

CNN's *New Day With John Berman and Brianna Keilar*

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8:11:55 a.m. [TEASE]

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Pandemic Politics; CNN Projects: San Francisco Voters Oust 3 School Board Members]

JOHN BERMAN: Plus, breaking overnight, an historic recall election, three members of a San Francisco school board kicked out of office over what they did and didn't do during the pandemic. Is this a sign of things to come around the country?

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8:15:50 a.m.

3 minutes and 53 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Pandemic Politics; CNN Projects: San Francisco Voters Oust 3 School Board Members]

BRIANNA KEILAR: So breaking this morning, CNN is projecting that three San Francisco school board members have been successfully recalled in a special election amid fierce backlash from parents who say the officials failed to prioritize their children throughout the course of the pandemic. CNN's Nick Watt has been following this story and he joins us now. This is incredible considering, I think, because it resonates across the country. Tell us about this, Nick.

NICK WATT: Well, that's exactly right. You know, you might ask yourself why is a local school board meeting getting national attention? Well, it's in part because this is in deep blue San Francisco. You know, voted 85 percent for Biden last time around and, you know, we've gotten used to seeing anti-COVID restriction protests in red states. Not so much in cities like San Francisco and COVID restrictions are at the heart of this. Listen, there are many other issues, of course, but a lot of parents seem to be motivated by the fact that their schools there in San Francisco were closed for over a year, and meantime, the school board was doing other things like trying to rename 44 schools that were named after people like Abraham Lincoln, who they decided shouldn't be honored in that way anymore. So that is one of the major things that drove this. Let's hear a little bit of parent reaction.

NICK DRIVER [to KGO-TV]: I saw a lot of struggling, you know — work — you know, doing school from home, and I saw the school board prioritize renaming schools.

JENNIE LUCAS [to KGO-TV]: The kids had only about six weeks of in class instruction last year. I mean, before summer break. So that is a huge loss when it comes to kids who are coming from difficult socioeconomic situations.

WATT: Now, the recalled school board members, you know, they said, listen, that renaming

effort was going on long before. It started in 2017 and they also say, listen, you're not giving us credit for the very low COVID case numbers in San Francisco that the city is getting credit for. So, what happens now? Well, London Breed, the mayor, she gets to appoint three new school board members until the next election. And London Breed released a statement. In it, she says: "The voters of this city have delivered a clear message that the School Board must focus on the essentials of delivering a well-run school system above all else. San Francisco is a city that believes in the value of big ideas, but those ideas must be built on the foundation of a government that does the essentials well." Now, this was the first recall vote in San Francisco in about 40 years, but recalls have become quite fashionable in this state. You'll remember Governor Gavin Newsom, he survived pretty easily a recall effort last year that was really driven by COVID restrictions. San Francisco's progressive D.A. also faces a recall vote June 7th. And interestingly, the supervisors in San Francisco just added another ballot measure to that vote June 7th that would make it much harder to hold recall votes in the city. One of the things they're proposing is you can't hold a recall within a year of a scheduled election. That would have actually meant this school board recall never happened because the school board is up for election pretty soon. But, listen, as you say, this is getting national attention because it's anti-COVID, restrictions in a very blue city and, of course, people are looking at what the big issues are going to be as we move into the midterms.

KEILAR: Yeah, I think it's also just about people questioning if officials balanced priorities correctly, especially with the benefit of hindsight. I think we can all look back and see where decisions might have been made differently. The question is could they have at the time. I don't know. It's up to voters, I guess, Nick. Thank you so much.

WATT: Thanks.