



By: *The Editorial Board*

# No surprises in Iowa - will Trump's opponents begin to oppose him?



The race has begun without surprises and uncertainty. It will remain significant, perhaps only because it was the first, and ended speculation that there would be a shift regarding the Republicans when the race started.

Donald Trump **won in Iowa** on the first vote for the election of the Republican presidential candidate (51% and 20 of the total 40 delegates), just as all the surveys had predicted since he announced his candidacy a little over a year ago.

He was sure of this result, so he held only one rally with supporters. There were about 500 people at the rally last Sunday, the day before the elections.

His opponents had been trying for days to use every moment to talk to voters despite blizzards and icy roads.

Trump has made a good start to the race that will last until June, when 2,429 delegates will vote for the future GOP presidential candidate at the final convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on July 15.

## The trials did not hurt Trump

The results of the primaries in Iowa confirmed the estimates of those convinced that the numerous lawsuits filed against Trump over the past year will not harm his popularity among Republicans.

The **charges** that Trump has been facing before the court, from financial fraud and falsifying business records to leaking confidential documents from the White House and conspiring against the US constitutional order, were not convincing enough for Republican voters in Iowa to turn their backs on the former US president.

These cases remain a burden for Trump's candidacy, but after the vote in Iowa, he can feel some relief.

**The majority of Republican voters in Iowa have placed their trust in a multi-accused person and turned their backs on their faith in a system based on equality before the law and the change of government**

The first step in the fight for the presidential nomination went smoothly for Trump, just like testing the impact of the indictments on his prospects for another presidential nomination.

This was a test not only for him. It was also a test for voters to see how they would handle having a front-runner for the presidential nomination with felony charges and facing possible decades in prison.

In this respect, the majority of Republican voters in Iowa have placed their trust in a multi-accused person and turned their backs on their faith in a system based on equality before the law and the change of government.

Trump's populism and the role of the victim in the "witch hunt" on which he has based his campaign won a victory over trust in the Constitution and US courts. Only in Iowa so far.

## Lessons for De Santis

But this will probably happen in many places in the next 5 months. In how many states it will depend to a large extent on Trump's opponents.

Just as Trump's results were as anticipated in Iowa, so were the results of his opponents. The first stop in the race for the nomination produced something new. It made the further fight for Trump's principal challenger more exciting.

Florida Governor Ron De Santis took second place, winning slightly more votes (21% and 8 delegates) than the latest pre-election polls predicted (16% - Des Moines Register, NBC,

Mediacom Iowa).

## Despite finishing second to front-runner Trump, De Santis has plenty of pending concerns ahead of him

Despite finishing second to front-runner Trump, De Santis has plenty of pending concerns ahead of him for the remainder of the primary season, which has just begun.

His strategy of offering more conservatism and more Trumpism in the fight against Trump in Iowa received the first confirmation of being futile. Voters will favour the original over a copy that offers the same thing under a new name, even after Iowa.

Nikki Haley will have much more potential. However, she will also have more time to correct her campaign after the primaries in Iowa. She finished third, just behind De Santis, with 19% of the vote and 7 delegates.

Despite still lagging far behind her former boss, Haley has room to toughen her position on Trump. De Santis has less of that.

## Can Nikki Haley be tougher on her ex-boss?

Nikki Haley will have the first opportunity to show a change in that direction on January 23, at the primaries in New Hampshire with a more moderate Republican electorate, less conservative than in Iowa. However, she needs her campaign to be more decisive for any breakthrough.

Trump can thank his opponents for his still unassailable rating because none of them (except Chris Christie, who dropped out of the race last week) presented themselves as open critics of Donald Trump.

Their pandering to Trump, or pandering to his supporters, has been ongoing since the start of the campaign.

Last August, in the first TV debate, when asked whether they would support Trump's nomination if convicted of a crime in a court of law, everyone answered positively, except for Chris Christie, who is no longer in the race, and Asa Hutchinson who got 0.2% in Iowa.



Despite still lagging far behind her former boss, Nikki Haley has room to toughen her position on Trump

The results of the primaries in Iowa are a message to Trump's opponents that the last moment has come to create a distance from the favourite and the policy he has been advocating.

Nikki Haley has limited room for manoeuvre given that she had a high position in Trump's presidential administration. Her previous careful and moderate dose of criticism against Trump resulted from her background as a former close associate of Trump.

"I think President Trump was the right president at the right time. I agree with a lot of his policies. But, rightly or wrongly, chaos has followed him", said Nikki Haley during the campaign.

If she wants to improve her prospects and threaten Trump's leadership position, she should forget the first sentence and stick to the second one, where she talked about the "chaos that follows" the former US president.

After the Iowa primaries, she stands out as the only contender with any chance of threatening Trump's lead.

Nikki Haley was right when she said she would win the presidential race against Joe Biden

convincingly. However, to get there, she must deal with an even bigger obstacle - getting the nomination from her own party.