
Please don't tell Kamala I'm with her

I don't want to jinx the race. My family sees me as a bad-luck charm — and begged me not to support her.

By Jerry Goldfeder

MY FAMILY HAS BEEN beseeching me not to support the Biden-Harris ticket. I'm a lifelong Democrat, so this might sound a bit strange. But when I've thrown my support behind presidential candidates before, the road has gotten bumpy.

In 1980, I was for Ted Kennedy. Four years later, I managed California Sen. Alan Cranston's '84 presidential campaign in New York and then helped run Walter Mondale's campaign. In '88, I supported Illinois Sen. Paul Simon's presidential bid. I was one of only a handful of party leaders who supported Jerry Brown's 1992 campaign in New York City. In 2000, Bill Bradley was my guy, and then I backed Al Gore. In 2004, I was a campaign lawyer for Dick Gephardt and then trained poll watchers for John Kerry. As a New Yorker, of course I was for Hillary Clinton in 2008. In 2016, I was on Clinton's "leadership council" — and assured everyone I was going to break my losing streak.

Well, you get my point. As this year's presidential race started heating up, I tried to be careful. I wanted to avoid jinxing a campaign.

When my family gathered to celebrate Hanukkah in December 2018, the talk naturally turned to presidential politics after we passed around the latkes. Kamala Harris was a favorite in the room. I had met her several times and financially supported her 2016 U.S. Senate race. She was, of course, very impressive — smart and engaging, with real leadership qualities.

Over lunch the next day, I was among a few potential donors who met with Harris as she mulled over whether to run for president. I kicked off the discussion by telling her that several members of my family were in her camp. But I also told her I could not support her. She stared at me as the room went silent. Her husband, Doug Emhoff, standing off to the side, grew tense.

I cleared my throat and explained: "Look, I think you're terrific. You'd be great. But, believe me, if I support you, your candidacy is doomed. Almost everyone I support for president loses. I can't do this to you." That broke the ice. Harris threw her head back and laughed uproariously — a sight now familiar to much of the world.

But I do carry some guilt. After all, maybe just my being in the room with her was enough to sink her presidential hopes.

I later became part of Pete Buttigieg's legal team. I hadn't warned him about my bad luck, figuring he was such a long shot, he couldn't blame me if it didn't work out. You know the rest of that story.

Harris is now on the cusp of the vice presidency. I hope for her sake — not to mention Joe Biden's and the future of the republic — that my support won't hurt. I do feel I'm backing a winner this time, but, just to be sure, please don't tell Kamala I'm with her.

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