



NATIONAL JOURNAL

Hole in your résumé? Biden admin alumni grapple with president's legacy on their own campaign trails

The unpopular former president casts a long shadow.



President Biden walks with White House deputy chief of staff Annie Tomasini, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, White House deputy chief of staff Bruce Reed, and White House communications director Ben LaBolt after returning from a trip to New York, April 26, 2024. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

Amelia Monroe and James A. Downs

🕒 Aug. 7, 2025, 5:06 p.m.

This cycle, Joe Biden may be back on the ballot in several races across the country—at least on the résumés of several Democratic candidates.

So far, at least six former Biden administration officials are running for Congress in competitive seats. Each candidate is discussing their time in the administration differently, with some proudly highlighting their service in the unpopular former president's administration, while others are more coy. *National Journal* spoke to four of them, while one declined to be interviewed and another did not return a request for comment.

Running in purple districts means having to make a decision about their past relationship with the Biden White House, as the former president remains something of a lightning rod. He dropped out of the race after a disastrous debate performance last summer and left office with a [36 percent](https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/15/politics/cnn-poll-biden-presidency) approval rating.

“I’m most focused on talking about the experience itself. I was a career civil servant working in the Department of Commerce, so my appointment there was not a political one,” Eric Chung, who’s

running in Michigan's 10th Congressional District, said to *National Journal*. Chung said his work in the administration was a key part of the passage of the CHIPS and Science Act in 2022.

On his campaign [website](https://www.ericchungformichigan.com/meet-eric/) (<https://www.ericchungformichigan.com/meet-eric/>), Chung highlights his political experience without touting ties to any administration in particular, including Biden's. Chung told *National Journal* that while he is proud of his bipartisan work that continued under three presidents, starting with the Obama administration, the connection to the president isn't the defining feature of his qualifications.



HOTLINE

Democrats splinter in reflections on Biden presidency, reelection campaign

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Former Pentagon official Christian Urrutia and former head of the Small Business Administration Michael Roth, candidates in New Hampshire's 1st and New Jersey's 7th, respectively, are taking a

different approach. They're not hesitating to advertise the work they did and which administration they did it for.

"It doesn't matter political affiliation. I can walk into a manufacturing facility that has a MAGA sign outside of it, say who I am and what I did," Roth said about his time overseeing COVID relief programs for small businesses. "I'm not telling you that I get a big hug. But I get a firm handshake and a thank you, because people remember that time of crisis and people remember that government showed up for them."

As for Urrutia, he proudly touts his national security role at the Pentagon. On his campaign [website](https://urrutiafornh.com/) (<https://urrutiafornh.com/>), Urrutia doesn't shy away from the Biden name-drop.

"I see it as national service," Urrutia told *National Journal*. "I was in an international security role. I think that is the most sacred obligation the country has, or the government has to the country, is national security."

All hope is not lost for the former Biden White House officials. Four administration alumni currently serve in Congress and have leaned into their experience to varying degrees, offering a potential roadmap for success on the campaign trail.

Rep. Gabe Amo of Rhode Island clung to Biden as he ran in a primary in a deep-blue seat. He ran several [TV](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNYYeyg5iX8) [ads](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNYYeyg5iX8) [. \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3-J4HVQfs\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3-J4HVQfs) touting his experience working in the administration and included [images](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBzFFixJOk8) [. \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBzFFixJOk8\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBzFFixJOk8) of himself with the former president.

“Part of the frustration that people feel is they’re not certain what the Democratic Party stands for. That’s really what this election is about.”

Rep. Nikki Budzinski, who flipped a competitive open seat in 2022, said she was “proud to work for President Biden” in her introductory [launch](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j_UOzMvxu8) [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j_UOzMvxu8) [. \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j_UOzMvxu8\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j_UOzMvxu8). But on TV she leaned into her [Illinois](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j_UOzMvxu8) [. \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j_UOzMvxu8\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j_UOzMvxu8)

— FORMER SBA LEADER MICHAEL ROTH

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[h?v=6ayYiTOeD3A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ayYiTOeD3A)), and
[union roots](#)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNpUBlEvQeQ>).

Rep. April McClain Delaney of Maryland, who ran in a battleground district last cycle, mentioned her time at the Commerce Department in her introductory [TV ad](#)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfBXaidIIVg&t=17s>).

But not all candidates preached about their time in the Biden White House during their runs last cycle. Lanon Baccam, a Democrat who ran in the competitive Iowa's 3rd Congressional District, fled from

his Biden ties, deleting social media posts mentioning the president as he became more of a liability on the campaign trail.

Republicans made sure voters didn't forget. Congressional Leadership Fund, the main super PAC associated with House Republican leadership, ran [TV ads](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWNOLhfnJd8) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWNOLhfnJd8>), chiding Baccam.

“Baccam worked in the Biden-Harris Administration, all-in for their open borders and higher taxes. But now that he's on the ballot, he's trying to delete his past,” one [ad](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZ1s-ZZue78) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZ1s-ZZue78>), said.

The former Agriculture Department official lost to Republican Rep. Zach Nunn by about 4 points.

Beyond Biden, the Democratic brand writ large is in a dire position. A new [poll](https://www.wsj.com/politics/elections/democratic-party-poll-voter-confidence-july-2025-9db38021) (<https://www.wsj.com/politics/elections/democratic-party-poll-voter-confidence-july-2025-9db38021>), from *The Wall Street Journal* found that 63 percent of voters have an unfavorable view of the Democratic Party, despite trepidation with President Trump's tariffs and foreign policy. The Biden alumni see this as an opportunity for a rebrand.

“Part of the frustration that people feel is they’re not certain what the Democratic Party stands for. That’s really what this election is about,” said Roth.

The National Republican Congressional Committee aims to use these Democrats’ experience in the Biden White House as an anchor to weigh them down.

“These out of touch Biden activists aren’t just complicit for the actions of the Biden Administration, they’re responsible for driving our country into crisis. Now they’re asking for a promotion for the damage they caused,” NRCC national press secretary Mike Marinella told *National Journal* in a statement. “We will ensure voters see them for exactly what they are: willing accomplices to a failed presidency.”

Some Democratic candidates, like Kishla Askins, a former Veterans Affairs Department official who’s running to represent Nebraska’s 2nd Congressional District, say bring it on.

Askins served 30 years in uniform as a naval officer and physician assistant in the Marine Corps before returning home to serve at the Pentagon and later as a deputy assistant secretary in the VA during

the Biden administration. She says her time in the military informs her run for Congress.

“My service is something that I am very proud of, and I welcome anyone to attack my service,” Askins said in an interview with *National Journal*. “I do not fear the ads that may come at me because I chose to serve my country.”

“As a health care provider in emergency medicine ... I couldn’t save everyone, and I carry that weight with me every single day. But it has driven my purpose on every decision I’ve made,” Askins added.