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News, Research and Events

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Election 2020: Kamala Harris is Joe Biden's choice for VP. How will the next 90 days unfold?

In a new [Baker Institute Blog post](#), political science fellow [Mark P. Jones](#) offers insights on what to expect in the race between Donald Trump and Joe Biden, including Kamala Harris' impact on the campaign, which states will be major battlegrounds and more. Read an excerpt from the Q&A below.

Will Kamala Harris' presence on the ticket make a difference in November?

Normally a presidential candidate's choice of a running mate has little effect on the actual outcome of the election, but this year is expected to be different. Biden's age, combined with concerns about his current cognitive abilities, could result in Harris either assuming office at some point during Biden's first term, if he is incapacitated, and/or being the Democratic Party's presidential nominee in 2024. As a result, we should expect higher scrutiny of her ability to serve as president by both the media and the Republican Party. That reality perhaps influenced Biden's choice of Harris, since her political resume and gravitas make it easy to imagine her as the president of the United States.

Will Biden's lead in the polls last?

We should expect Biden's lead over Trump to narrow. At some point, Biden will have to leave his basement and face the media and public in a much less controlled and scripted manner than has been the case over the past few months. And, as much as many in the media want to see Trump defeated, all professional journalists will do their best to provide balanced coverage, which will involve analyzing and discussing Biden's gaffes on the campaign trail, any signs that his cognitive abilities are deficient and any issues related to Harris. These matters, and the extent to which the economy strengthens and Covid-19 weakens between now and November, will affect the size of Biden's lead.

Jones answers more questions about the election at the [Baker Institute Blog](#).

“[The federal debt] is not just going to disappear on its own. At some point, we’re going to have to raise taxes or make some painful spending cuts to balance the budget.”

Jorge Barro, Fellow in Public Finance,
to [The New York Times](#)



How mass incarceration affects women

More than one million women come into contact with the criminal justice system each year in the United States. Currently and formerly incarcerated women often face many challenges — including in health, employment and housing — and additional hardships may be placed on their loved ones. To explore ways to address these problems, [Quanta Moore](#), fellow in child health policy, hosted a webinar with [Brittany Barnett](#), an attorney, author and social entrepreneur, [Jennifer Herring](#), director of reentry services at the Harris County Sheriff's Office, and [Nadine Scamp](#), CEO of Santa Maria Hostel in Houston.

Barnett's experience of having a mother in prison motivated her to found The Buried Alive Project, which seeks to reform federal drug laws, and Girls Embracing Mothers, dedicated to empowering girls with mothers in prison. The Santa Maria Hostel also helps women to lead healthy, fulfilling lives after their release by providing housing support, life skills education and more.

Herring discussed how the Harris County Jail is coping with the Covid-19 crisis. Currently, the priority is to prevent the spread of disease and to keep the incarcerated population low. Like the other speakers, Herring emphasized that Covid-19 is amplifying many of the systemic issues that existed prior to the pandemic. For example, due to the current state of the economy, access to adequate housing and employment has worsened for former inmates.

All three speakers highlighted the importance of policies and legislation that support the humanity of women prisoners, and their ability to lead stable and productive lives after their release. To hear more about the proposed policy changes, watch the full webinar on the [event page](#).

Upcoming Events

Webinar — Schools and Covid-19: When to return to normal? This webinar, held earlier today, featured [Peter Hotez](#), fellow in disease and poverty, and [Zeph Capo](#), the president of the Houston Federation of Teachers, who discussed what schools should do to keep students and teachers safe. **August 13 | Noon**

Webinar: The continuing saga of petroleum in 2020. Following a price war and a pandemic-induced demand shock, oil prices have seen unprecedented volatility this year. At this webinar, experts from the [Center for Energy Studies](#) explore these uncertainties and the implications for future market balance. **August 14 | 3:00 pm**

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Rice University, MS-40, P.O. Box 1892, Houston, TX 77251-189214