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## *Why Josh Shapiro Would be a Dangerous Choice as Harris's Running Mate*

Kamala Harris has gained strong support as the presumptive Democratic presidential candidate. Putting Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro on the ticket would likely fracture that support.

The most divisive issue among Democrats is the U.S.-enabled Israeli war against the civilian population of Gaza. To unify the party and defeat Trump's MAGA forces, Harris needs to distance herself in a meaningful way from Joe Biden's Gaza policy. If she does so, she can win back the votes and energy of young activists, progressives, racial justice organizers, Arab Americans and Muslims – many of whom devoted weeks or months of their lives in 2020 to defeating Trump on behalf of the Biden-Harris ticket.

But a Harris-Shapiro ticket would jeopardize all that.

Today, parallels are apparent with pivotal events of 1968, when President Lyndon B. Johnson – increasingly unpopular among Democrats and others because of his Vietnam War – stunned the political world by announcing he would not seek reelection. At the Democratic convention in Chicago, the party nominated LBJ's vice president, Hubert Humphrey, as its standard-bearer. Humphrey's halting efforts to distance himself from Johnson's war policy were too little, too late, and he was unable to connect with many of the dedicated Democratic activists and voters who were antiwar. Failing to detach himself sufficiently from the president's war policy, Humphrey lost a winnable election to Republican Richard Nixon.

If Harris now chooses a running mate who intensely connects her to Biden's policies on the Gaza war that are so unpopular with much of the Democratic base, party unity – and the chances of defeating Trump – would be undermined.

Overall, Josh Shapiro is liberal and sometimes progressive on domestic issues (though notably not on fracking or tax subsidies for private schools). But on the contentious issue of Israel's relentless war against Palestinian civilians in Gaza, Shapiro sounds much less bothered by the lethal violence than by U.S. ceasefire activists, many of whom he has demonized. Here's a bit of the history:

In 2021, after Ben & Jerry's (a company founded and led by Jewish Americans) refused to sell its products in Israel's illegal settlements, then-Attorney General Josh Shapiro threatened the company by urging Pennsylvania state agencies to enforce a constitutionally suspect law targeting advocates of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel over its discriminatory policies. Shapiro smeared such advocates by claiming that "BDS is rooted in antisemitism" – although the effort has wide support globally, including from many Jews, as a *thoroughly nonviolent* tactic in advancing Palestinian rights.

After the horrific Hamas attack of October 7, several dozen Pennsylvania-based Muslim groups wrote a letter protesting Governor Shapiro's one-sided comments: "Not only did you fail to recognize the structural root causes of the conflict, you chose to intentionally ignore the civilian loss of life in Gaza." Responding to the letter after Israeli bombs and missiles had killed more civilians in Gaza than had been killed by Hamas in Israel on October 7, the governor's spokesman said: "We all must speak with moral clarity and support Israel's right to defend itself."

Last December, after he amplified the Capitol Hill demagoguery of MAGA Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, Gov. Shapiro contributed to the firing of the University of Pennsylvania president. Referring to UPenn's president, Shapiro said: "I thought her comments were absolutely shameful. It should not be hard to condemn genocide." By then, after two months of Israeli bombing, more than 17,000 Gazans had been killed, mostly women and children – and later that month, Israel was charged with violations of the Genocide Convention in South Africa's filing at the International Court of Justice.

In early April, after Democratic governors in other states had called for a ceasefire in Gaza, Muslim leaders in Philadelphia criticized Shapiro for his refusal to do so.

Beginning in late April, Gov. Shapiro and his office repeatedly prodded campuses to "restore order" and take action against student encampments, including the University of Pennsylvania Gaza Solidarity Encampment which called on the college administration to provide greater transparency on university investments, divest from Israel, and reinstate the banned student group Penn Students Against the Occupation.

On May 9, Shapiro invoked student “safety” in demanding the encampment be shut down. Police shut it down the next day, arresting 33. In two different interviews, Shapiro seemed to compare campus ceasefire activists, many of whom are Jewish or students of color, to “white supremacists camped out and yelling racial slurs” and “people dressed up in KKK outfits or KKK regalia making comments about people who’re African American.”

In May, as activism continued to grow over Israel’s lethal violence against civilians in Gaza, Gov. Shapiro issued an order aimed at Israel’s critics that revised his administration’s code of conduct to bar state employees from “scandalous or disgraceful” conduct – a vague and subjective directive criticized by the legal director of Pennsylvania’s ACLU as a possible violation of free speech protections.

In a July 23 tweet on X, progressive leader and former Ohio State Senator Nina Turner wrote: “Choosing Governor Josh Shapiro for Vice President would be a mistake. Governor Shapiro compared pro-peace protesters to the KKK. That’s simply unacceptable & would stifle the momentum VP Harris has. Hopefully she is looking to build a broad coalition to beat Trump.”

A broad coalition to defeat Donald Trump and the fascistic MAGA movement is exactly what we need. Making Josh Shapiro the nominee for vice president is exactly what we don’t need.

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