

'Republicans for Harris' launches with Illinois GOPers Jim Edgar, Ray LaHood, Adam Kinzinger, Joe Walsh endorsing Kamala Harris

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Aiming to woo [GOP voters](#) who reject Donald Trump, the Kamala Harris campaign on Sunday launched “Republicans for Harris” that includes politicians from Illinois like former Gov. Jim Edgar, former Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, and ex-Reps. Adam Kinzinger and Joe Walsh.

Vice President Harris’ campaign said the “campaign within a campaign” will send GOP endorsers on the road, kick off on-the-ground organizing efforts, and use paid ads “to reach, persuade, and mobilize Republican voters.”

The effort to target GOP voters — especially those in battleground states who backed former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley’s Republican primary bid — had already started before President Joe Biden announced July 21 to not seek another term and Harris quickly locked in the support to become the presumptive Democratic nominee.

The Illinois four and the others might appeal to various persuadable Republicans who are not part of the Trump MAGA movement.

Edgar and LaHood have strong reputations as moderates, with LaHood serving as Transportation Secretary under President Barack Obama. Conservatives Kinzinger and Walsh are among the nation’s most outspoken Trump critics, warning that democracy is at stake if he returns to the Oval Office.

LaHood is an example of the Republican house divided. His son, Rep. Darin LaHood, R-Ill., is a Trump supporter who attended the GOP convention in Milwaukee last month.

Republicans for Harris start blitzing crucial swing states Monday. As part of the drive, some will also join Harris with her newly minted vice presidential pick at a rally Tuesday in Philadelphia and stump with the ticket in the battleground state events this week.

Illinois, as a reliable Democratic presidential state since 1992, will not see any of this action.

Kinzinger [endorsed the Biden-Harris ticket](#) June 27, hours before the debate in which Biden’s disastrous performance set the stage for him to fold his candidacy.

Kinzinger said in a statement backing Harris, “As a proud conservative, I never thought I’d be endorsing a Democrat for President. But I know Vice President Harris will defend our democracy and ensure Donald Trump never returns to the White House.”

Kinzinger, one of two Republicans on the House Jan. 6 committee investigating the attack on the Capitol intended to prevent Biden from becoming president, said

Trump “poses a direct threat to fundamental American values. He only cares about himself, and his pursuit of power. That’s what we saw on January 6 when he sent a mob to overturn our lawful election, who violently attacked law enforcement and ransacked our nation’s Capitol in the process.

“There’s too much at stake to sit on the sidelines, which is why I wholeheartedly endorse Kamala Harris for President. Now is the time for us all to unite to save our democracy and defeat Donald Trump one last time.”

Walsh, who ran against Trump in the 2020 GOP primary, said in a statement, “I am proud to be part of the Republicans for Harris program to ensure those in the party of Lincoln who are disgusted by the extremism, by the hatred, and by the lies put forth by Donald Trump, know that they have a place in this campaign, and can join me in voting for Vice President Harris this November.”

Part of the outreach to disillusioned GOP voters is using high-level veterans of the Trump White House — those who know him best — and their warnings that he should not get another term. Those voices were included in a digital ad released last month titled “Unfit.”

The Harris campaign, mapping out the program for the [Democratic convention](#) that kicks off Aug. 19 in Chicago, wants to feature Republicans who are making the case to vote for Harris. It’s still being determined who those speakers will be.

Harris’ national director of Republican outreach, Austin Weatherford, a former chief of staff to Kinzinger when he was in Congress, said in a statement, “Trump’s MAGA extremism is toxic to the millions of Republicans who no longer believe the party of Donald Trump represents their values and will vote against him again in November.

“Donald Trump said he doesn’t want these voters, but Vice President Harris and our campaign are working overtime to earn the support of my fellow Republicans who care about defending democracy and restoring decency — all of which would be torn away in a second Trump presidency.”

Republicans for Harris endorsers also include former Trump White House officials Stephanie Grisham and Olivia Troye; former Obama administration Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel; former Govs. Bill Weld of Massachusetts and Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey; and Mesa, Arizona, Mayor John Giles.

According to invitations obtained by the Sun-Times, on Monday, Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear is scheduled to headline a Chicago fundraiser to benefit the Harris presidential campaign. Beshear is in the running for vice president. Among the co-hosts for the Joint Action Committee for Political Affairs event: Christie Hefner, Hon. Fay Hartog-Levin, Marcia Balonick, Julia Stasch, Elisa Harris, Gila Bronner and Gordon Segal.

Second gentleman Emhoff hits the area Aug. 14 for at least two events, one in Chicago and another in Glencoe.

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/elections/2024/08/04/republicans-kamala-harris-launches-illinois-gopers-edgar-lahood-kinzinger-walsh-politicians-endorsement>