Danger Posed By Conservatism. Because Rush Limbaugh Was Actually Quite Honest In That Clip, Where He Basically Said He Didn't Care About Ideas. He Didn't Care About Policies. It Was All About Ratings And Everything. And I Think This Was Something That People Missed, That He Said, 'I Am A Showman. I Will Say What I Need To Get The Biggest Possible Audience.' He Was Fundamentally A Man Without Principle Who Would Then Become A Champion For Politicians Without Principle.

[Ed. Note: Brilliant. Utterly Pfucking Brilliant!!!]

And It Strikes Me As Such A Passing Of The Torch, Maybe Unintentional In That Moment, Where —

Yes, That Was Exactly — And I Thought, Here's William F Buckley Who Spent His Entire Adult Life Creating This Intellectual Superstructure, Driving Out The Crackpots And The Cranks From The Conservative Movement, Creating An Intellectual Respectability For Conservatism. And Now Your Sitting Across From The Carnival Barker Who Is About To Transform Everything You Had Created.

And Then Ultimately, With The End Point Being Donald Trump. Do You Credit Limbaugh With The Deterioration Of The Conservative, Of The Modern American Conservative Movement?

I Think You Have To. I Think We Are Living In The World That Rush Limbaugh Created For Us. And You See All Of That, You Know, Conservatism As Entertainment, But Also That Sense Of Being Willing To, You Know, Say Things That Are Completely Not True And Laugh It Off. Donald Has This Reptilian Instinct That I Think He Honed Listening To Conservative Talk Radio. And If You Listen To A Lot Of Conservative Media Before Trump Came Along, You Understood What Trump Was Echoing. And Rush Limbaugh Played A Tremendous Role There.

You've Written Extensively, Including In Your Most Recent Book, How The Right Lost Its Mind, About How The Conservative Movement, Quote, "Devolved Into A New Tribalism That Valued Neither Principle Nor Truth." How Do You Understand That Assault On Truth?

Well, I Think This Is One Of The Most Difficult Questions We Have. Is The Assault On Truth? — By The Way, The Assault On Truth Is Not Simply Telling Lies. It's What Hannah Arendt Described As The Attack On All Of Your Critical Sensibilities. So That There Comes A Point Where You Doubt Your Ability To Even Know The Truth. So We Have Millions Of People In This Country Who Are being Lied To, Who Either Do Not Know They're Being Lied To Or, And I Think This Is More Disturbing, They Know Their Being Lied To And They Don't Care. It Becomes Irrelevant. That The Lie Only Exists As Whether it Is Useful To Your Tribe And To Your Connection To The Tribe And To Your Connection To The Tribe, And To Creating Liberal Tears. And Donald Trump Has Just Fully Immersed Himself Into This Stream. I Mean, That's Why When We Say That Shamelessness Is His Superpower, There's A Part Of Him I Think That's A Little Bit Shocked That He Gets Away With What He Gets Away With. Can I Really Say

This? Could I Really Shoot Somebody? Could I Really Actually, You Know, Attack A Woman And Get Away With It? Can I Really Say These Things And Have The Entire Republican Party Say, Yeah, We're Okay With That? But It Is An Extraordinary Moment That We're In. And Again, It's Not Just We Face A Lot Of Lies. If We Use The Phrase Like Post-Truth, It Means That The Whole Concept Of Truth And Lies May be Irrelevant To Much Of The Political Class.

But Is It The Entire Republican Party, Or Is It Just Enough Of The Base?

Well, This Is The Interesting Thing. No. It Is The Base. But — And I Have This Discussion All The Time With Many Of My Former Friends Who Will Say, You Know, 'Charlie, You Know, Most Republicans, 60% Of Republicans Are Normies. [Ed. Note: Please Define *Normies* In This Context.] We Get All Of This Stuff.' But The Problem Is You Enable And You Empower The Crazies. You May Not Be The Crazies, But You Are Part Of An Infrastructure That Has Advanced Marjorie Taylor Greene, That Is Right Now Prepared To Perhaps Renominate Donald Trump. So Part Of It Is, You May Not Be That, *But You Allow It And You Tolerate It.*

BIDEN TRUMP POLL

A Recent ABC News Washington Post Poll Showed Former President Trump Leading President Biden By Six Percentage Points. You Have Said This Poll Should Be A Wake Up Call —

Yeah.

Wake Up And Then What?

Well, I Think The Poll Is An Outlier. I Want To Make This Clear. But I Also Worry About Complacency. And I Worry About People Who Think That Because Something Is Unthinkable, That It Can't Happen. But We've Already Lived Through This. So There's A Very Real Possibility That Donald Trump Could Become President Again. And I Think That People Need To Imagine What Trump 2.0 Means [Ed. Note: Perhaps A Year Ago, There Was A Disconcerting Piece (Vanity Fair, Maybe) That Addressed What A Second Trump Term Would Likely Manifest — The "Three Rs" — Revenge, Retaliation, Retribution. Early In His First Term, There Was A Lot Of Ignorant Chatter About Whether Trump Was Vladimir Vladimirovich's "Useful Idiot" And/Or His "Bitch." Trump's Abysmal And Otherwise

Historic Performance In Helsinki Will Stick To This Diseased Crazy Delusional *Piece Of Shit* Party That THE DONALD Has Comically Tight-To-The-Short-Hairs Like Stink On Shit. And In The Immediate Aftermath Of That Supremely Embarrassing International Shit Show, Who Spoke Some Much Needed Blunt Truth To the Self-Proclaimed “Very Stable Genius”? It Was None Other Than His U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley — aka “The Poor Little Brown Girl.” But Back To The VF (?) Piece. The Main Thrust Of That Most Insightful Article Is How The GOP’s Very Able Technocrats Will Once Again Use Trump As Their Bespoke And Otherwise “*Useful Idiot*.”

Technocrats Headlined By People Like Leonard Leo, Marjorie Dannenfelser And A Great Many Nameless Faceless (To The Public) High Level Political Functionaries From Internationally-Powerful Cocksucker Law Firms Like *Jones Day*. (Please See David Enrich’s *Servants Of The Damned: Giant Law Firms, Donald Trump, And The Corruption Of Justice*. (HarperCollins 2022) Also See Mr Enrich’s Phenomenal *Dark Towers: Deutsche Bank, Donald Trump, And An Epic Trail Of Destruction*. (HarperCollins 2020). With Every Incoming Administration One Always Hears The Miserably Tired Trope That They’re Going To “Hit The ground Running.” More Often Than Not, It’s Just A Pathetic Aspiration As The Harsh Reality Of *Governing* Settles In Over *Our* Capital City. But These A\$\$WHOLES Are Highly Likely To Hit The Ground Running With *Knives Out*. The Consequences Of Which Will Likely Have Grave Consequences For Our Institutions — And, Of Course, For Our Democracy Itself. *The Stakes Are That Pfucking High (And Serious) Peeple. Yar They Are.*

Make No Mistake, *These People* Have Been Quietly But Diligently Working On Their Takeover Agenda Since The 2020 LANDSLIDE Election Was So Eggregiously Stolen From McPresident Donald John Trump. *THIS* Is the Moment That People Like The Late Paul Weyrich Have Waited A Lifetime For. Trump May Be None To Bright — But He Has A Keen Feral Sense For The Acquisition Maintenance And Propagation Of *R-E-A-L P-O-W-E-R*. Here’s My Half-Assed And Otherwise Unwashed Take On What A Trump 2024 Cabinet Might Look Like: DoD — Michael Flynn (God’s & QAnon’s General); DOJ — The Disgraced, Unprincipled But Able Trump Toady, John Eastman; FBI — Someone With Substantial Experience With The Inappropriately* Partisan And Corrupt New York Office; Home Sec — The Most Vile Disgusting Facsimile Of A Human Being, Stephen Miller.

When — I Think It Was David From Who Said When The Velociraptors Figured Out How To Open The Doors, This Time When They Figured Out How To Do All the Things They’re Going To Do. And So That’s When You Realize That There Is A Sense Of Urgency. And I Think Particularly For Democrats And Anti-Trump Folks, It’s Like, We May Have A Lot Of Differences Or A Lot Of Other Things In Our Agendas That We’re Concerned About. But We Need Recognize That Right Now We Can’t Sit Around And Have Another Seminar. We Can’t Indulge Ourselves In All Of The, You Know. Ideological Goodies That We Would Necessarily Like. Lots On The Line. And So That’s Why I Think The Complacency — You Asked ‘And Do What?’ It’s Like, Don’t Allow Anything To Take Your Eye Off The Ball Of This Existential Choice That America Will Make In November Of 2024.

Presuming That Donald Trump Is The Nominee —

I Do.

Let's Go Through The Republican Field. You Are Not A Fan Of Republican Governor Ron DeSantis. The Wall Street Journal Editorial Board Recently Assessed DeSantis's Legislative Record In Florida, Saying That He Had, Quote, "A Notable Record Of Conservative Governance In Action." They Applaud His School Choice Initiatives, His Immigration And Abortion Restrictions. What Are They Getting Wrong?

Well, They're Getting Wrong The Fact That Ron DeSantis Is Not Really A Conservative. I Mean, He's Sort Of A Wannabe MAGA Guy. [\[Ed. Note: Dead Bang On, That Observation.\]](#) I Guess I've Been Around Long Enough To Know When Conservatives Would Not Have Used The Power Of The Government To Attack A Private Company Or Engage In This Vendetta. This War With Disney Ought To be Kind Of A Wake Up Call. It Is One Thing To Push Back Against Political Correctness In Education. It Is Something Else To Be Passing Book Bans Or Restrictions On What People Can Talk About Here. I'm Not Sure Whether Or Not Ron DeSantis Believes All Of These Things, But He Thinks He Has To. And There's Something Fake About Him, Inauthentic, That He Wants To Figure Out What Is The Most Extreme, Right Wing, Punitive Position To Take, And Then Do It. But He Is Not A Small Government, Pro- Free Market Conservative By Any Stretch Of The Imagination.

And Yet He Is Still Doing Better Than Anybody Else In All Of The Polls. Would He Be Better Than Donald Trump

Okay. I Could Spend Half An Hour Telling You How Bad Ron DeSantis Is, But I'm Going To Make This Very Clear: He Is Not Worse Than Donald Trump. Yes, I Mean, No One Is Worse Than Donald Trump. I Think Most Republicans Want To Move On From Donald Trump. They Lack The Collective Will Or The Strategy To Do It. I Think The Strategy Is Sort Of Like Something, Something Unicorn. Maybe He Dies. So There's A Lot Of Magical Thinking About It. And We Lived Through This In 2016 Where Everybody In The Republican Party Knew That Donald Trump Would Not Become The Nominee, But Nobody Was Going To Be The One To Actually Stop It.

Former Governor Nikki Haley Is In The Race. Former Governor Asa Hutchinson Is In The Race. Senator Tim Scott Is Anticipated To Announce His Candidacy In The Coming Weeks. Glenn Youngkin May Also Be Doing The Same. Ron DeSantis May Be Doing The Same. Who Have I Left Out? Mike Pence. The Only One Who Has Been Willing To Draw A Contrast With Former President Trump And Condemn His Unconstitutional Behavior And His Inappropriate Behavior Is Former Governor Asa Hutchinson From Arkansas.

And Chris Christie.

Who Is Not In the Race Yet. That's True. I Left Him Out. I Left Him Out. All Right. So Does Actually Anyone Stand A Chance If He Remains In The Contest?

Well, There's A Couple Of Known Unknowns. How Many Indictments Are There Going To Be And Will That Make Any Difference? I Don't Know That That Has An Effect.

Don't They Help Him?

They Might. How Many Candidates Will Get In The Race? From Donald Trump's Point Of View, The Bigger The Field, The Better It Is For Him.

2016 All Over Again.

The Only Way — Exactly. It's 2016 All Over Again. The Only Way That You Can Conceive A Scenario Where He Is Defeated Is If There Is A Strong One-On-One Who Becomes The Embodiment Of All Of The Non-Trump Votes Out There. Now, As Much As I Admire What Asa Hutchinson Has Been Saying And Agree With What Chris Christie Has Been Saying, They Have No Shot. That Is Not Going To Happen.

Why?

The Republican Base Is Never Going To — The Republican Party Is Never Going To Go With Somebody Who Is Perceived To Be That Anti-Trump. The Formula Is To be Non-Trump Without Antagonizing The Trump Base. Ron DeSantis Thought That He Had The Formula. Clearly, He Has Not Figured It Out Yet. So You Have To Have That Field Winnowed Down And It Has To Winnow Down Pretty Quickly. If There Are Eight Or Nine Candidates In That Field Going Into the Primary Season, Hard To See That Donald Trump Doesn't Win.

But If There's A Winnowing Of the Field Early —

Yes.

Is Any One Of Them Better Than Donald Trump?

They're All Better Than Donald Trump. Every Single One Of Them Is Better Than Donald Trump. But Having Said That, There's One Big Caveat: Is Donald Trump Going To Allow Anyone Else To Be The Nominee? Donald Trump Has Made It Clear He Never Loses. He Never Loses General Elections And He Never Loses Primaries. And On The Way Out the Door, He's Going To Burn The Whole Thing Down. So One Of The Things That Republicans Are Dealing With Is *Can We Afford To Move Past Trump If He Will Blow The Place Up On The Way Out Because He's The World's Worst Loser?* [Ed. Note: Whenever And However This Hostage Siege Shit Show Ends, Trump Will Have Unequivocally Shown The GOP That He Doesn't Give A Rat's Ass About Their Party And Never Has — Something Which They Richly Deserve.]

GENERAL ELECTION

So, Charlie, What Happens In A General Election Then If It Is Trump Versus Biden?

Then I Think The Election Becomes A Referendum On Donald Trump. And I Think This Is the Decision The Republicans Have To Make.

A Referendum On Trump?

Yes, Because I Think Under Normal Circumstances The General Election Is A Referendum On The Incumbent President. And If It's Any Other Republican Other Than Donald Trump, The 2024 Election Will Be A Referendum On Joe Biden And His Record And His Agenda. But If It's Donald Trump, It Becomes Completely Reversed. That Election Becomes About Donald Trump. And That Will Determine What the Turnout Is. That Will Determine The Levels Of Enthusiasm. Joe Biden Does Not Need To Gin Up Enthusiasm Among the Democratic Base If Donald Trump Is On The Ballot. The Formula Shifts.

In 2020 You Voted For Joe Biden?

Yes.

In 2024 If It's Joe Biden Versus Not Donald Trump, Another Republican, Do You Know Who You Vote For At This Point?

I Don't Know. But I'm Pretty Sure I'm Going To Vote For Joe Biden Because In Order To Get That Republican Nomination, You Will have Had To make So Many Compromises, So Many Moral Compromises With A Republican Party That Has Become So Extreme. The Problem The Republicans Have Is Not Just Donald Trump. It Is — When Donald Trump Leaves, The Dysfunction Of The Republican Party Does Not Go Away, And The Extremism Of The Republican Party, Its Willingness To Accept The Conspiracy Theories, Is Willingness To Accept The Authoritarian , Is Still Going To Be Ongoing. So, Yeah.

You Don't Think Any Candidate Who Gets The Republican Nomination Will Have The Ability To Break The Fever?

I Would Sure Like To Think They Would. I Don't Think This Fever Is Going To Break For A Very Long Time.

THREAT OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

This Week Two Members Of Democratic Representative Gerry Connolly's Staff Were Attacked With A Metal Baseball Bat In His District Office In Virginia. The Attacker Was Reportedly Looking For The Congressman. Political Violence Is a Very Real Concern. How Do You Diffuse This. How Do We Diffuse This?

I Mean, I Think We Should Not At All Underestimate The Danger Of The Rising Political Violence, Because The Amount Of Rhetoric, The Intensity Of The Emotions Is Ratcheted Up. We Have Had A Number Of Mass Shootings, A Number Of Tragedies That Should Have Caused People To Sober Up And Say We Need To Lower The Temperature. That Has Not Happened. Everybody Is Raising The Temperature. [Ed. Note: Me Included.] So First, We Need To Understand That This Is A Real Threat. It Doesn't Mean That Tens Of Millions Of People Are Going To Be Coming To These Offices With Baseball Bats. But You Only Need A Handful. You Only Need A Very Small Number Of People With Guns Who Decide That They're Going To After People That They Been Told Molest Children And Hate God And Hate America. *This Is A Very, Very Dangerous, Dangerous Moment.*

I Would Like To Say That This Would Be The Moment Where The Thought Leaders On Both Right And The Left, Particularly On The Right At The Moment, Actually Think, And Then Lead And Encourage People To Listen To The Better Angels Of Their Nature. Because I think That Would Be Influential. There Has To Be This, This Understanding That Conservatives Used To Universally Have, That Ideas Had Consequences, And That If You Spread Toxic Ideas, They Will Have, They Can Have Toxic And Tragic Consequences.

Charlie Sykes, Thank You For Joining Me On Firing Line.

Thank You.

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