

Let's get this race started

by BROCK WEIR

The frustratingly stagnant race to be the next President of the United States got a much-needed shot in the arm on Sunday when incumbent ? and then-Democratic candidate ? Joe Biden announced his decision to drop out of the race, endorsing Vice President Kamala Harris to be his successor.

When I say a much-needed shot in the arm, I do not mean this in any way as a slight against the outgoing President. Rather, it's a comment that this political campaign, potentially one of the most pivotal of our lifetimes, no matter which side of the border we happen to find ourselves, has remained relatively stagnant since the start of the campaign.

Now, if we're honest with ourselves, the current campaign started as soon as Joe Biden was declared victor in the 2020 election four years ago this November ? an exhausting slog by any measure.

As I wrote in my column on July 11, following Biden's apparently-disastrous debate against Donald Trump a few weeks ago, it was hard to believe that the apparently-flagging performance of the incumbent would in any way move the political needle.

Both men are extremely known quantities. By this point, unless you have been living underwater or at the International Space Station for the last decade or so, you know who they are. You know what they stand for. Up until that point, the campaign had yielded very few surprises on vision, compassion, character or mental acuity, although one seemed (and seems) to be held to a much higher standard than the other.

If you were still an undecided voter at the time of the debate, I'd suggest you might be trying to fool yourself. Heck, knowing what each represents, Biden and Trump could have joined hands on that stage for a duet of ?Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better? with very little consequence to polling numbers or the likely outcome.

Yet, on Sunday, Biden finally bowed to pressure to leave the race.

While an undoubtedly disappointing outcome for the incumbent, he can, in my view, rest on particularly exceptional laurels. But, as sad as it is that it's the end of the road for such a dedicated public servant, it has undoubtedly reinvigorated the campaigns to take (or re-take) the biggest gig in the western world.

Since the powers-that-be in the United States piled on Biden following that fateful night on CNN, the intervening weeks have provided food for thought on term limits and age limits when it comes for those seeking public office.

Personally, I have never been fully in favour of either limitation. While I see the value of such limits, in some ways I see it also as limiting the will of voters and the democratic process.

For every Dianne Feinstein and Strom Thurmond, U.S. Senators who served well-beyond their ability to do so ? with Feinstein's controversial final term ending with her death last September at 90 and Thurmond's ending just a few months before his death at 100 ? there is a Ted Kennedy or a Nancy Pelosi who have been respected by their voters and dynamic in the process into their late-70s, as was the case with Kennedy, and into their 80s, as continues to be the case for the former Speaker.

There's also the case of Elizabeth II served as our Head of State, and that of 14 other countries around the world until the age of 96, with Prime Ministers and Presidents alike vehemently stating she was just as sharp as she ever was until her death and, by dint of her age, a repository of wisdom younger leaders were eager to draw upon.

Closer to home, we have Evelyn Buck, the first female mayor of Aurora, who, following her time in the top job, served on Town

Council off and on well into her 80s. An occasionally divisive politician, like her or not she had the confidence of her electors, she knew who they were, and she served them well by their estimation.

If voters are happy with their representation, if the politician does their part to stay on top of their game, and that includes keeping up with social mores and evolving methods of communication, does it make sense to say they're now ineligible for the job they do well simply because they have crossed an age threshold?

On the flipside, if a politician is of a certain age, knows what their constituency is, but is unable or unwilling to connect to and engage with new voters or seasoned voters searching for representation, would this lack of engagement be remedied by such age and term limits?

I don't have all the answers, but Sunday did provide some insight.

"Over the past three-and-a-half years, we have made great progress as a nation," said Biden in his letter to the American people. "Today, America has the strongest economy in the world. We've made historic investments in rebuilding our Nation, in lowering prescription drug costs for seniors, and in expanding affordable health care to a record number of Americans. We've provided critically needed care to a million veterans exposed to toxic substances. Passed the first gun safety law in 30 years. Appointed the first African American woman to the Supreme Court. And passed the most significant climate legislation in the history of the world. America has never been better positioned to lead than we are today."

"It has been the greatest honour of my life to serve as your President. And while it has been my intention to seek re-election. I believe it is in the best interest of my party and the country for me to stand down and to focus solely on fulfilling my duties as President for the remainder of my term."

"For now, let me express my deepest gratitude to all those who have worked so hard to see me re-elected. I want to thank Vice President Kamala Harris for being an extraordinary partner in all this work. And let me express my heartfelt appreciation to the American people for the faith and trust you have placed in me. I believe today what I always have: that there is nothing American people can't do when we do it together. We just have to remember we are the United States of America."

A gracious exit, perhaps one that could only be written with the grace and insight that comes with age, experience and walking the walk, and not doing so just for themselves alone.

Now, it will be interesting to see the balance of the campaign to come.

By press time this week, Harris, 59, had already closed in on the delegates she needs to secure the nomination, more than \$100 million in donations from small, individual donors have flowed into the Democratic Party's coffers, a sure sign of the renewed energy in the air, and Donald Trump, 78, is now the oldest person who will ever see their name on a Presidential ballot.

That sure upends their "Don't vote for the old guy" platform!