

THE ANNENBERG ROUNDTABLE

Conversations on
Politics, Media,
and Society

AT THE 2024 DNC

CHICAGO, IL
AUGUST 19-22, 2024



USC Annenberg
School for Communication
and Journalism
*Center on Communication
Leadership and Policy*



in collaboration with



Ms. POLITICO

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Annenberg Roundtables on Politics, Media, and Society continued a 16-year tradition of joint programming at both the DNC and RNC by the USC Annenberg School and the Annenberg School at the University of Pennsylvania.

Hosting 12 roundtables over four days, CCLP was proud to present one of the largest scheduled programs in its history for the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, IL. CCLP partnered with Penn Annenberg and presented roundtables in collaboration with Common Sense Media, Ms. Magazine and POLITICO.

The mission of The Annenberg Roundtables at the DNC, as with the RNC one month before, was to demonstrate the role of the university in bringing students, guests, and leading figures together for conversations about important issues. The series continued topics from the RNC, including public diplomacy, election cybersecurity, and why history matters, and opened new conversations on Gen Z voters, Latino voters, and women's rights.

To watch highlights from our DNC roundtable conversations, please visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxEjTAYE4Rs>.

In a separate report, we describe our Annenberg Roundtable events at the Republican National Convention.

Geoffrey Cowan

Director, USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy



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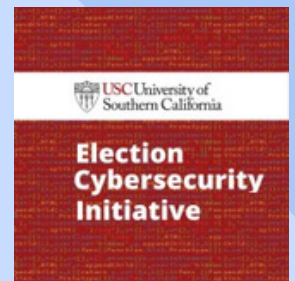
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FAKE VIDEOS AND ELECTION CYBERSECURITY IN THE AGE OF AI



Monday, August 19

**WITH GEOFFREY COWAN, JUDE MECHE, ERIK C. NISBET,
MICHAEL POSNER, ADAM CLAYTON POWELL III**



At the Democratic National Convention, election security was front of mind. For speakers on the first conversation of the Annenberg Roundtables, educating politicians and voters about the ways bad actors manipulate information is important for personal safety as well as electoral integrity.

“Fake Videos and Election Cybersecurity in the Age of AI,” a conversation introduced by Director of the USC Election Cybersecurity Initiative Adam Clayton Powell III, kicked off The Annenberg Roundtable Conversations on Politics, Media, and Society at the 2024 DNC. Panelists included Director of CCLP Geoffrey Cowan, Chief

Information Security Officer at the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Jude Meche, Owen L. Coon Endowed Professor of Policy Analysis & Communication at Northwestern University Erik C. Nisbet and Jerome Kohlberg Professor of Ethics and Finance at NYU’s Stern School of Business Michael Posner.

Powell continued this conversation topic from the Annenberg Roundtables at the Republican National Convention, but as he told the morning guests, his presentation had to be completely revised in light of recent developments. Just the week before, Microsoft and the Trump campaign



announced that Iran had successfully hacked into the campaign. Iran, China, Russia, North Korea, Bangladesh and other countries are also mass producing disinformation using AI.

“What we saw going into the Republican Convention was that AI was more theoretical than transformational. It’s the dog that didn’t bark,” Powell said. “Well, now the dog is barking.”

Nisbet considered disinformation a domestic problem, as opposed to an international one. From research, he saw that although inauthentic content from abroad propagates disinformation, it tends not to change users’ actual behavior.

“The threat is creating an information environment where false and misleading information is not only amplified on social media,” Nisbet said. “It’s amplified in hyper-partisan press. It’s amplified by politicians themselves. That’s when it’s impactful.”

Going into the 2024 election, he said the two largest threats he will be looking at is disinformation in battleground states and low confidence levels in American democracy.

Posner attributed some of the greatest risks of disinformation to social media platforms, which he said are retreating from their responsibility to moderate content. Meta, Google, TikTok and X are all companies that he saw as going neutral to the detriment of electoral integrity. He said the

federal government has a role in providing oversight, like they do with, say, drugs or planes.

“Federal government needs to be on top of these companies to find out what is in the algorithm, how are they operating, who is doing the content moderation,” Posner said. “We can do a lot of things to protect the system without regulating content.”

One of Meche’s responsibilities is promoting cybersecurity awareness within Democratic Senate campaigns. In part, he works to convince people they should expect to be targeted. Most of the time, phishing attempts are not complicated. Front-end solutions, such as strong passwords, new passwords, and two-factor authentication, make those attempts less likely to succeed.

“Right now, we have to slow down and not plow through links, emails and even attachments the way we used to,” Meche said. “All of these are vectors for them to target us.”

Nisbet said education about disinformation is critical for long-term safety. Researchers are still determining a method that works on a large scale and has a sustained effect.

“It’s one of those things where, much like advertising, you can’t stop,” Nisbet said. “You can’t simply educate people once and expect it to be duration. It needs to be an ongoing sort of campaign to create population resistance.”

WHY HISTORY MATTERS

Monday, August 19

**WITH DOUGLAS BRINKLEY, GEOFFREY COWAN,
KERRY KENNEDY, DAVID HUME KENNERLY**



It is no coincidence that “Why History Matters,” like all the Annenberg Roundtable conversations, took place at the Hilton Chicago. Infamous for being the site of the 1968 DNC anti-war protests and police riot, the Hilton Chicago set the stage for this conversation focused on why it is important to remember history.

Geoffrey Cowan, director of CCLP, moderated the discussion. Other speakers included CNN Presidential Historian Douglas Brinkley, President of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Kerry Kennedy and Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer

David Hume Kennerly.

Cowan stayed in this hotel as one of young activists at the 1968 DNC who [reformed the presidential primary system](#). He organized the reform commission motivated, he said, by attending the 1964 convention in support of the Freedom Democratic Party. He also took inspiration from Theodore Roosevelt, who created the presidential primary system in 1912, a topic he later wrote about in “Let the People Rule: Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of the Presidential Primary” (2016).

"From my own standpoint, I feel like history makes a difference," Cowan said.

From the introduction of the television at the 1952 DNC to the hardening of the modern conservative movement at the 1964 RNC, Brinkley walked guests through the major moments in convention history that continues to shape political narratives.

"There's usually a moment that lives," Brinkley said.

He highlighted the moment Barry Goldwater, a far-right conservative, clinched the 1964 GOP nomination, as well as when Ronald Reagan gave his campaign speech at Cow Palace in San Francisco. He viewed those moments as laying the groundwork for Trump's MAGA movement.

"Our own times are not uniquely oppressive. That's what you learn about history," Brinkley said. "Now we're looking at if there are comparisons while we're sitting here. What will this be seen as? Is there an analogy to another time?"

To Kennedy, the 2024 DNC in Chicago so far feels different than the 1968 DNC. Although the protests over the war in Gaza have suggested parallels to the anti-Vietnam war protests over five decades earlier, she reminded viewers of the historical differences. Unlike today, five high-profile political assassinations (John F. Kennedy, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy Jr.) caused violent riots and protests, reflecting the broad sentiment of anger and division present at the 1968 convention.

"One of the lessons we have to learn today is we want to encourage young people to protest," Kennedy said. "We want to encourage people to get out there and express themselves, we can't end up divided. We have to be united."

There are many ways to read into history, especially through historical documents like photographs. Kennerly said it is his mission as a political photographer to promote the standards of objective journalism, and that mission is complicated given an image is only true for a fraction of a second.



"A real photo could sometimes tell the wrong story," Kennerly said.

Kennerly has photographed every presidential convention since 1976. This year at the RNC and DNC, he was on assignment for POLITICO. Earlier in the morning, he was taking photographs of the street protests for Gaza—an example, Brinkley said, of a moment in Chicago that could be framed differently by Kennerly in comparison to an outlet like Fox News.

The big question facing Harris's presidential campaign is if she can maintain the projection of optimism that has galvanized her campaign.

Brinkley explained her campaign messaging within the larger context of Democratic presidential candidates, who evolved to counter the GOP's ideology—developed from Goldwater to Reagan to Trump—that the government is a problem.

“So many of our citizens don't trust the government due to conspiracy theories, the internet, social media, Warren Commission, Vietnam. The list is long and that creates a new environment,” Brinkley said. “Harris has to convince people that government is your friend again—the way FDR did and Truman and Kennedy—and keep that upbeat spirit of protecting of the government.”



Kennerly discussed the career-defining moment he took a photograph of Robert F. Kennedy, the father of Kerry Kennedy (middle), at 19 years old in Oregon. RFK was the first national politician he covered in his Pulitzer Prize-winning political photography career.



PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING

Monday, August 19

**WITH MICHAEL ABRAMOWITZ, GEOFFREY COWAN,
KRISTIN KANE, KERRY KENNEDY**



CCLP presented the roundtable “Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting” in tribute to John Lansing, former president and CEO of NPR, who passed away on August 14, 2024. Lansing joined CCLP as a senior fellow in March after an illustrious career at the top of national and global media agencies. He was scheduled to speak on Monday’s discussion.

The conversation focused on the intersection of human rights, democracy and international media. Director of CCLP Geoffrey Cowan was the moderator, and the other speakers were Director

of Voice of America Michael Abramowitz, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Global Public Affairs Kristin Kane and President of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Kerry Kennedy.

Voice of America broadcasts in 48 languages. Abramowitz said the strength of Voice of America, in comparison to Chinese and Russian state media operations, for example, is its credibility. He said VOA is trusted because of its willingness to share facts, regardless of how they reflect on the United States.

“My goal is to strengthen VOA as a really important United States asset for countering that global spread of disinformation,” Abramowitz said.

He considers VOA one tool in a toolbox to push back against well-funded disinformation campaigns coming from China, Russia and other adversarial nations. Kennedy agreed, adding that the U.S. needs to redouble its financial commitments to VOA, rather than expanding the budget of the Pentagon, to make an appreciable difference in supporting the global media ecosystem.

“We’ve got to spend more money on soft power,” Kennedy said. “We need to double, triple, your budget and yours has to be huge. It’s so much better to spend money on this than spending it on bombs and warships.”

Kennedy, who is the president of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, aims in her role to expand civic spaces. She considered activists, from human rights defenders to advocates of the LGBTQ community to journalists, responsible for

the world’s major changes over the past several decades. Yet, she said civic spaces are under attack like never before.

“Why should we care in this election?” Kennedy said. “Because that problem has now walked up the driveway and it’s in our house. That is, that’s Donald Trump and his allies.”

Belief in the strength of U.S. institutions informs Kane’s optimism. She is a career officer leading public affairs efforts in the U.S. Department of State. Kane and her colleagues were at the DNC—and they were at the RNC in Milwaukee—to run a center for foreign journalists, fitted out with briefing rooms and invitations for special guests to broadcast their message to international audiences. She said political conventions fascinate viewers who are interested in American democracy.

“We still have a good story to tell,” Kane said. “We are still absolutely the partner of choice. It is because of the government, but it’s also because of the strength of our people, our NGOs, our human rights organizations, all these wonderful heroes of democracy.”



POLITICS AND THE MEDIA IN THE 2024 ELECTION: SHAPING THE NARRATIVE

Tuesday, August 20

**WITH CHRISTOPHER CADELAGO, MICHAEL SCHERER,
STEVE SCULLY, LYNN SWEET**



Journalists on the panel “Politics & the Media in the 2024 Election: Shaping the Narrative with POLITICO” provided insight into how media outlets have developed, and at times blundered, in covering the 2024 presidential election.

Host of “The Briefing” on Sirius XM POTUS Steve Scully moderated the roundtable, which was hosted jointly by CCLP and POLITICO. Other speakers included POLITICO California Bureau Chief Christopher Cadelago, National Political Reporter at The Washington Post Michael Scherer and Washington Bureau Chief for the Chicago Sun-Times Lynn Sweet.

President Joe Biden passed the torch to Vice President Kamala Harris the evening before, which made for a historic moment that Scherer and Sweet saw coming. Leading up to Biden’s decision to leave the race, Scherer saw advisors playing a private strategy that let Biden come on his own to the conclusion that Harris needed to be at the top of the Democratic ticket.

“The public had already left him even before the debate,” Scherer said, referencing Biden’s botched June 27 debate performance against Trump that panicked his base. “The reason to have that June debate was so he could get the public back and

jumpstart the campaign...It was a process of allowing him to get to that place.”

Taken together with Biden’s built-out campaign infrastructure, which Scherer said includes 180 field offices, 1500 people on the ground and tens of millions of dollars in the bank, Harris was the reasonable choice.

Speculation of Biden’s departure from the presidential race should be an object of study, Sweet added. She was surprised by what she considered fantasizing on behalf of political reporters.

“Our responsibility, writ large, as reporters, is to explain what’s going on,” Sweet said. “You needed to know before you wrote your story about an open primary or gave the people telling you this the time of day, you can’t start from scratch.”

Donald Trump has expressed his dissatisfaction with Harris’s newfound positive news coverage, and Sweet attributes it to three data points that he tracks: ratings, crowds and donations. She said he has been destabilized now that he is no longer the asymmetric candidate.

His struggle to remain on message, according to Scherer, is compounded by changes beyond the sudden shift to Harris as his opponent. He pointed out that the American people have changed.

“They kind of know the act now, and there is an act to it,” Scherer said. “One of the things the Trump campaign is struggling with right now is that he hasn’t figured out how to make the act fit this moment.”



Scherer and Cadelago said their news organizations and others have worked to learn lessons from the 2016 election about how they cover Donald Trump. His speeches are not always broadcasted live, and organizations have increased instant fact-checking.

Cadelago said media coverage is simultaneously impacted by the strategy of the Harris campaign. He noted that the campaign has so far preferred to limit its response to Donald Trump’s individual comments that can be seen as inflammatory for the Democratic Party.

“The calculation behind that is the more Democrats react with outrage to every comment, the more he controls the conversation,” Cadelago said. “They could be more playful and more dismissive.”

Looking ahead to the next major forecasted political event—the presidential debate between Trump and Harris on Tuesday, Sept. 10—Cadelago said the format will likely bring out more of her strengths while the Trump campaign is already dialing back expectations.

LATINO VOTERS. LATINO MEDIA.

Tuesday, August 20

WITH NANETTE BARRAGÁN, JENIFER FERNANDEZ ANCONA, SERGIO GARCÍA-RIOS, LEÓN KRAUZE, JENNIFER MEDINA, CARLOS ODIO, PAOLA RAMOS, SIMON ROSENBERG, JULIO VAQUEIRO



Latino voters are not a monolith or single-issue voting bloc, but instead a diverse and quickly electorate group. Speakers on the two-part discussion “Latino Voters. Latino Media.” analyzed the rising influence of Latino voters, discussing both voter trends and outreach methods for the Democratic Party.

The roundtable spanned two hours to accommodate a wide range of speakers, from pollsters to politicians. León Krauze, former Univisión anchor and a CCLP Senior Fellow, moderated the discussion. Participating in the discussion was U.S. Representative for California’s 44th Congressional District Nanette Barragán, Co-

Founder and Vice President Way to Win Jenifer Fernandez Ancona, Director of Polling and Data at Univisión News Sergio García-Rios, National Correspondent for The New York Times Jennifer Medina, Co-Founder of Equis Research Carlos Odio, TV Host and Correspondent for VICE Paola Ramos, Political Strategist Simon Rosenberg and Telemundo Anchor Julio Vaqueiro.

The day after Biden's announcement that he was stepping away from the presidential campaign, Odio directed his research and polling data company to test the favorability of Kamala Harris versus Donald Trump in the eyes of Latino voters. Whereas Biden was five points ahead of Trump, he found Harris was 19 points ahead. Immediately she picked up what Odio called "potential Biden defectors," as well as voters who disliked both original candidates.

All things being equal, Odio said Democrats have a built-in advantage among Latinos. Even so, poor messaging about policy wins and overlooking the need to prioritize Latino voters can cause that lead to slip, as it has been.

"There is a chunk of Latinos who are not incredibly partisan," Odio said. "They are swinging, they don't have a party attachment, and they tend to break for Democrats—all things being equal—but be open to individual Republicans in different contexts."

Trump has made inroads in the Latino electorate. García-Rios said those gains, which he averages at 35.7% of the electorate, are likely not going away. He dismisses the idea that the statistic is a sign Latinos are becoming more conservative overall.

"I'll say that's more of a sign of Democrats inability to maintain trust of Latinos," García-Rios said. "In part this is a reflection about how many



of the issues that affected the community were not issues that were the issues of Democrats or Republicans.”

Some of the largest issues mentioned during the roundtable were healthcare conversations beyond abortion services, public safety and immigration. After the shootings in El Paso (2019) and Uvalde (2022) that targeted Latinos, gun violence has also been a main concern.

Barragán, who chairs the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, has been traveling with U.S. representatives to growing Latino-populated areas to hear from residents and share about the accomplishments of the Biden-Harris Administration, such as the landmark gun safety legislation passed two years ago.

“I’m hearing many of the things Americans are hearing,” Barragán said. “What I say is Latino issues are American issues, and they’re the same issues. People want to wedge us into immigration. It’s not just that.”

Within the diversity of Latino voters, a divide largely prevails between new immigrants and people with a Latino background who have been settled for years or for generations in America. These settled voters are “questioning this theory of change” that Ramos said has been baked into Democratic politics. She said the anti-immigrant sentiment propagated by Trump and the GOP has been contagious.

“Even in this new slogan of ‘Latino-Americans for Trump,’ it’s no longer ‘Latinos for Trump,’” Ramos said. “It’s creating the illusion to Latinos who are criminalized by Trump that they are not the others, and that is really powerful.”

The top two priorities of the 2024 GOP platform

included shutting the U.S.-Mexico border to migrants and conducting mass deportations. Medina said Trump-supporting Latino voters may be ignorant of what mass deportation means, but they may also see themselves as immune from immigration sweeps.

“By definition, these people are all US citizens, so they feel safe and don’t think that anything Trump will do will affect them,” Medina said. “They don’t think they will be hurt. That’s a little bit hard to get your mind around because, for so long, many Latino leaders had imposed or tried to encourage solidarity. That doesn’t seem to be quite as salient as it was 20 years ago.”

Immigration is an especially complex issue. Fernandez Ancona recommended for Democratic politicians to excise language about the “border problem” or “border crisis” to avoid adding to dehumanizing narratives. Odio said to consider immigration as two issues—pathways for citizenship and demands for law and order—both of which are priorities for Latino voters.

The speakers agreed that Trump and Harris need to consider Latino voters as a central constituency in the upcoming election. Rosenberg sees support for Harris for her role serving the border state of California, home to large Hispanic and Latino populations. He said it has made Democrats more bold about talking about law and order, which voters are receptive to. He also credits her for transforming the Democratic Party into a digital-first party who now runs on love of country.

“We’re a patriotic party now,” Rosenberg said. “There’s no group of people in the country who are more patriotic and who love this country more than immigrants and Hispanic, in particular. I think that’s going to be another way for us to deepen our connections.”

With Harris, Fernandez Ancona sees additional promise in her economic messaging, which she said is similar to Biden's in emphasizing economic well being, tangible promises and neo-populism.

"I think it was a messenger problem," Fernandez Ancona said. "You can already see the trust gap tightening with Kamala Harris talking about very much the same exact policies that Biden had been running on."

Until the votes are counted on election night, the full impact of Harris's nomination within the Latino community remains unknown, but many speakers at the roundtable felt encouraged.

"I have to be optimistic, and I'll make sure our

party continues to message on the issues that our community cares about," Barragán said. "Seeing that we are the largest growing population, I think it's going to be key."

Vaqueiro said this election cycle feels different than other election cycles. He believes the numbers are there in significant numbers for Latino votes, but he remains unsure that either campaign fully grasps the diversity of the Latino electorate.

"Campaigns are realizing that Latinos matter, that Latino voters will make a big difference in swing states," Vaqueiro said. "But then again, I don't know if campaigns really understand who Latinos are."



WHY WOMEN MATTER

Tuesday, August 20

WITH MICHELE BRATCHER GOODWIN, CAROL JENKINS, KATHERINE SPILLAR, JENNIFER WEISS-WOLF



“You can’t have a democracy without women’s rights and you can’t have women’s rights without a democracy,” Executive Editor of Ms. Magazine Katherine Spillar told roundtable guests. “The two are interlinked, and we’re driving that message home.”

CCLP, in partnership with Ms. Magazine, hosted “Why Women Matter” with a panel of feminist leaders to focus attention on the role of women in politics, journalism and history. The roundtable was moderated by Jennifer Weiss-Wolf, executive director of the Birnbaum Women’s Leadership

Center at NYU Law. She was joined by Spillar, Linda D. & Timothy J. O’Neill Professor of Constitutional Law and Global Health Policy at Georgetown Law Michele Bratcher Goodwin and Chair of the ERA Coalition Carol Jenkins.

Ms. Magazine and its publisher Feminist Majority Foundation have been at the forefront of the drive to recognize the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The ERA guarantees legal gender equality, but it has been stopped from entering the Constitution by failing to make a disputed seven-year ratification deadline.

That is not stopping Spillar, Jenkins and ERA supporters.

“We’re already looking ahead,” Spillar said.

“What are we going to do when the ERA is in the Constitution to guarantee that Congress does its job to pass laws to implement the ERA? That is the key. We are exploring all aspects.”

After the Dobbs decision in 2022 overturned Roe v. Wade, abortion rights received renewed attention, which Goodwin said was much delayed. She had been warning of increasing abortion restrictions, including those that removed exceptions for rape and incest. For over a decade, she had been collecting stories and trends for her book, “Policing the Womb: Invisible Women and the Criminalization of Motherhood.”

“I’ve been saying that what has happened post-Dobbs is seeing blood on the tip of the arrow tossed at our democracy, the blood of women,” Goodwin said.

The campaign for abortion rights has resonated with voters. Before the 2022 midterm elections, Spillar commissioned a poll from Democratic strategist Celinda Lake, who found that women were as equally motivated by the economy as they were by abortion access. Spillar said this data point helped better predict voter behavior than traditional media sources, who warned of a “red wave” that ultimately did not happen.

The speakers compared feminist media and traditional media outlets, which they called “corporate” media. Those differences included media ownership and multilayered storytelling.

“We are constantly trying to get the corporate media to understand what’s going on because we have the depth and the knowledge and the history to know,” Spillar said.

Jenkins considered herself somewhere in between the two kinds of media as a self-described “old-school reporter.” Jenkins, an Emmy Award-winning former television journalist for WNBC, expressed concern that today’s journalists do not receive enough training on writing about classicism, racism, transphobia and other nationwide issues.

“As Gloria [Steinem] says, the reason we’re so crazy about the media is because if you’re not in the media, you’re not in the history books,” Jenkins said.

Turning to the 2024 election, she warned of impending attacks on Kamala Harris’s presidential campaign and asked guests in the room to understand it is “okay to be kind.”

“We’re entering a frightening period where people will be afraid to express their opinions, afraid to go to the polls, afraid that even if they do go, it’s not going to matter,” Jenkins said. “All of us need to be on the side of bravery.”



TWO PARTIES? FOUR PARTIES? INTRAPARTY DISSENT IN 2024

Wednesday, August 21

**WITH LAUREN HARPER POPE, PATRICK MURPHY,
CRAIG SNYDER**



Beyond unifying behind presidential nominee Kamala Harris, Democratic representatives speaking on “Two Parties? Four Parties? Intraparty Dissent in 2024” explored what it means to be a Democrat today.

This was the second part of a discussion started at the RNC and moderated by Penn Annenberg’s Craig Snyder. At the RNC, Snyder invited speakers to characterize the disconnect between MAGA and anti-Trump Republicans. Now at the DNC, conversation turned toward the division between left-wing and center-leaning Democrats.

Snyder was interested in asking if America has de facto developed into four parties. He was in conversation with Co-Founder of WelcomePAC Lauren Harper Pope and former Congressman Patrick Murphy.

Snyder opened the discussion by quizzing Pope and Murphy on a series of deliberately provocative questions. For each one, he wanted to know: does a Democrat have to believe this? He asked about the existential threat of climate change, abortion, fracking, equity, gender-affirming care and supporting Israel.



that they cause visceral reactions.

She said concepts like freedom and liberty, which tend to appeal to both conservatives and liberals, make for a better message.

“Let’s get rid of the words that aren’t working,” Pope said. “If the goal is to actually get things done, then I don’t think that we need to wrap it up into a bow that has a lot of bad vibes on it.”

To the first question about climate change, Pope and Murphy gave opposite answers. Pope agreed that Democrats need to recognize climate change as an existential threat, while Murphy said on this topic he does not need to see beliefs.

“My short answer is no, as long as you’re pushing what it needs to solve that problem if it wasn’t a threat,” Murphy said. “If you’re there talking about how the next generation of jobs are green energy, ability to invest in solar energy, wind power, geothermal, I think it’s fine.”

Pope and Murphy reached a similar answer rejecting the need for a Democrat to adopt a position allowing abortions beyond 15 weeks, but they revealed opposite approaches. Pope said she is much more pro-life than she is pro-choice and explained the Democratic Party will have to make concessions to win over similar voters. Murphy is a devout Catholic and pro-choice. He has seen pro-life Democrats nonetheless cut down on abortion rates by offering proactive reproductive services, such as birth control pills.

To the question about equality versus equity, Pope countered with the idea of justice. To her, words like “equity” and “DEI” have become so loaded

One difference between equity and equality is that, according to Murphy, Democrats will not get elected if they do not believe in equality. He considers two institutions as the mainstays pushing America toward justice. The first are small business owners. The second is the military, which he said democratized education with the GI bill, desegregated earlier than the South and made strides to catch up in protecting LGBTQ rights.

Pope said the Democratic coalition strategy over the next three months, up to and through the Nov. 5 presidential election, should be to hold basic conversations about values. Both Pope and Murphy touched on how Democrats have historically struggled to talk the language of values, compassion and pathos, in comparison to policy issues. She said the aim is to win over voters by building trust and delivering a feeling that their votes were earned.

“If the Democratic party is going to be the party that is restorative and healing for our nation, we have to permit nuance,” Pope said. “You should not have a purity test for the only party that’s really actively working to protect the things that we hold valuable here in our country and the interest of individuals themselves.”

AN AMERICAN PLAN FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Wednesday, August 21

**WITH JIM STEYER, ROSARIO DAWSON,
JOHN DELLA VOLPE**



The family agenda and power of youth are much more powerful than politicians understand, according to activists and researchers speaking on the roundtable “An American Plan for Families and Children.”

Common Sense Media, the leading source of entertainment and technology recommendations for families, co-presented the panel. Its founder and CEO Jim Steyer acted as moderator. Speakers included actress and political activist Rosario Dawson and Director of Polling at the Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics John Della Volpe.

Steyer laid the groundwork for the discussion with a five-point agenda for families and kids. The priorities were 1) investing in early childhood health and care, 2) reforming and investing in K-12 education, 3) increasing family income and support, 4) providing youth mental health and 5) reining in social media companies. For the last point, Steyer said Common Sense Media is finally seeing big wins, but they are without the help of Congress.

“Because Congress is so dysfunctional, they have not passed a law related to technology in 25 years,” Steyer said.

All speakers placed hope in the youngest generation, Gen Z, that is coming of age into the American voting electorate. Della Volpe estimated that Gen Z in combination with millennials will make up roughly 40% of all votes in the coming election. And no two generations have shared the same set of values than these two generations. Many members of Gen Z attended the conversation from Penn, USC and Harvard.

“There is much more political power in this room than many of you students may appreciate,” Della Volpe said.

According to Della Volpe’s survey data, Gen Z seems to be united across partisan lines in terms of their key concerns, from preserving access to clean air and water to reducing gun violence in schools. He considers these concerns as basic rights that older generations took for granted.

The replacement of President Joe Biden with the younger Vice President has reinvigorated the youth vote in ways that Dawson sees as unprecedented. Dawson co-founded Voto Latino 20 years ago to encourage young Latinx voters to register and plan to vote. This election cycle, Voto Latino has so far registered over 97,000 voters, which Dawson said represents a big uptick not usually seen before conventions.

“One of the big issues when you’re talking about not seeing enough young people in positions of power is that their elders are not retiring, and there’s not upward mobility for that,” Dawson said. “This was an opportunity that we just saw of pressure being put on by particularly young people who demanded a change, and it got answered.”

She warned not to take this enthusiasm for granted. There are many hurdles to voting,



including disinformation, misleading ballot measures and voter suppression. To fight back, she said to practice one-on-one conversations.

Della Volpe warned that young people also generally lacked knowledge of their own impact. He listed legislative achievements and battleground wins that were secured with the help of young people, such as the Inflation Reduction Act, which served as the largest climate package in history.

The Harris campaign has been inviting content creators, many of whom are young, to the Democratic National Convention to witness political history and start conversations within their own communities. Dawson applauded the move to let young people become conduits of information themselves, which she said is oftentimes more engaging for them than celebrity statements or traditional media coverage.

“It shows again the very forward thinking of this particular administration in welcoming young people into the conversation early,” Dawson said. “These are the folks that we’re not just hoping are going to be voting for the change, but that they’re actually going to be leading that change: running for office themselves, stepping into those positions of media and hopefully transforming politics.”

A CONVERSATION WITH CELINDA LAKE

Wednesday, August 21

**WITH CELINDA LAKE, MARJORIE MARGOLIES,
KATHERINE SPILLAR**



Celinda Lake, one of the Democratic Party's leading pollsters, mapped out the data that makes up Vice President Kamala Harris's demographic blueprint for success. From the top of the ticket to the majority of the party base, women will drive the Democrats' strategy to win the White House.

Lake was the spotlight of a lunchtime conversation moderated by Katherine Spillar, executive editor of Ms. Magazine. They were joined by Penn lecturer Marjorie Margolies.

The "secret formula" of success in 2024, Lake

said, is for Harris to win women by more than she loses men. Polling shows the traditional gender gap widening dramatically, in part due to Harris's historic candidacy, but also because she champions abortion rights against increasing Republican-led restrictions.

Lake said voters are about 10% more pro-abortion than before. Although she noted Republicans have tried to mute their opposition to abortion, about 75% of voters are convinced Donald Trump will install a national abortion ban for political reasons.



She said abortion is an especially strong campaign issue when viewed in connection to the economy.

“We know younger women also know that women’s rights and abortion are very strongly tied to economic well being,” Lake said. “They understand intersectionality. How can you thrive economically if you don’t have control of your own reproductive choices and your own body?”

Spillar advocated for politicians to run on a combination platform of abortion rights and support for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Last year, she asked Lake to run the numbers on the ERA, and results reflected huge support.

There is also a sense that the ERA is an old issue without real political consequence, which Spillar said is far from the truth. She considers abortion protections and the ERA as mutually supportive, which is a message she is taking to Congress.

“We are hoping it can happen this session,” Spillar said. “If not this session, it should be in the hundred day agenda of the Harris administration.”

It is complicated to gauge men’s support for Harris, according to Lake. Black men have shown enthusiasm, but, in general, men are easily susceptible to disinformation, which has been amplified on the basis of Harris’s identity as a woman of color. On the whole, men are receptive to populous economics, which Lake said is a

strength of Harris’s campaign.

Lake said the Democratic Party had overlooked opportunities for outreach with unmarried women under 55—one of the few groups of white women who vote net Democratic—and lesbian and transgender women, who are one of the most pro-choice groups of women.

Margolies brought in an international perspective from her decades-long career in journalism, Congress and Women's Campaign International (WCI). As WCI’s founding president, Margolies has traveled worldwide to promote the importance of electing women. At trainings, she works to empower women interested in public careers.

“Women all around the world apologize often or they marginalize what they are about to say. Every place in the world,” Margolies said.

When women defer to their husbands, Lake said they may be intimidated to change their vote to match. Mail-in voting opens the opportunity for spouses to compare ballots, unlike in-person voting with secret ballots.

“We’re pushing vote by mail and early vote because it increases democratic participation. But in doing that, we have to empower women to have their own way of doing things,” Lake said. “One of the things to say to them is, vote on your own schedule.”

GEN Z AND THE 2024 ELECTION

Thursday, August 22

WITH JOHN DELLA VOLPE, DAVID HOGG, JIM STEYER, MICHAEL TUBBS



The values of America's youngest voters are widely aligned, and speakers came together to discuss how to drive their participation in the 2024 election and make change in policy debates and presidential elections.

"Gen Z and the 2024 Election," a roundtable moderated by Common Sense Media CEO Jim Steyer, featured Founder of Leaders We Deserve David Hogg, formerly the youngest mayor in America Michael Tubbs and Director of Polling at the Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics John Della Volpe.

Della Volpe started the discussion by emphasizing the impact of young people in American democracy. As a pollster for the 2020 Biden presidential campaign, he said in the five states that flipped red to blue in 2020, there was a 20-point average margin in voters under 30 years old. That statistic, plus record turnout, contributed to the winning margins.

"We live in a different and better country because of the efforts of Gen Z," Della Volpe said. "Donald Trump would be president today without young voters."

From watching his father with Parkinson's disease struggle with healthcare access to living through the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, where a gunman killed 17 of his teachers and classmates, Hogg told guests he had every reason to lose faith in this country. Many members of Gen Z report a high degree of hopelessness and apathy towards politics. But Hogg, a member of Gen Z, considered that attitude a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In the wake of Parkland, Hogg and other survivors successfully lobbied Florida's legislature to raise the gun buying age to 21 and to disarm individuals who pose harm to themselves or others, which is known as the red flag law. Since Parkland, the red flag law has been used 12,000 times and no school shootings have happened in Florida.

"The reason we were able to make it possible is because we believed that change was possible," Hogg said. "We had the one thing that so many people didn't, which was the belief that it was actually possible to have a government that represents us and not the NRA."

The panel touched on how young people have occupied public office, including Tubbs and David Hogg's colleague, Rep. Maxwell Frost. Tubbs, a senior fellow at CCLP, became America's youngest mayor in 2016 by being elected mayor of Stockton at age 26, and Frost was the first member of Gen Z in Congress.

"For me as a millennial, Gen Z has been very instructive because so much of the narrative is about vibes and memes, but for me, what Gen Z really represents is values," Tubbs said. "Part of what's inspiring for me is that they don't create any of these problems, but they're on the front lines of actually solving them."

According to research from FutureVoice, a

nonprofit co-founded by Della Volpe and Steyer, about 15% of young voters ("civic youth") are participating in elections and immersed in the political sphere. There are four other attitudinal segments within Gen Z: "cynical ones," "unmoved," "show me" and "teach me." Della Volpe believes the last two groups, which represent roughly 25% of the generation, hold the greatest promise for effective targeted communications that urge voters to show up on Election Day.

"Kamala Harris is up by a couple of points. In some of the battleground youth polls I've done, I've seen a 13 point shift in the last three weeks," Della Volpe said. "A lot of that is responsible for tightening the polls and Harris leading. That's the political effect and impact of Gen Z."

The right kind of messaging—one that is authentic, but persuasive—is critical to influence Gen Z voters. Hogg recommended the strategy that Harris's campaign has picked up on recently to bring joy and humor back into politics.

"We have to produce funny content that will first get their attention, but then say a real message to them, where we have thousands of soft touches," Hogg said.

Steyer said the call for joy, which was repeated throughout the week's Democratic National Convention, is particularly persuasive in light of the national mental health youth crisis. He sees young kids and young adults who are reeling from political polarization and poor examples of leadership, which he said are displayed on both sides of the aisle. He believes optimism is needed.

"I actually think you're watching, here in Chicago, the message change," Steyer said. "It's why they're talking about joy, and it's that simple. It's something to believe in."

A CONVERSATION WITH HARRY LITMAN

Thursday, August 22

WITH GEOFFREY COWAN, HARRY LITMAN



In a surprise for guests, “Talking Feds” podcast host Harry Litman stopped by The Annenberg Roundtables to offer his insights into Kamala Harris’s track record as a California prosecutor. He spoke in conversation with CCLP Director Geoffrey Cowan.

Litman noted that the Harris campaign has, for now, led with her identity as a prosecutor. Coming out of the DNC, he predicted the Trump campaign to attempt to hold her background against her.

“It’s a battle of two prosecutors, both named Kamala Harris,” Litman said. “You’re going to have Trump disparaging—hyperbolically and

sometimes falsely—her role and record, and Harris herself on the other side.”

Litman characterized her legal record as down the middle. He said she appeared intent on enforcing criminal justice and conscious about resisting a progressive bent to her tenure. She still adopted progressive policies, such as coming out against cash bail and the death penalty.

“The truth is, as a DA and an AG, she was pretty hard-nosed. The felony conviction rate went up from 51% to 72%,” Litman said. “On the other hand, she had very important, and still is very important, progressive sides of her as a prosecutor.”

DOES AMERICA NEED A LANDSLIDE?

Thursday, August 22

**WITH AL HUNT, MARJORIE MARGOLIES, PATRICK
MURPHY, CRAIG SNYDER**



Landslide elections occurred in the 20th century. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan coasted to the White House with roughly 60% of the popular vote. Those numbers seem impossible now, according to speakers on Penn Annenberg's second branded panel "Does America Need a Landslide?," but that does not stop landslide victories from being desired.

"We're overdue for a landslide and that's what we're talking about," Marjorie Margolies, who heads the Penn Annenberg team, said.

Margolies was joined in conversation by Penn

lecturer Craig Snyder, former Congressman Patrick Murphy and former Washington Editor of Bloomberg News Al Hunt.

The speakers were under no illusions about the polarization dividing America. Snyder walked guests through each election in the past two decades. He pointed out how the popular vote increasingly stabilized between the political parties, reflecting the disappearance of a coalition representing a broad majority of Americans. Snyder acted as moderator for the panel, filling in last minute for David Eisenhower, another leader of the Penn Annenberg team.

“We’re now down to the president being picked by half the states, being rejected by the other half the states,” Snyder said. “We are very far from landslide territory. The question that David has posed for us for consideration is, do we need a landslide?”

Murphy agrees with the premise that a landslide would be healing, especially considering how recent tight elections have empowered members of the Republican Party to attempt to invalidate results, such as the insurrection attempt on January 6, 2021. He said a landslide victory for the Harris-Walz ticket would send a welcoming message to Republicans who are disgruntled with Donald Trump.

The reasons a landslide victory is unlikely are numerous, but Murphy highlighted one such reason that happened on Friday, Aug. 23: third-party presidential candidate Robert Kennedy’s endorsement of Donald Trump.

“Might be a point or two, but it will make a

difference,” Murphy said.

Hunt said a landslide is unlikely in his lifetime. He brought up how even the best performing Democrats in red areas, like Governor Roy Cooper from North Carolina, failed to notch a 55% majority vote. He nevertheless remains optimistic, including when examining polling data for close Senate races in Ohio, Pennsylvania and even Texas, where he sees a “ghost of a chance” of picking up a Democratic Senate seat, that the Democrats can win over undecided minds.

The 2024 election will not be a “slam dunk,” Hunt cautioned guests, but he would rather have Harris’s odds than Trump’s. If the race comes down to a handful of votes and a small margin of victory, as many pollsters predict, he looked to recent history for good news.

“Joe Biden did a pretty goddamn good job, barely getting in and having a majority of one in the Senate and four or five in the House,” Hunt said. “You can get things done if you have the skill.”



CCLP AT THE ANNENBERG ROUNDTABLE



AND INSIDE THE RNC CONVENTION HALL



Thanks to friends, former colleagues and its commitment to journalism, CCLP staff received passes for all days of the DNC.

After each day's Annenberg Roundtable conversations, CCLP staff attended the DNC (as well as related events around Chicago).



CCLP represented the Trojans inside the convention hall.