

Defiant Biden says no intention to exit presidential race in TV interview

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President Joe Biden greets the few supporters he still has left at a campaign rally at Sherman Middle School in Madison, Wis., Friday, July 5, 2024. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

Washington, July 6 (RHC)-- U.S. President Joe Biden used a much-anticipated interview with ABC News to reiterate that he is the candidate to beat Donald Trump in November's presidential election and again called his recent disastrous debate against Trump "a bad episode."

Biden, who is now 81 years old, told ABC News anchor George Stephanopoulos in a taped interview that "I have a cognitive test every single day," referring to the tasks he faces daily as president.

"Every day, I've had tests. Everything I do," he said. "I just had a bad night. I don't know why."

Stephanopoulos asked whether the debate debacle "was a bad episode or a sign of a more serious condition" and whether Biden was being realistic in his belief that he could beat Trump, 78, given the gap opening in opinion polls between the two candidates and growing concern among Democrats that Biden should step aside. A Reuters/Ipsos poll found that one in three Democrats want Biden to quit the race.

"I don't think anyone is more qualified," Biden said in the interview, blaming his debate performance on exhaustion and a "really bad cold".

The polls, Biden said, were inaccurate. Asked whether he was more frail, Biden said: "No."

Asked also whether he would drop out if fellow Democrats in Congress said he was hurting their re-election chances in November, Biden said: "If the Lord Almighty comes out and tells me that, I might do that."

The 22-minute interview, which ABC said was not cut or edited, was being closely watched by Democrats concerned about the president's ability to serve another four years, or beat Trump.

The interview, even before it aired in full, seemed to do little to assuage viewers about Biden's age and fitness to stand for election. A handful of Democratic Party donors and business leaders are making their displeasure with Biden's candidacy known loudly, halting funding or looking at possible alternative candidates. Some of Biden's closest political allies, including former House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, have raised questions about his health.

"It hard to imagine this good man beating Trump and serving four more years in the most demanding job on earth," Ron Fournier, a former White House correspondent, said on social media alongside a clip of the ABC interview.

Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey issued a statement on Friday asking Biden to weigh his decision to run carefully, the rare Democratic governor not to issue a statement of support to the president in recent days.

"President Biden saved our democracy in 2020 and has done an outstanding job over the last four years," she said. "The best way forward right now is a decision for the president to make. Over the coming days, I urge him to listen to the American people and carefully evaluate whether he remains our best hope to defeat Donald Trump."

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