

CBS Mornings

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7:00:46 a.m. [TEASE]

8 seconds

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN: We just have 15 days until one of the most important elections in our lifetime, and it's going to shape the way this country looks like for the coming decade.

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7:03:26 a.m.

3 minutes and 49 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: America Decides Campaign '22; Battleground Pennsylvania; New CBS News Poll Shows John Fetterman & Mehmet Oz Statistically Tied]

GAYLE KING: But we're going to begin, of course, as we often do this time, with politics. Election Day now is just two weeks away from today, and Pennsylvania is a crucial battleground for both parties. The latest CBS News battleground tracker out this morning finds the Senate race between Democrat John Fetterman and Republican Mehmet Oz is a toss-up right now. Fetterman leads Dr. Oz by just about two points. That's according to our poll. They will have their only debate of the campaign tonight in Harrisburg. That is, of course, the state capital. Robert Costa is already there covering one of the Senate races that will help decide who controls Congress for the next two years. Bob, it's good to see you. This is a big night for both candidates.

ROBERT COSTA: Gayle, good morning. Good to be with you from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the state capital. Ahead of this high-stakes debate, our CBS News poll shows core voters in both parties are rallying around the nominees, coming home as they say, before Election Day. When they take the stage, a lot is on the line for Republican Mehmet Oz and Democrat John Fetterman and for Pennsylvania voters.

DR. MEHMET OZ [IN CAMPAIGN AD]: I'll keep us safe, cut your taxes, and protect your jobs.

COSTA: Oz and Republicans have linked Fetterman to President Biden and made crime a focal point.

OZ [on FNC's *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, 10/24/22]: All the law enforcement groups have endorsed me because they know Fetterman doesn't have their back and I'll fight hard to let them do the job.

COSTA: Across the ballot, the Republican push on crime has led other Democrats to push back, including the state's attorney general and Democratic gubernatorial nominee.

ATTORNEY GENERAL JOSH SHAPIRO (D): Voters are concerned about public safety as they are the economy and protecting their fundamental freedoms. And so, I talk about this issue

wherever I go.

COSTA: On the economy, pain is evident. The new CBS News battleground tracker shows voters want to hear the candidates' views on the economy and inflation policies. [TO PENN STATE STUDENT] What's it like when you walk into the grocery store these days as a college student and you look at the prices?

PENN STATE STUDENT: Heartwrenching cause I've got certain amount of money for, like, the week and by the time I go grocery shopping, it's all gone.

VOTER: Who wants to pay \$4 for gas, you know. That's — that's really — has to be the number one issue.

LT. GOV. JOHN FETTERMAN (D-PA): And despite all that, I — I survived to be back — and that means — I'm going to fight for you all because I'm back out on the trail [sic].

COSTA: Fetterman, who had a stroke in May, has been reassuring voters that he is ready to serve. His doctor has done the same, issuing a letter that the candidate “has no work restrictions and can work full duty in public office.”

FETTERMAN [on NBC Nightly News, on 10/11/22]: But as loon [sic] as I have captioning, I'm able to understand what's being asked.

COSTA: Fetterman's use of a captioning device will be on display during the debate. In downtown State College on a football weekend, voters weighed in.

PENN STATE STUDENT: I don't think anyone should be shamed for using things that makes things more accessible for them.

VOTER: I think that people are wondering, you know, can he handle the job?

PENN STATE PROFESSOR AL TOMPKINS: There's just too much attention on it.

COSTA: Says media observer Al Tompkins. And more than half of the voters agree, saying they don't think it's important to talk about Fetterman's health during debate.

TOMPKINS: I think people care about things like inflation and crime and international relations, trust in government. Those are all important issues for people.

COSTA: CBS News has learned that, later this week, President Biden will return to Pennsylvania to raise money for Democrats. He will be back again in early November with former president Barack Obama. They will crisscross the state, going to Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, highlighting just how important this battleground is for the White House, Nate.

BURLESON: You're right about that, Bob. Thank you.