



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on February 11, 2023

## **GOP Establishment Desperate to Unify Around Trump Alternative**

The Republican establishment — the big donors, consultants, and party bosses — is growing increasingly worried at the possibility of once again having Donald Trump at the top of the ballot, and are scrambling for an alternative to rally behind. Yet their hopes thus far have failed to bring forth a viable solution.

A recent [Politico](#) piece sheds light on the turmoil gripping establishment GOP circles. A number of big-time Beltway players have come to the conclusion that Trump would inevitably lose in a rematch against Biden, and also that Trump will inevitably win the party's nomination if the primary field is crowded, as it was in 2016.



AP Images

Thus, the consensus among the insiders is that non-Trump candidates must be persuaded to drop out early in the race and unify around the most capable among them. But the “who” and “how” continue to elude these members of the establishment.

Eric Levine, the founder and CEO of CellarTracker and a top GOP donor, is one of many power brokers within the party who desperately wants to see someone other than Trump win the nomination in 2024.

“I don’t think it is fair to call Donald Trump a damaged candidate,” Levine joked to *Politico*. “He is a metastasizing cancer who if he is not stopped is going to destroy the party. Donald Trump is a loser. He is the first president since Hoover to lose the House, the Senate and the presidency in a single term. Because of him Chuck Schumer is the Leader Schumer, and the progressive agenda is threatening to take over the country. And he is probably the only Republican in the country, if not the only person in the country, who can’t beat Joe Biden.”

Andy Sabin, a metal mogul who hosted a Trump fundraiser at his estate in 2019 and over the years has given Trump more than \$100,000, is similarly done with the 45th president.

“I don’t see a big bunch of donors coming behind Trump at this point,” Sabin said. “I wouldn’t give Trump a ... nickel.... As we get closer Trump is going to see the handwriting on the wall.... Trump worries only about Trump, so he may not care if we lose as long as he has his day in the park, but I don’t know any donor that wants to give a red nickel to Trump.”

Blackstone CEO Stephen Schwarzman has given a cool \$3.7 million to Trump and Trump-aligned groups in recent years. But after the midterms, he reflected that “It is time for the Republican Party to turn to a new generation of leaders, and I intend to support one of them in the presidential primaries.”

And Ken Griffin, the Citadel chief executive who donated \$60 million to the GOP in 2022, said after the midterms that he’s supporting Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, declaring that “I’d like to think that the



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Republican Party is ready to move on from somebody who has been for this party a three-time loser.”

Indeed, many of these individuals blame Trump for the party’s subpar performance in the midterms and fear that he would not only cost the party a shot at retaking the White House, but lose the newly won House majority and prevent the GOP from retaking the Senate.

Not surprisingly, both Club for Growth and the Koch Brothers-affiliated Americans for Prosperity — two major power players in Republican politics — have indicated that they’ll be looking to get behind a presidential candidate who isn’t Trump.

But all of these individuals and organizations recognize that Trump’s support among the base is still strong enough that he can plow through the primaries if the field is divided up among several weaker candidates.

*Politico* notes that party insiders are striving to prevent such a scenario in the states that will be early contest battlegrounds.

As the outlet reports:

Bob Vander Plaats, the president of The Family Leader, a socially conservative advocacy group, is one of the most sought-after endorsers in the Iowa Caucus. He said that he is speaking with every potential candidate about the need to not overstay their welcome in the race.

“I tell them that there is an open and fair playing field here in the state of Iowa, and that we will introduce you to our base, and we will give you all kinds of opportunities for you to introduce yourself. And if you have the call in your heart to run for president, I am the last person to tell you to not to.

“But,” he also tells them. “Do not listen to your consultants, who have a vested interest in you staying in. I can help you decide if you should stay in or not.”

It remains to be seen whether the likes of former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, former Vice President Mike Pence, or any of the other anticipated Republican contenders will heed the warning from the Powers That Be in the party.

And if the donor class does ultimately find a “champion” to rally around, will Trump be able to pull off another win against the odds?



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