

NBC's *Today*

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7:01:37 a.m. [TEASE]

13 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Jill Biden Live]

SAVANNAH GUTHRIE: One-on-one. Former first lady Dr. Jill Biden live in Studio 1A for a look inside her time at the White House, that fateful debate, and her husband's recent health battle.

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7:18:04 a.m. [TEASE]

16 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: 7:30 AM; Jill Biden in Studio 1A]

GUTHRIE: Coming up —

CRAIG MELVIN: Former First Lady Jill Biden is right here in studio and opening up like never before about her time in the White House, her husband's presidency, and the events that led to the end of his political career. We'll talk about all of it. We'll talk about her *View from the East Wing*.

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7:30:23 a.m.

14 minutes

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: One-on-One With Jill Biden]

GUTHRIE: But first, we have a Today exclusive. We have a special guest who's sitting down with Craig. Good morning to Craig and to Dr. Biden.

MELVIN: Yeah, a special guest indeed. It has been — it's been a year and a half since the 2024 election, but questions and debates surrounding the final months of the Biden presidency and the campaign. Those questions and debates have hardly faded. Well, now former First Lady Joe Biden is offering her most detailed account yet. It's a new memoir. It's called *View from the East Wing*. She's reflecting on her years in the White House, her husband's presidency, and also the questions over his age, and health, and the events that led to his decision to end his political career. Welcome back, Dr. Biden.

JILL BIDEN: Well, thanks.

MELVIN: Good morning.

JILL BIDEN: It's nice to be here, thank you.

MELVIN: So, you wrote a lot of biography back in 2019, but this is — this is different.

JILL BIDEN: This is different.

MELVIN: Why did you feel like you had to set the record straight now?

JILL BIDEN: Well, I guess because so many people wrote about Joe's four years in the White House and I felt that, you know, now it was my turn to give my view and my reflections.

MELVIN: Last year, it was revealed that the former President has stage four of the cancer — stage four prostate cancer. That it's also spread to —

JILL BIDEN: His bones.

MELVIN: — his bones as well. As we sit here right now, how is former President Biden doing?

JILL BIDEN: He's — you know, he's doing okay. I mean, Craig, you've been through this with your brother.

MELVIN: Yep.

JILL BIDEN: You know how tough it is. And I think if he had just been, you know, diagnosed with prostate cancer, that's one thing because that can be cured.

MELVIN: Yeah.

JILL BIDEN: But the fact that it metastasized to his bones, that makes it a whole different story. And so, I think Joe will live with cancer till the rest of his life.

MELVIN: Let's talk about the book because his age and his health, it's a good part of the book. And you write about this — that debate moment that so many people have talked about and written about, June of 2024. Want to remind our viewers exactly how part of it went down.

JOE BIDEN [on 06/27/25]: Making sure that we're able to make every single solitary person eligible for what I've been able to do with the — with — with COVID — excuse me — with — dealing with everything we have to do with — if — we finally beat Medicare.

MELVIN: So, in the book, you write that you thought that he might have been having a stroke on stage during that — during that — that part of the debate. But despite that, the debate ends, and you guys go on to have not one, but two political events —

JILL BIDEN: Two.

MELVIN: — And here's part of what you said a few hours later.

JILL BIDEN [on 06/27/24]: You did such a great job. You answered every question. You knew all the facts. [SCREEN WIPE] Four more years! Four more years!

MELVIN: In the days and weeks after that, you continued to insist that the President was fine. How — how do you square thinking that he may have had a stroke with what you were saying in the days and weeks after? How do you square those?

JILL BIDEN: Well, look — Craig, look at it from my point of view. So, I'm watching, just like everybody else was, scared to death, like, what is going on. He gets off the stage, I see, he appears to be okay. He says to me, Jill, I really, in other words, messed up, didn't I? And I said, yes, you did. And so, we get off — and I know we're going into another event, or we have two more to do. And I — my mind is racing. What do I say to him? What do I say to him?

MELVIN: Yeah.

JILL BIDEN: I'm his wife. I've got to lift him up. So, we go to the next event, and I'm thinking saying, what do I say that will lift him up that is true? I want to say things that are true. So, I said, you answered every question. My mind was racing.

MELVIN: That's a pretty low bar. I mean —

JILL BIDEN: Well — so, I had to sort of lift him up. I'm his wife. I'm not going to get out on the stage there and say, Joe, you really screwed that up. I mean — I — and we have all of our supporters, you know, so that's who we are. I had to support him. I couldn't come out and — I mean, really, publicly, say, Joe, you did a terrible job in that debate?

MELVIN: In the book, you also write, that was, you, you write that that was essentially sort of a one-off.

JILL BIDEN: Yes.

MELVIN: That this is not who he had become.

JILL BIDEN: No.

MELVIN: But special counsel Robert Hur, as you probably know, he described the former President “as an elderly man with a poor memory.” George Clooney — George Clooney, the actor, said at a private fundraiser before the debate, “Biden was the same man we saw that we all witnessed on that debate stage.” Even his former chief of staff said that his memory had worsened over the course of his presidency.

JILL BIDEN: He aged. He did. He got older. And we, we all saw him aging. We — you know, there were the words that he would forget. But, you know, we were all aging.

MELVIN: He — you — you wrote something. This was quite revealing in the book. And I want to put an excerpt on the — on the screen.

JILL BIDEN: Okay.

MELVIN: You write — because you questioned some of your decision making, it seems, in the book: “Had he grown too old for the job, and I hadn’t noticed? I didn’t think so, but could I be objective enough to be sure? The doctors assured us that he was healthy and able.” In hindsight, were you able to be impartial?

JILL BIDEN: Well, you know, the doctors did assure us. I mean, he had an exam every — every year — a health exam like every president does. The doctors assured us he was, you know, he was healthy, and I saw him doing the job every single day. Every single day he got up, he went into the office. He did the job. He passed bipartisan legislation. You know, he — he worked — and I saw him work hours into the night. So, I — you know, yes, did I see him, you know, slowing down a little bit?

MELVIN: Yeah.

JILL BIDEN: When he got tired, did he stutter a little bit at night? Yeah, sure. But he was still doing the job and he was doing a good job.

MELVIN: You were his closest confidante. You’re described as Joe’s gut check. If you could go back in a time machine and do it all over again, would you have encouraged him maybe to not run again?

JILL BIDEN: You know, as I look back, would I want to put Joe through the hurt and the pain that we felt during that time? Never, never. I mean, it was so hurtful. And —

MELVIN: So, it sounds like you’re saying, if you could do it all over again, you probably would have encouraged him to — to be a one-term President?

JILL BIDEN: — but it had to be his decision, Craig. It had to be his decision alone because he had to live with that decision the rest of his life. I couldn’t say, Joe, do this or Joe, do that. It was his decision to run in the first place, only his, even though the family had their input, especially the grandchildren.

MELVIN: Yeah.

JILL BIDEN: But, you know, it was his decision to get out.

MELVIN: It’s — it’s — it’s interesting because in the book, you know, you — you write about

this scene at a restaurant where you two are talking about the decision to run. You could have said there. You could have said —

JILL BIDEN: My gosh.

MELVIN: — you know, Joe, you've done.

JILL BIDEN: That was in 20 — what was that? 2021?

MELVIN: Yeah.

JILL BIDEN: Or, I forget what year it was myself. But what do you mean I could have said your too — no.

MELVIN: Okay.

JILL BIDEN: Everybody was saying, Joe, you have to run. You have to run. Everybody was encouraging to run. In my book, I write about that — how people were encouraging him because in the beginning he thought, you know, should I run? Shouldn't I run? but everybody was so positive and, you know, all our supporters were so positive. Everywhere we'd go, supermarkets down the street.

MELVIN: But Dr. Biden —

JILL BIDEN: Yeah, yeah.

MELVIN: — to be fair, I mean, there's a poll, there's a poll from 10 months before that debate moment. I mean, you're — you're noting the folks who wanted him to run. This is August 2023. We're not talking Republican voters here. We're talking 77 percent of everyone asked, was he too old to be effective to serve in other terms [sic]? Some of them said, yeah, he's too old, Democrats, seven in 10. How do you — how do you square that with the decision to put them through it again? Because he really wanted to.

JILL BIDEN: Well, you know, I square it with in 2023, the Democratic Party was behind my husband. And then the debate happened and things changed. So, you know, in my book, I write about everything that happened.

MELVIN: You do.

JILL BIDEN: I put it all in context. You read my book.

MELVIN: You do, yes.

JILL BIDEN: Thank you for that. And so, I think readers will understand from my point of view, and I think we have to point out, Craig. Like, that's one chapter of my book. My book is not

about politics. It's about me, my reflections, my life, my life as a teacher. My life is the first working lady — you know, First Lady. I went to work. I taught at a community college. I took a paycheck. I wanted to say to American women, look at me. I am like you are.

MELVIN: Yep.

JILL BIDEN: I'm balancing a job, my family, and then my duties as First Lady. And that's what my book is about.

MELVIN: Yes.

JILL BIDEN: It's not all about this debate, which was one moment in time, or of our four years.

MELVIN: Correct. In her book last fall, former Vice President Kamala Harris —

JILL BIDEN: Uh-huh.

MELVIN: — she wrote that staying in as long as he did was recklessness, that “the stakes were simply too high to leave to one person's ambition.” Does the former Vice President perhaps have a bit of a point there?

JILL BIDEN: That is her point of view, and if she felt that way, she should have said it.

MELVIN: The book, it's already, as you probably have heard, some fellow Democrats have expressed some frustrations with the timing of the book, reopening old wounds, potentially —

JILL BIDEN: I'm not reopening old wounds.

MELVIN: — but this is just — this is just some of what they've been told over the last few days. Take a listen.

SENATOR CHRIS MURPHY (D-CT) [on CBS's *Face the Nation*, 05/31/26]: I think Democrats do have to be honest about the mistakes that we made in 2024. Obviously, in retrospect, Joe Biden should have stepped away from that race.

CONGRESSMAN ADAM SMITH (D-WA) [on NBC News NOW, 05/29/26]: Jill Biden, his family, his inner circle, I mean, they did this country, and certainly the Democratic Party, a grave disservice by allowing this to go forward.

MEGHAN HAYS [on C-SPAN, 05/29/26]: When we get pulled back into conversations about age and the election in 24, it's never going to be a good place for Democrats.

MELVIN: What's your — what's your response?

JILL BIDEN: We are moving on. You know, Democrats have a great future. I think, you know,

we're looking forward to winning the midterms. And I think things are going to move forward in a more positive way. And yes, we look back and we're going to learn from the mistakes we made.

MELVIN: You're right. The book isn't just about politics.

JILL BIDEN: Thank you, Craig.

MELVIN: It's not just about that moment.

MELVIN: You write about Hunter.

JILL BIDEN: I write about him.

MELVIN: You write about Hunter. You write about the decision to pardon him as well. You acknowledge that the former President's senior advisors said not a good idea, but ultimately, you and the former President decided that, for your family, it would be a good idea. Have you —

JILL BIDEN: The pardon, you mean?

MELVIN: Took the pardon. Pardon — pardon — pardoning Hunter.

JILL BIDEN: Well, wait a minute. Not you and your family decided — the party — to pardon him. Joe —

MELVIN: But you consulted, you said you supported it.

JILL BIDEN: I did support it, of course. I'm his mother.

MELVIN: Have you made peace with the idea, perhaps, that a decision that could have been good for the Biden family may not have been necessarily good for the office of the President or President moving forward?

JILL BIDEN: Joe wasn't thinking about himself. You know, he said all along he was not going to pardon Hunter.

MELVIN: But then he did.

JILL BIDEN: Then the administration changed. You know, the process was not fair to Hunter. And I could — Joe could not see our son — you know, then the current President won, and the Justice Department changed, it became political. You know, Craig, you and I both know we grew up with, you know, the three separate branches of government, hands off, you know, Joe would never have interfered in — in the Justice Department, and told the Justice Department what to do or how to handle it. So, we were never — I mean, at the end, when we saw the Trump-- if someone tells you who they are, believe it. Trump said, "I want Hunter Biden to go to jail."

JILL BIDEN: We could not let our son go to jail on a — on that charge for a gun that he bought —

MELVIN: So —

JILL BIDEN: — and he had for 11 days. We could not let him do it.

MELVIN: — so, the President basically —

JILL BIDEN: Changed his mind.

MELVIN: — changed his mind —

JILL BIDEN: Yes.

MELVIN: — because he lost faith in the system?

JILL BIDEN: Because — yes, I guess it is, yeah.

MELVIN: You know, it's — it's — it's interesting because we started this conversation by talking about our connection.

JILL BIDEN: Yeah.

MELVIN: And the Biden legacy so much of it is going to involve cancer.

JILL BIDEN: It is.

MELVIN: You lost — Beau — to cancer. You launched the Moonshot Initiative —

JILL BIDEN: Yep.

MELVIN: — and now the former President has stage four —

JILL BIDEN: I know.

MELVIN: — prostate cancer. In — in terms of legacy, as you look back on this chapter, what do you want the Biden family legacy to be? The — not the political legacy — the personal legacy when it comes to these families right now, who are in similar fights?

JILL BIDEN: Oh, my gosh. You know, it's so hard. It's so hard to be a caregiver in that, you know, you worry every day, is he eating, right? Is he getting enough exercise? You know, is he taking — did he have his medications? And I think every American family has someone in their family dealing with this. And I hope that people can find hope in the fact that people are still fighting. We're still fighting against cancer.

MELVIN:

JILL BIDEN: It's part of my legacy. I hope it's part of Joe's legacy that we will keep fighting just like we did in those four years. We will keep fighting for the American people.

MELVIN: I know you will. Jill Biden, thank you.

JILL BIDEN: Thank you.

MELVIN: It really is a fascinating work.

JILL BIDEN: Thank you.

MELVIN: She's going to be sitting down with Jenna and Sheinelle as well later this morning. And the memoir — *View from the East Wing* — is out tomorrow.