

NBC's *Today*

11/03/22

7:00:20 a.m. [TEASE]

6 seconds

SAVANNAH GUTHRIE: The midterms just days away. New messages to voters from both sides.

HODA KOTB: Yeah. We're going to break it all down as we head into the home stretch.

(...)

7:00:31 a.m.

28 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: "Defining Moment"]

KOTB: Defining moment. In a prime time address, President Biden warns democracy itself is on the ballot and in peril next Tuesday.

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN: We must, with an overwhelming voice, stand against political violence voter intimidation, period.

KOTB: Republican leaders saying don't blame us.

HOUSE MINORITY LEADER KEVIN MCCARTHY (R-CA) [on FNC's *Hannity*, 11/02/22]: The Democrats were dividing us as we move forward. They just want to distract from the disasters they created.

KOTB: With key races to decide the balance of power tighter than ever, we've got everything you need to know.

(...)

7:03:14 a.m.

3 minutes and 58 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Midterms a "Defining Moment"]

GUTHRIE: But we're going to start this morning with the final push to the midterms. The President using a speech in Washington to make the case that democracy itself is on the ballot.

KOTB: We've got it all covered. We're going to start with NBC's chief White House correspondent Kristen Welker. Good morning, Kristen.

KRISTEN WELKER: Hoda and Savannah, good morning to both of you. With Republicans gaining momentum, President Biden is intensifying his focus on an issue he thinks can energize the Democratic base: threats to democracy. It is a theme he's talked about since his campaign, but overnight, the President calling the midterms a defining moment. But Republicans and even many Democrats say, with the economy ranking as the top issue, the impact may be minimal on an election now just five days away. With Democrats on defense in the final midterm push, President Biden sharpening his closing message overnight.

BIDEN: Democracy is on the ballot for all of us.

WELKER: Focusing on voter intimidation, political violence and those who won't commit to accepting election results.

BIDEN: We, the people, must decide whether the rule of law will prevail or whether we'll allow the dark forces to thirst — thirst for power put ahead of the principles that have long guided us.

WELKER: Mr. Biden framed his speech around the brutal politically motivated attack on Paul Pelosi, husband of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, denouncing those who have joked or spread false information about it.

BIDEN: We must with an overwhelming voice stand against political violence and voter intimidation, period.

WELKER: Mr. Biden spoke less than two blocks from the U.S. Capitol, symbolic because this will be the first national election since the January 6th attack against the Capitol nearly two years ago.

BIDEN: I wish I could say assault on democracy had ended that day, but I cannot.

WELKER: The President placing blame squarely at the feet of his predecessor, President Trump, for refusing to concede the 2020 election. With his poll numbers sagging, Mr. Biden has stayed off the campaign trail, instead focusing on key issues like the economy and abortion. While Wednesday marked a shift in his rhetoric, it's unclear if voters will respond. Many are more worried about pocketbook problems. According to a poll released yesterday, far more voters say inflation is the most urgent issue facing the country than any other issue. Mitch McConnell, the top GOP leader in the senate tweeting, "President Biden is desperate to change the subject from inflation, crime and open borders. Now he's claiming that democracy only works if his party wins." Other top Republicans also lashing out.

MCCARTHY [on FNC's *Hannity*, 11/02/22]: The Democrats were dividing us as they moved forward. They just want to distract from the disasters they created.

KOTB: Well, Kristen, the President, obviously he's focusing on the potential dangers to the election process. But other Democratic candidates are not focusing on that. What's their strategy?

WELKER: They really aren't, Hoda. In fact, I talked to a number of Democratic sources who are working on the midterms overnight. And look, they're saying it's doubtful you're going to hear many Democratic candidates who are locked in think razor tight races focus their message around the issue of threats to democracy. Instead, Hoda, they say they're likely going to continue to focus on pocketbook issues, which are still the top issues for voters. Not just across the country, but in key voting blocs like suburban women, who could make all the difference in those races. One Democrat, in fact, telling me overnight, Hoda, they are clear high eyed about the environment they're facing. The fact that the President's low poll numbers are a drag on their chances. So, in this home stretch, the strategy for Democrats about making the case on the economy and outperforming an unpopular President. Hoda?

KOTB: Alright, Kristen Welker for us, thank you. And just a programming note, guys, stay with us on election night. Savannah, Lester, and our team will have complete live coverage as the results come in. That's starting Tuesday, 8:00 p.m. Eastern/5:00 P.M. Pacific right here on NBC and obviously streaming on NBC News Now.

(....)

8:00:23 a.m. [TEASE]  
13 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Defining Moment]

KOTB: Defining moment. President Biden takes the stage ahead of next week's crucial midterm elections, saying democracy itself is on the ballot. With key races set to decide the balance of power, what you need to know about what's at stake.

(....)

8:02:25 a.m.  
1 minute and 41 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Midterms a "Defining Moment"]

KOTB: In a last-minute appeal to voters, President Biden overnight framed next week's midterm elections as a defining moment for democracy itself. NBC News chief White House correspondent and weekend Today co-anchor Kristen Welker, she joins us with a closer look at the President's remark. Hey, Kristen, good morning.

WELKER: Hi, Hoda, good morning to you. With Democrats on defense, President Biden is intensifying his message around an issue he thinks will energize the Democratic base. That's threats to democracy. In that speech overnight, just blocks from the U.S. Capitol, the President put the focus on voter intimidation, political violence, and also those who will not commit to accepting election results. He really framed his speech around the brutal, politically motivated attack on Paul Pelosi, of course, the husband of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, denouncing those

who've joked or spread false information about it. And the President placed the blame for this environment squarely at the feet of his predecessor, former President Trump, for refusing to concede the 2020 election.

BIDEN: An overwhelming majority of Americans believe our democracy is at risk, that our democracy is under threat. They, too, see that democracy is on the ballot this year.

WELKER: The GOP Senate leader Mitch McConnell accusing the President of trying to change the subject from inflation, crime, and open borders. Republicans and even many Democrats, are really skeptical the President's speech will have an impact. In fact, according to a poll released just yesterday, far more voters say inflation is still the most urgent issue facing the country. So, you can expect candidates of both parties to stay largely focused on pocketbook issues in these closing days, Hoda.

KOTB: Alright, Kristen Welker for us there in Washington. Kristen, thank you.