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By Jill Colvin and Jeff Martin

‘Trump is in the past’: Mounting losses show limits of power

«Трамп у минулому»: зростаючі втрати показують межі влади

Бувший президент США Дональд Трамп розпочав травень, піднявши відстаючого кандидата в Сенат в Огайо до номінації від республіканців, що, здавалося б, закріпило статус колишнього президента як можливої кандидатури в Білий дім. Однак він закінчує місяць, страждаючи від низки поразок, які свідчать про зниження його впливу. Д. Трамп зіткнувся з серією невдач на первинних виборах, оскільки виборці відкинули його спроби позбутися двох головних цілей для відплати: губернатора Джорджії і державного секретаря, обидва з яких свого часу відкинули надзвичайний тиск Д. Трампа з вимогою скасувати результати президентських виборів 2020 року. Але масштаб поразки в перегонях губернатора — понад 50 % — був особливо приголомшливим і викликав питання про те, чи не починають виборці-республіканці відходити від Д. Трампа. Рух «Зроби Америку знову великою», який очолював Д. Трамп, нікуди не дінеться. Але виборці все більш голосно кажуть, що майбутнє партії — це щось більше, ніж Д. Трамп.

<https://apnews.com/article/2022-midterm-elections-ohio-georgia-government-and-politics-presidential-5c12a4799de80ddd40a8e2e7cd8d6955>



Former President Donald Trump speaks at a rally at the Delaware County Fairgrounds, April 23, 2022, in Delaware, Ohio. With Trump focused on solidifying his reputation as a GOP kingmaker ahead of another potential presidential run, some allies say the Ohio victory could encourage him to step up his involvement in other bitter primary fights from Arizona to Missouri. (AP Photo/Joe Maiorana, File)

WOODSTOCK, Ga. (AP) — [Donald Trump](#) opened May by lifting a [trailing Senate candidate in Ohio](#) to the Republican nomination, seemingly cementing the former president’s kingmaker status before another possible White House run. He’s ending the month, however, stinging from a [string of defeats](#) that suggest a diminishing stature.

Trump faced a [series of setbacks](#) in Tuesday’s primary elections as voters rejected his efforts to unseat two top targets for retribution: Georgia’s Republican governor and secretary of state, both of whom rebuffed Trump’s extraordinary pressure to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. But the magnitude of defeat in the governor’s race — more than 50 percentage points

— was especially stunning and raised questions about whether Republican voters are beginning to move on from Trump.

Nearly seven years after the onetime reality television star launched what seemed to be an improbable campaign for the White House, the “Make America Great Again” movement Trump helmed isn’t going anywhere. But voters are increasingly vocal in saying that the party’s future is about more than Trump.

“I like Trump a lot, but Trump is in the past,” said David Butler of Woodstock, Georgia, who voted for Gov. Brian Kemp on Tuesday and said Trump’s endorsements had “no” impact “whatsoever” on his thinking.

It was the same for Will Parbhoo, a 22-year-old dental assistant who also voted for Kemp.

“I’m not really a Trumper,” he said after voting. “I didn’t like him to begin with. With all the election stuff, I was like ‘Dude, move on.’”

One thing Parbhoo liked about the current governor? “Kemp is focused on Georgia,” he said.

Trump sought to play down the losses by his favored candidates, saying on his social media platform Wednesday that he had a “very big and successful evening of political Endorsements” and insisting some races “were not possible to win.”

Still, the pattern of high-profile defeats is hard to ignore.

After JD Vance vaulted from third to first place following Trump’s late-stage endorsement in the Ohio Senate primary, the dynamics took a turn. Trump’s pick in Nebraska’s primary for governor, Charles Herbster, [lost his race](#) after [allegations surfaced that he had groped women](#).



In Idaho a week later, [the governor beat a Trump-backed challenger](#). In North Carolina, [voters rebuffed Trump’s plea to give a scandal-plagued congressman a second chance](#). And in Pennsylvania, a [marquee Senate primary](#) featuring Trump-endorsed celebrity heart surgeon Mehmet Oz remains too close to call.

But his biggest upset was in Georgia, a crucial swing state, where former Sen. David Perdue, whom Trump had lobbied to run and helped clear the field for, lost to Kemp. The governor was among Trump’s top targets after he refused to overturn the results of the 2020 White House election in his state.

Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, who defied Trump's call to "find" the votes to change the outcome two years ago — a call that is [now under investigation](#) — also won his party's nomination. Attorney General Chris Carr and Insurance Commissioner John King — both opposed by Trump — were also successful in their primaries.

In Alabama, Rep. Mo Brooks, whose Senate endorsement [Trump rescinded as he struggled to gain traction](#), made it to [a runoff](#), having gained support after Trump dropped him.

Trump has endorsed in nearly 200 races, from governor to county commissioner, often inserting himself into contests that aren't particularly competitive and helping bolster his compilation of wins. Some of his work, even in races with multiple candidates, has paid off.

His early support helped football great [Herschel Walker](#) and Rep. Ted Budd sail to their respective Senate primary nominations in Georgia and North Carolina. [Sarah Huckabee Sanders](#), Trump's former press secretary, easily won the GOP nomination for governor in Arkansas. And even in Georgia, all of the candidates Trump endorsed in open races won or will head to runoffs.

Some allies say Trump's endorsement tally is a poor measure of his influence, even if Trump constantly promotes that record.

They argue that voters may support the former president and be eager for him to run again, but may not be persuaded by his selections, especially in races with governors such as Kemp who have long histories with voters. And even without Trump on the ballot, the party has been transformed in Trump's image, with candidates adopting his "America First" platform, mimicking his tactics and parroting his lies about a stolen election.

But with Trump out of office and relegated to posting on his own social media platform, other voices are beginning to fill the void. Fox News host Tucker Carlson, the most watched personality on cable television, has become a driving ideological force in the party. Republicans such as the conspiracy-embracing [Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene](#), who won her party's nomination for reelection Tuesday, have taken up his mantle in Washington.

Meanwhile, potential presidential rivals to Trump are waiting in the wings for 2024.

[Former Vice President Mike Pence](#), who has been distancing himself from Trump, rallied with Kemp in suburban Atlanta on Monday evening and told the crowd that "elections are about the future" — an implicit knock on his former boss.

Trump has also spawned a new generation of candidates who have channeled his "MAGA" brand, but who have done so independent of his support and see themselves as its next iteration.

"MAGA doesn't belong to him," Kathy Barnette, the Pennsylvania Senate candidate whose late-stage surge stunned party insiders, said in an interview. "Trump coined the word. He does not own it."

While the left, she said, may see the "MAGA movement" as a "cult of Trump voters," she said it goes far beyond one man. She argued that Trump had succeeded in 2016 because he aligned himself with voters' concerns and said out loud what people were already thinking, particularly on immigration. She said she tried in her race to do the same.

"I do believe Trump has an important voice still," she added, but "he needs to get better advisers, and in addition to that, he needs to do better himself in remembering why we aligned with him."

And it wasn't because we were aligning with his values. It was because he was aligning with our values. And I think he needs to remember that so that his voice can remain relevant."

Other Republicans grouse that precious time and money have been wasted on an ego-driven Trump vengeance campaign, forcing incumbents to defend themselves in primaries rather than focus on general elections. They worry Trump has elevated some candidates who may prove unelectable in the November general election and has exacerbated divisions.

"There's no question unnecessary fights with kind of the extremes of the party, of Trump's grievance party, have made it more difficult for us to win in November," said Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, a potential 2024 GOP presidential candidate who has been working to protect incumbent governors.

Hogan, a Trump critic, said that, so far, the races have "been a bit of a mixed bag,"

"We're in the middle of a battle for the soul of the Republican Party and quite frankly the battle's not over yet," he said. "I don't think we can say exactly what the outcome is yet. And I think we still have many more primaries to go."

Others are more confident in saying Trump's power has diminished over time.

"The Trump endorsement is helpful but it is not something that by itself can put anyone over the top. And that means it's less powerful than it was when he was president and it seemed like a fait accompli when he endorsed," said Mike DuHaime, a longtime GOP strategist.

Still, he acknowledged that Trump is "still the most influential person in the party," even if that influence has waned.

Colvin reported from New York.