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## Despite discrimination act, ageism takes over 2024 election

By *Robert Weiner and Kailynn Bannon*

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One of the main concerns voters have entering the 2024 election is Donald Trump's and Joe Biden's age. Trump, 77, and Biden, 81, have both been criticized by Republicans and Democrats alike. This discrimination of older individuals presents questions not only of sound science, but societal ageism and legal limitations of employment age discrimination acts.

When the Congress passed the Age Discrimination in Employment Act Amendments in 1977, 359-2 in House and 89-10 in Senate, Rep. Claude Pepper and President Carter met at the White House with the House Select Committee on Aging.

"Ageism is as odious as racism or sexism," Pepper said.

The bill was signed into law on April 6, 1978 after receiving support from President Carter. One of the amendments passed was the abolishment of all mandatory age-based retirement or employment discrimination in the federal government. In addition to no Constitutional upper limit prohibition, the same law should be the message for the upcoming presidential election.

Since Trump is only about three years younger than Biden, the Republican media has clearly figured out how to put Trump in a better light.

When the Age Discrimination in Employment Act was originally put into place [in 1967](#), it was to ensure that workers over the age of 40 had an equal opportunity to retain and regain jobs.

If the government were to create a nearly impossible amendment that puts an age limit on the presidency, it would judge a candidate based only on their age rather than their potential to carry out the job.

Age discrimination exists for the younger generations too. Deon Tedder was only 33 when sworn into the Senate District 42, making him the youngest

person in the South Carolina Senate. He was endorsed by Congressman Jim Clyburn and announced his campaign for reelection.

Even though these laws were put into action decades ago, ageism is one of the more widely abused forms of discrimination.

"Ageism is really one of the last acceptable 'isms' that society tolerates," said Heather Tinsley-Fix, a senior adviser at AARP, [for USA Today](#). "We're generally speaking of a society that really values youth, not only physically, but in these beliefs that everything good is young."

Similar to sexism and racism, ageism discriminates against someone based on something they can't control, and solely relies on the age of a person without proof of their work ability. With the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, everyone in the workplace is given equal opportunity on the basis of age.

Voters' fears stem from the concern that older age will affect how equipped both candidates are to lead the country. However, science shows that age does not directly coordinate with cognitive decline.

For example, last year Clyburn was named one of the Biden campaign's national co-chairs. Even at 83 years old, Clyburn is effective at portraying facts and history often on television.

Aging often leads to difficulty with memory recall, articulation and mixing up proper nouns. These are all normal signs of an aging brain, and do not relate to a person's ability to function or perform tasks. That's why those elected for president have long had their physical and mental abilities tested rather than an evaluation based on age.

The Biden administration released six pages of details on Biden's physical health evaluated by his physician, Kevin C. O'Connor. The report states that Biden is a "healthy, active, robust 81-year-old male, who remains fit to successfully execute the duties of the Presidency." The doctor did not believe Biden needed to take a cognitive test.

On the other hand, Trump claims to have passed several cognitive tests, but released little to no details other than a three-paragraph note from his doctor claiming his physical and mental health are fine.

When people bash Biden for his age, they often criticize perfectly normal signs of aging which do not suggest further issues. Trump and Biden have legal rights and scientific support going into this election. Age can even be beneficial to a position as powerful as this one. People gain more experience with age and obtain more knowledge over time. Individuals have proved to show more

emotional stability as they age, which is incredibly vital in such a demanding position.

Because the president's office is an incredibly powerful and complex position, it is without a doubt that the candidates should be in good physical and mental health. When deciding who is best fit for president, age should not be the deciding factor.

Ronald Reagan was 77 while in office and served two terms successfully. Franklin Roosevelt was 63 and served four terms while becoming paralyzed from the waist down, and he was still capable of performing his presidential duties.

It makes sense to deem someone unfit for office if they are proved to have physical or mental restrictions that limit them from serving. However, everyone ages differently. It is unjust to choose a random number as an age limit when cognitive function cannot be determined by a number. It is discriminatory to assume everyone above a certain age cannot perform their required duties.

Another factor that affects voters' opinions and decisions is the media coverage behind each candidate's campaign. If he wins, Trump will be the oldest person elected as president at 78 years old. However, voters talk about Biden's age and its implications way more.

Data from [Pew Research Center](#) shows that Americans believe Trump's age doesn't get enough attention from news media outlets. Focusing on Biden's age more than Trump's age misinforms voters on the stability of both candidates by painting Biden as older and weaker -- ignoring his experience and substantive balance.

As American voters become frustrated with having older candidates on the ballot, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act still stands and is not likely to be amended to allow an age limit for the president's office any time soon.

*Robert Weiner, now 76, was a spokesman in the Clinton and George W. Bush White Houses. He was Chief of Staff of the House Aging Committee and in 1971-72 was the youth voter registration director at Watergate National Democratic Headquarters after the 26th Amendment passed giving 18 year-olds the vote.*

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