

How Trump Can Keep the Good Vibes Going

di Karl Rove

[Joe Biden](#)'s presidency isn't officially over, but it is for all intents and purposes. [Donald Trump](#) dominates the political landscape and national consciousness. Mr. Biden? He's nowhere.

The once and future president seems to be everywhere: an interview on NBC's "Meet the Press," a quick trip to Notre-Dame de Paris's reopening, an appearance at the Army-Navy football game, ringing the bell at the New York Stock Exchange the day he is named Time's Man of the Year (again), and announcing a promise of \$100 billion in foreign investment in the U.S.

Truth Social produces an almost nightly flood of appointment announcements. Capitol Hill is awash in nominees visiting Senate offices soliciting confirmation votes. Advisers, some of whom will enter the administration and others who will try shaping policy from the outside, are pushing ideas left and right.

Business moguls make the pilgrimage to Mar-a-Lago to bend the knee. Foreign leaders jet there for dinner and face time. Others reach out by phone. All are attempting to ingratiate themselves to the president-elect. These are heady days for a man who has time and again been counted down and out.

For the first time ever, Mr. Trump's favorable rating in the RealClearPolitics average is higher than his unfavorable rating. Currently, it's 48.9% to 47.9%.

Still, some humility is in order. While small-business confidence has risen sharply since the election, according to the National Federation of Independent Business, two-thirds of Americans in the latest survey by the Associated Press and National Opinion Research Center believe the state of the economy is poor. The border is still largely open, the deficit worrisome, and a giant tax hike inbound if the 2017 cuts aren't renewed.

The world has been destabilized, especially in the Middle East, and the Russia-Ukraine war grinds on. Governments in Canada and South Korea teeter on the brink. Those in Germany and France have gone over the edge. China is conducting its largest maritime operations in nearly 30 years in the western Pacific.

Voters will stick by Mr. Trump if he focuses on what they elected him to do: Break inflation, deliver economic growth, secure the border, rebuild the military, calm the world, and end the woke assault on America.

Today Mr. Trump has that measure of goodwill that all incoming presidents receive before they have to take the responsibility of governing and the blame if things go wrong. But before long the public will begin grading the 47th president, and not on a curve. They'll decide how well he delivers on his promises. I know from my own White House years that new administrations have about a year to deliver on their agenda before Congress gets mired in midterm politics. If voters are frustrated by then, they'll cut down his party's slim congressional majorities, making his last two years even more difficult and unproductive.

Mr. Trump can't do everything at once, and some important things can be done sooner than others. He's leaning toward Senate Majority Leader John Thune's idea that Republicans move a border security bill quickly and renew the 2017 tax cuts later. Tax bills are tough and take time. Consider that in 2017, it took 11 months for Republicans to pass tax cuts when the GOP had a 22-seat House majority. Next year, it could be a single seat. A border bill can pass more quickly and with more Democratic votes.

Unfortunately, it's still a question if Mr. Trump will stay focused on the nation's priorities. On "Meet the Press" earlier this month, he said his was "a message of unity" and that he was "not looking to go back into the past" but "to make our country successful." Then he accused members of the House Jan. 6 Committee of having "committed a major crime" and said he would "most likely" pardon Jan. 6 defendants, including those who pleaded guilty to attacking police officers, saying "they had no choice" but to enter those pleas. He's now suing an Iowa newspaper for running a poll that was way off, which is very different from suing ABC for broadcasting the false statement that he was "found liable for rape."

If Mr. Trump pursues retribution against all those who offend him or pardons people who beat Capitol police on Jan. 6, there will likely be a swift, adverse public reaction. The president may be interested in vengeance. But most of the people who voted for him aren't and won't tolerate it. Most of the country wants his leadership on the economy, border, energy, defense and culture. And MAGA diehards won't sniff at that either.

We can hope Mr. Trump returns to the White House wiser than he was eight years ago. Given the challenges America faces, he'd better focus on the country's needs, not his desire for revenge.

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