

Kamala's campaign rakes in £1 billion in just two months

KAMALA Harris' presidential campaign has amassed \$1 billion in just two months, while Donald Trump is struggling to match the fundraising momentum of his previous run for office.

She crossed the milestone at the end of September – just eight weeks after being declared the Democratic candidate following Joe Biden's withdrawal from the race.

Insiders from her campaign dis-

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closed Ms Harris' achievement as a separate analysis revealed that contributions from small donors to Mr Trump's camp have tumbled by 40 per cent compared with his last White House bid in 2020, when he lost to Mr Biden.

Mr Trump had raised \$309million by the start of September.

But the former president got a boost from the polls as he edged ahead of Ms Harris in key battleground states. Mr Trump is leading Ms Harris by 3 per cent in

Michigan and 2 per cent in Wisconsin, Politico reported.

Mr Trump has offset his reduction in smaller donations through support from influential political

'Trump has raised \$309million'

action committees (PACs), which raise and spend money to support candidates without donating to them directly. The America PAC, set up by Tesla tycoon Elon Musk,

has spent more than \$30million since mid-August to support the Republican candidate.

Fewer than a third of the Trump campaign's contributions have come from donors who gave less than \$200 – down from nearly half of all donations in his 2020 race.

He has raised \$98million, compared to \$165million previously, research by Associated Press and OpenSecrets, which tracks political spending, revealed.

Mr Biden and then Ms Harris have raised \$285million from such donors, representing more than

40 per cent of their fundraising. Karoline Leavitt, from the Trump campaign, did not directly address the fall in donations. But she blamed the Biden administration and Ms Harris for a poor economy which had led to voters having less money to spend.

Yesterday, both candidates continued to campaign in battleground states. Ms Harris was due to attend an event in Las Vegas before going to a rally in Phoenix, Arizona. While Mr Trump gave a speech at the Detroit Economic Club in Michigan.



COMMENTARY By Lord Ashcroft

WITH 25 days to go until the United States chooses a new President, the race looks as close as it could be.

In a nation of 336 million people, the election once again looks set to be decided by a few thousand voters in a handful of places. In these final weeks of the seemingly interminable campaign, my focus groups with voters in seven crucial swing states will tell us what is on Americans' minds as they decide who will replace Joe Biden in the White House.

Our tour begins in Phoenix, Arizona, where Biden won in 2020 but Trump now has a narrow lead, according to the latest polling. Two major factors help account for this. One is security on the border the state shares with Mexico – more than 8 million migrants have crossed illegally since Biden took office, around four times the number under Trump.

The other is that Hispanic voters, who make up around a third of Arizona's population, are increasingly shifting from their traditionally solid support for Democrats. Largely working class, many of these voters warmed to Trump during his presidency and have been hit hardest by inflation in the post-Covid Biden years. And those who have migrated legally to the US often strongly support a firmer stance against those who simply walk across the border.

Some Hispanic voters, especially men, told us that having backed Biden four years ago or stayed at home, they were switching their support. 'I would say circumstances have changed and it's time for Trump again,' one man told us.

HIGHER prices, a more dangerous world requiring stronger leadership at home, and the aim to cut energy costs by boosting domestic production – 'drill baby, drill' as his mantra has it – all had their appeal. So did Trump's plan to scrap tax on overtime pay, which he announced up the road in Tucson last month – 'that really caught my attention', a hard-pressed manual worker declared.

One aspect of the campaign, which could cut both ways, is Americans' familiarity with the former President. In the 2016 campaign, after each new Trumpian outrage, his opponents would think surely now people would see what kind of person he was (never grasping that they could see it all too clearly, but were going to vote for him because other things mattered more or because they liked the unfiltered, unvarnished nature of what he was saying).

Elements of this mindset still exist. A



Neck and neck: Donald Trump and Kamala Harris during their television debate

The swing state that offers vital clues to which candidate will win this closest of U.S. elections

new book from Bob Woodward, the veteran Washington reporter who uncovered the Watergate scandal that brought down Nixon, claims that Trump has spoken to Vladimir Putin some seven times since his election defeat, and even sent the Russian leader a private supply of Covid tests.

The Trump campaign denies the allegations, to put it mildly: 'None of these made-up stories by Bob Woodward are true and are the work of a truly demented

and deranged man', his spokesman said. But Trump's backers like the idea that he can talk to world leaders – friendly or otherwise – and use his relationships to America's advantage.

'Eventually, unless you're planning on them all killing each other, you're going to have to talk and figure out a way to stop the war,' said one. 'He might be greasing the skids – "if I do get into office, is there something I can do here?" Nobody wants

to talk to Biden and Harris, there's just no fear. Trump likes to keep other world leaders guessing.'

After the assassination attempt against Trump in July, many on both sides thought the election was all but settled in his favour to the extent that some Democrats in our groups told us they wondered if it had all been 'engineered'.

'My first thought was, is this even real? Some people were saying it was like a little blood pack,' said one. 'Something felt fishy. I still don't know what to believe,' added another. Don't let anyone tell you that conspiracy theories are the exclusive preserve of the MAGA crowd.

But the advent of Kamala Harris has transformed the race. There is huge relief that the choice is no longer between two octogenarian white men, and that trying to stop Trump no longer means voting for someone clearly incapable of governing.

Having had a fairly low profile as Vice President, Harris has had only a few weeks to introduce herself to the country as the Democrat nominee, and many feel they still don't know her very well.

SOME find this concerning. Touting a record as a tough prosecutor in California, she developed a reputation as a liberal in the Senate and now positions herself as a moderate. Some wonder which is the real Kamala. Does she signal a new progressive start or, as one voter put it to us, 'a new face of the same old'? There is also frustration at what they see as a lack of policy detail. 'When I hear her talk, it just makes me think, "Why am I not hearing anything?"' complained one exasperated voter.

Yet paradoxically, the challenge for Harris in the remaining weeks is not to define herself, but to avoid doing so. Republicans are doing their best to paint her as a woke Lefty. ('Kamala's for they/them. President Trump is for you' declares a TV attack ad, citing her past support for taxpayer-funded sex-change operations for prisoners.) Events, or a rare unguarded moment in the final weeks of a carefully curated campaign, may yet reveal more than she intends.

But if she can keep it up until election day, this strategic ambiguity means that moderates who thought Biden was just too old and don't want a return to the Trump circus can cling to the hope that she represents experience and continuity; younger voters fed up with what they see as the compromises of the Biden years can project onto her their hope for something more radical.

'I don't know what to expect from her,' one participant put it. 'I'm only voting for her because Trump is the alternative.'

If it works and she wins, whichever side is to be disappointed won't find out until she's in the White House. But if she loses, both will be devastated.

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