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By [Kate Bennett](#), CNN

Joe and Jill's long summer

Довге літо Джо та Джилл

Це літо не було легким для президента США Джо Байдена, і ніхто не відчуває цього більше, ніж Джилл Байден, пише журналістка CNN. Його результати опитувань похмурі, демократи хвилюються про проміжні вибори, критики нападають на його похилий вік, а потім — на додачу до всього — він підхопив Covid-19, що ізолює його від людини, яка приносить йому найбільше комфорту. Байдени, одружені 45 років, не люблять залишати один одного довше, ніж на пару днів. Літо Джилл Байден, яка залишалася в Делавері протягом останніх 12 днів, також пройшло не так, як планувалося. Незважаючи на те, що перша леді часто спілкується з президентом, вона тримається подалі від Білого дому і не бачила свого чоловіка особисто з 20 липня. Перша леді стурбована наслідками пандемії та війни в Україні для її чоловіка, а також тим, як її чоловік поводить себе особисто.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/08/04/politics/jill-biden-joe-biden-summer/index.html>



President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden walk out of the White House on July 4, 2022 in Washington.

(CNN) This summer has not been an easy one for President Joe Biden, and no one feels [that more than Jill Biden](#).

His polling numbers are bleak, Democrats fret about the midterms, critics attack his advanced age, and then -- on top of everything -- he caught Covid-19, keeping him from the person who brings him the most comfort.

Sequestered in Delaware for the last 12 days, Jill Biden's summer has not gone [exactly as planned either](#). Though in frequent contact with the President, the first lady is staying away from the White House and has not seen her husband in person since July 20. She had been scheduled to meet up with him over the weekend in Wilmington, but the rebound of his illness kept the couple apart -- something the Bidens, married 45 years, do not like to be for more than a couple of days, if they can help it.

One person with knowledge of Biden's agenda and state of mind tells CNN the first lady is [concerned about the effects of the pandemic](#) and [the war in Ukraine have had on her husband](#),

and how her husband carries himself personally. Biden's communications director Elizabeth Alexander tells CNN the first lady feels those challenges, and "how he continues to meet the moment with courage."



[President's granddaughter announces White House wedding ceremony set for South Lawn](#)

The President has scored big wins over the past week. His administration announced its successful operation [to kill Ayman al-Zawahiri](#), a mastermind of the September 11 terror attacks, on Monday. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Sen. Joe Manchin reached a breakthrough that could deliver on some of Biden's biggest campaign promises, on climate change and prescription drug pricing in particular. And Congress has passed other bills in recent weeks that have registered as major legislative wins for the President, including on gun policy and much-needed semiconductors.

But Biden's abysmal approval ratings are raising questions about whether he will, or should, run for reelection in 2024, a daunting task the White House insists is in the plans. At the same time, Biden's son [Hunter remains under investigation by the Department of Justice](#) -- a long-running probe that CNN has previously reported appears to be nearing a [critical juncture](#).

A campaign is a heavy lift that not everyone in the family longs for, say two people with knowledge of internal family conversations. The summer has been difficult.

"(The first lady) feels what he's going through deeply," one of the people with knowledge of the Bidens' relationship told CNN.

Jill Biden had been trying to stay closer to home. In late July, she was supposed to go on a long-awaited, planned trip to Africa. But the home front was calling. Problems and crises were mounting, headlines were negative, kitchen-table issues still a struggle.



[First on CNN: Jill Biden's press secretary leaving White House](#)

She pulled the plug on Africa to stay in Delaware, telling aides she just was not feeling the policy impact hit right and the timing was off. CNN spoke with multiple people with knowledge of the first lady's schedule and state of mind for this story, under condition of anonymity to protect their professional and personal relationships. Several were involved in planning the foreign travel, then putting the kibosh on it.

Lately, on summer break from teaching duties at a Northern Virginia Community College, Jill Biden had cropped up by Biden's side even more, and vice versa. She was with him at the White House's congressional picnic; present for the Medal of Honor ceremony; bestowing a peck on the

lips in front of cameras at Fourth of July festivities. She huddled with him, alone, in the garden next to the East Wing before he left for a recent day trip and waited on the Truman Balcony several times for him to return home.

"The emotional weight is huge for a first lady for the President's health and well-being under normal circumstances," said Anita McBride, who served as chief of staff to Laura Bush. "I think it's even more complicated for Dr. Biden by the fact that there is constant public fretting over his health and ability to carry out his duties."

McBride notes first ladies are the best barometers for how a President is actually feeling.

Travel, but make it domestic

The Africa trip would have been a four-day, three-country visit to a continent that is often a rite-of-passage for a solo visit from American first ladies.

Scheduled to depart during the latter part of July, several government agencies, the Military Office, embassies and security apparatus were enlisted to assist Biden's travel. At least one advance trip to suss out specifics had already been made.



[A year and a half in, first lady Jill Biden's favorability is mixed](#)

"It was unexpected," said the person of Biden's late-in-the-game decision to call it off.

"An advance trip to Africa, in terms of logistics, in terms of cost, in terms of staff -- it's a lot," said a former White House official who participated in several such trips during a previous administration.

Asked by CNN if the resources used for the advance trip to Africa would be reimbursed or reallocated, Alexander said, "We conducted survey travel to Africa and we plan to use all information gathered towards travel for the first lady or one of the other White House principals."

Three of the people who spoke to CNN about the reason behind the cancellation indicated the first lady's desire to go simply waned as the scheduled departure neared, and she questioned the core objectives.

"The details just weren't forming in a way that made sense to her from a policy or timing perspective," said a White House official who was involved in the broader conversation about pulling down the trip.

Instead of Africa, Biden downshifted to her sweet spot: Domestic messenger.

In early July alone, she hit [Texas](#), Connecticut, Massachusetts, Georgia and Michigan, talking about everything from pandemic recovery to the American Rescue Plan.

"It isn't sexy stuff, and it definitely isn't how she planned to focus her energy," said one of the people who spoke to CNN about Biden's priorities as first lady, adding her ability to be a non-polarizing administration emissary in America's current political climate is "both a blessing and a curse."

Yet Biden seems comfortable doing what she has done for the last four decades as political spouse, augmenting her husband. It is in part the jumble of bad news and crises, coupled with a handful of international faux pas and a Democratic Party at odds with itself, that have kept the

President at home and the first lady on the road. In 18 months, Biden has visited 40 states to the President's 34, her number far ahead of any of her modern-day predecessors. "As she has said in her own words -- she thinks part of being a successful first lady is 'just showing up,'" says McBride.

Forecasting their political future

A potential second term and the President's political future "are on her mind," the other person with knowledge of the Bidens' relationship tells CNN, adding that concern can at times, "feel heavy" for her. Jill Biden knows all too well the drain a messy and mean presidential race can put on her family, admitting even she underestimated the smears of the last campaign. It is a challenge for her to at once be her husband's chief hype-person and his fiercest protector, especially as his advanced age becomes a talking point. [A recent CNN poll indicated 75% of Democratic and Democratic-leaning voters](#) want to nominate someone other than Joe Biden for the next ticket.

"That's tough, but [Jill Biden] is very adept at conveying a level of confidence in her husband's health and stamina," says McBride.

Asked if the first lady is assessing the political landscape as 2024 edges closer, Alexander tells CNN, "As the President has said, he intends to run for another term."

Jill Biden also has zero interest in unveiling a branded initiative, second term or no, telling her staff there are just too many projects and priorities for her to focus on.

"A catch-all logo is not her thing," says one of the people who work with her.



[Jill Biden on President Joe Biden's hindered progress: 'He had so many hopes'](#)

This summer of hardships for the President has drawn the first lady closer to her family, say several of those who spoke to CNN. There have been robust, multi-generational trips to Camp David, days spent sunning at the beach in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. She is also actively involved in the planning of the November nuptials of her oldest granddaughter, Naomi Biden, a speck of good news for a family besieged by challenging headlines. Naomi Biden announced last week she will marry fiancé Peter Neal in a ceremony on the White House South Lawn, followed by a reception.

Additionally, Biden finally finished decorating her East Wing office. In February, a statement from the East Wing indicated she had hired an interior designer to update her suite of offices to her taste.

Mark Sikes, a celebrity decorator with an active social media presence, and an admitted love of the color blue, confirmed publicly he got the job. Sikes retooled the décor, painting over the shade of pale pink her predecessor had selected for her office walls, among other things. Biden's workspace now reflected the breezy, "coastal elegance" vibe Biden prefers, says a person with knowledge.

A date this week for Biden to return to the White House and reunite with the President has not been announced, though it is likely it will not be before Joe Biden has a negative Covid test. For now, Biden remains in Delaware -- kept company by her rescue cat, Willow.