CBS Mornings
11/02/26
7:00:17 a.m. [TEASE]
5 seconds

GAYLE KING: We've got a surprise endorsement shaking up a crucial Senate race just days before Election Day.

(....)

7:00:31 a.m. [TEASE]
14 seconds

CONGRESSWOMAN HALEY STEVENS (D-MI): Abdul made very clear that I was not welcome in his campaign, that he didn't need me there, that he didn't want me there.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: The Final Stretch]

KING: Michigan Democrat Haley Stevens endorses Abdul el-Sayed's Republican opponent.

(....)

7:02:45 a.m. [TEASE]
14 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Shocking Endorsement]

KING: We are ready with just one day to go. Everybody is talking about the Michigan Democrat who flipped on the Senate nominee and endorsed Republican Mike Rogers. We will hear from Haley Stevens and break down what it could mean for Tuesday's election.

(....)

7:03:20 a.m.
7 minutes and 49 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: America Decides; Rep. Stevens Breaks With Party to Support Rogers]

KING: But we begin this morning on the eve of Election Day. It is here, where nearly a dozen races in the midterm election could determine the balance of power in the next two years. One of them is in the Michigan Senate race where a last-minute endorsement on Sunday surprised, shocked the political world. Democratic Congresswoman Haley Stevens endorsed Republican nominee Mike Rogers, sparking a firestorm within her party. Now, as you know, she publicly supported nominee Abdul El-Sayed, who defeated Stevens in the Democratic primary. Nancy

Cordes is here to try to explain why Stevens changed her mind. What is the explanation, Nancy? Where do you begin?

NANCY CORDES: There are a lot of twists and turns in this story. Good morning, Gayle. You know, it was just last week that Democratic Congresswoman Haley Stevens was out in public supporting Abdul El-Sayed and telling people she was going to vote for him, even though her fiancé was voting for the Republican.

STEVENS: I am endorsing Mike Rogers for the United States Senate today.

CORDES: Democratic Congresswoman Haley Stevens made the shocking announcement just 48 hours before Election Day.

STEVENS: And our Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate, Abdul, said that I was no longer welcome in his campaign and that I should stay away, and he's right.

CORDES: The video was released as she attended a church service with the Republican Senate candidate Mike Rogers yesterday morning in Detroit.

FORMER CONGRESSMAN MIKE ROGERS (R-MI): I'm honored to have Haley Stevens' support today.

CORDES: The rift between Stevens and El-Sayed appeared to grow last week over an online political ad from an outside group, which appeared to link U.S. military support for Israel to rising grocery prices in the U.S.

WOMAN [in Rebellion PAC ad]: But we have to set that $7 aside for killing Palestinians.

CORDES: On Friday, Stevens urged El-Sayed to condemn the ad. Saturday, he told reporters he has already made clear that the ad was not made by me and I don't agree with the contents. He also asked Stevens not to attend his campaign event Sunday or future campaign events.

ABDUL EL-SAYED: I've been very clear that I would rather not distract from the key issues of this campaign, and those are getting way out of politics for money...

CORDES: Last night, Stevens struggled to explain her change of mind.

STEVENS [on CNN's *AC360*, 11/01/26]: Well, why is it okay to have the Democratic Party and a top nominee that, you know, ejecting, you know, this type of—or injecting, rather, this type of anger and lack of kindness?

[SCREEN WIPE]

ANDERSON COOPER [on CNN's *AC360*, 11/01/26]: Are you saying the anger and lack of kindness, again, that seems to point to you being disinvited to this event. Is that to the — is that

his anger and lack of kindness?

[SCREEN WIPE]

STEVENS [on CNN's *AC360*, 11/01/26]: Anderson, I was just trying to help this campaign and stand up for people who feel hurt. I am not the only one in this position.

CORDES: Stevens, who lost to El-Sayed by one point in the primary, has publicly disagreed with his stance on Israel's actions in Gaza. He has called it a genocide and opposes continued U.S. military support. El-Sayed told CBS's *60 Minutes* last night—

EL-SAYED [on CBS's *60 Minutes*, 11/01/26]: I don't know about you, but I don't pay my taxes to buy another country a bomb or a tank. That's Israel.

CORDES: Democratic Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, who endorsed Stevens in the primary, called her endorsement of Rogers a "despicable betrayal," and Nancy Pelosi said she chose to "dangerously betray Michigan families." On Sunday, El-Sayed tried to downplay the drama surrounding the Stevens switch.

EL-SAYED: At the end of the day, I actually don't think about Haley Stevens. None of this matters.

CORDES: Campaigning in Iowa last night, President Trump extended an invitation to Stevens.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I'd love her to join the Republican Party.

O'DONNELL: Well, let's continue this conversation with Nancy and bring in Ed O'Keefe as well. Wow, this is a shocking about-face, a betrayal of the Democratic Party and all of the members of Congress she told the night before she wasn't going to endorse the Republican. Nancy, what happened, and is this about their disagreement over Israel?

CORDES: It does seem that that was one of the factors, but the real precipitating event was his campaign saying she was not wanted at an event on Sunday, after she spent several days publicly criticizing him. She mentioned it in her video posted online, she mentioned it in her interview last night: If he doesn't want me, I don't want him. And it may just be that simple. The fact, however, is that it is an incredibly pivotal race that could decide the balance of power in the U.S. Senate, which is why it's sending shockwaves through both parties.

KING: I know some people are calling it a brave decision, some people are calling it a betrayal. But, Ed, I'm curious because Abdul El-Sayed says none of this matters. Close to two million people in Michigan have already voted. Do you think other Democrats will follow suit? Will it make a difference?

ED O'KEEFE: She won 731,000 votes in their primary that she lost by less than one percent, so there are potentially thousands, tens of thousands of Haley Stevens voters out there who may or

may not have voted yet and might take a cue from her. She did better with Black voters; she represents a large percentage of Michigan's Jewish voters. Those are the two groups with which he has had the biggest weakness. That's why Democrats wanted her out there campaigning with him and for him, telling her constituents, 'he is the guy you should vote for.' What is telling, though, is the guy managed to raise $1.2 million yesterday afternoon. For anyone, that's a good afternoon, but it is a signal at least the Democratic Party writ large across the country is ticked off at Haley Stevens for what she did, and that might inspire enough Michigan Democrats to show up and say, 'no, no, we don't do that in the closing days when we are facing the administration we are facing.'

NATE BURLESON: And either of you can take this, but there are now reports that some of her staff — former staff —

O'DONNELL: Yes!

BURLESON: — has resigned, and they are taking to social media about it.

CORDES: Yes.

NATE BURLESON: What does it say about Haley Stevens and her now-endorsement for Mike Rogers, and what does it say for the Democratic Party?

CORDES: She's almost being excommunicated from the party. Her long-time chief of staff on Capitol Hill stepped down. He said a lot of his fellow staffers are doing the same thing. The head of the Michigan Democratic Party said she is no longer a member of the party and they took her picture down from the website. This is a real backlash from the party.

KING: Did they know she was going to do it?

CORDES: Nobody knew.

KING: Nobody knew.

BURLESON: It seems like they were caught off guard.

CORDES: Nobody knew. They talked to her the night before, she said, 'no, no, I'm sticking.'

BURLESON: Blindsided.

O'DONNELL: Haley — Haley Stevens, once again, last night accused El-Sayed of making comments and having actions that were certainly anti-Semitic, in — in her words. Does it represent a larger rift within the Democratic Party?

CORDES: There's no question that this is an argument that has been playing out in public among Democrats for some time, specifically over Israel. He has argued he has no quarrel with Jews or

Jewish voters; his quarrel is with Israel's actions. On the other side, you've got Mike Rogers, who has been campaigning with President Trump, who has said a number of Islamophobic things about El-Sayed, claiming he is a jihadist, saying you need a metal detector if he makes it into the Senate, so that he can be escorted safely onto the Senate floor. So, there are a lot of hateful comments on both sides.

O'DONNELL: On both sides!

O'KEEFE: There may be something simpler at play here, though. There have been personality clashes between him and other statewide Michigan Democrats since he challenged Gretchen Whitmer back in 2018, and this may just be a case of, 'we don't like the guy.'

O'DONNELL: Yeah.

O'KEEFE: It could be that simple — just personalities clashing who run the party, a lot of ego, and then in the closing days, with the stakes as high as they are, she decided, 'forget it.'

O'DONNELL: Fascinating. Nancy and Ed, we love having you here.

BURLESON: Yeah. Thank you for helping us unpack it.

O'DONNELL: Stay with CBS for midterm voting on Election Day tomorrow. Our America Decides broadcast kicks off at 7:00 p.m. Eastern, right here after a special edition of the *CBS Evening News*. And we're going to have a full wrap-up of the election results on Wednesday.

(....)

7:21:06 a.m. [TEASE]
9 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Texas Turnout]

O'DONNELL: Ahead, everything is bigger in Texas including their elections, big voter turnouts, and even bigger spending are breaking records. Adriana Diaz is on the ground talking to voters. Can't wait for that.

(....)

7:36:57 a.m. [TEASE]
5 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Coming Up; Tough Race in Texas]

O'DONNELL: Up next, Texas voters talk about the state's hard-fought U.S. Senate race.

(....)

7:41:25 a.m.
2 minutes and 43 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: America Decides' Texas' Record-Breaking Midterm Races]

O'DONNELL: The state of Texas is going to be one of the most crucial battlegrounds on election night. So far, the races there are breaking records. Nearly 7.5 million early ballots were cast in Texas, a new state record. The Senate campaign between Democrat James Talarico and Republican Ken Paxton is now the most expensive non-presidential race in U.S. history and the polls show it is very close. *CBS Saturday Morning* co-host Adriana Diaz talked with voters in one Texas city about the race.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE JAMES TALARICO (D-TX): It is so good to be back in San Antonio.

ADRIANA DIAZ: James Talarico and Ken Paxton were both in San Antonio Sunday, possibly their only common ground.

STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL KEN PAXTON (R-TX): I think this is potentially my favorite place.

DIAZ: Talarico, a seminarian and former teacher elected to the state house at 29, identifies as a moderate fighting corruption. State Attorney General Paxton won the primary after getting President Trump's endorsement. He survived an impeachment trial three years ago over bribery and other charges. [TO CROWD] Anybody want to talk about the election? [BACK TO VOICE-OVER] Both candidates are zeroing in on Dallas-Fort Worth suburbs, must-win counties to flip the seat for Democrats. It may not get more Texas than this. We are at the Stockyards in Fort Worth in Tarrant County, where there's a daily cattle drive, and in this county, both parties are trying to wrangle votes. [TO UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOTER #1] Who are you voting for?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOTER #1: James Talarico.

DIAZ [TO UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOTER #1]: And why are you voting for Talarico?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOTER #1: He is more familiar because he came from a poor community like me, and I think he understands more of how the people at the bottom like me and my other friends are feeling right now.

DIAZ: This couple from East Texas voted early and for Paxton despite his past scandals. [TO UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOTER #1] What was the issue that was most important to you, the policy that Paxton represents that really got your vote?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOTER #1: Well, I think it's just on the whole as far as government

staying out of our lives and things like that, as far as taxes and whatnot.

DIAZ: A CBS News poll found that five percent of Republicans plan to vote for Talarico. Former Fort Worth mayor and lifelong Republican Betsy Price isn't one of them. She did something else.

BETSY PRICE: I did not vote in the Senate race, and, you know, I just skipped it. I did not feel like I could compromise my ethics or my morals and vote for either one of the candidates.

DIAZ: Both parties are also courting Latinos, who helped elect Trump in 2024, but many are dismayed by the economy and the President's immigration enforcement. Now, another issue you should pay attention to here in Tarrant County is that they eliminated 92 polling places in September as a cost-saving measure, but critics say they were mainly in Black and Latino neighborhoods, Nate.

BURLESON: All right, Adriana. Thank you.

(....)

7:55:51 a.m. [TEASE]
13 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Final Midterm Shakeups]

O'DONNELL: Ahead as Americans head to the polls tomorrow, we will look at key races, and a stunning about-face as a Democratic candidate endorses a Republican! We talk with two top former campaign strategists. They'll break it down.

(....)

8:00:17 a.m. [TEASE]
13 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: November Surprise]

KING: It is the final day, you know this, before the midterm elections. Candidates are making the last-minute push to reach voters, and we've got expert analysis of the issues and people to watch. Plus, the stunning endorsement in a very crucial race.

(....)

8:01:09 a.m.
6 minutes and 5 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: America Decides; Last-Minute Shakeups Ahead of Election Day]

O'DONNELL: And we're going to start this hour with control of Congress hanging in the balance ahead of tomorrow's midterm elections. On Sunday, President Trump rallied Republicans in Iowa and Kansas, two states he carried easily in 2024, but GOP Senate candidates are in tight races there in 2026. In Alaska, a federal judge dismissed a Justice Department effort to block certification of the results if Republican Senator Dan Sullivan loses. And Democrats in Michigan are in uproar after Senate primary loser Haley Stevens endorsed the Republican, Mike Rogers, after saying she would support the Democratic nominee, Abdul el-Sayed. Stevens says she felt pushed out by his campaign after demanding he condemn an outside group's ad linking Israel's war in Gaza to higher grocery prices. Let's look at the key development from both sides of the aisle. With us are Joel Payne, executive director of Move On, and Terry Sullivan, former presidential campaign manager for Marco Rubio. They are both CBS News contributors. Welcome to you both. Oh, my gosh! October surprise. We were all watching it. Joel, let me ask you, is this going to hurt the Democrats' chances of taking back the U.S. Senate in this high-profile race when the Democrat endorses the Republican at the last minute?

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: America Decides; Democratic Tensions Swell in Michigan]

JOEL PAYNE: No, well, you clearly would not want to be talking about disunity only 48 hours before an election. I think the —

NORAH O'DONNELL: This disunity.

PAYNE: — this disunity and unity. The way that this has happened, I actually think mitigates the risk for Abdul El-Sayed, because it was so, frankly, odd and so strange and so unexpected. Haley Stevens had previously endorsed Abdul El-Sayed. In fact, she made a pretty strong case against Mike Rogers previously, and something happened in the last week or two that has intervened. I don't want to speculate, and I think it would be unfair to speculate about her agency in the decision, but regardless, what this is experienced as, as voters feeling, I think, a bit misled by her, and I actually think it could — it could help Abdul el-Sayed. I mean, if you look at national Democrat, they're uniting behind Abdul El-Sayed, other Michigan Democrats uniting behind him, so it could have a boomerang effect that is beyond what Haley Stevens actually anticipated.

O'DONNELL: Terry, this is a bonus to Mike Rogers.

TERRY SULLIVAN: I'd say Joel and I are not unified on this. This is not going to help El-Sayed. The reality is this not only hurts him, but this helps Republicans nationwide because we are talking about this right now. You know, this has not been a great information flow for Republicans this election cycle, especially recently, and suddenly this helps a bunch. I kind of feel like Jim Carrey in *Dumb and Dumber* here. You know, "you're saying there's a chance?"

BURLESON: So, you are saying we are talking about this as in it's a distraction for Republicans?

SULLIVAN: Well, I wouldn't say it is a distraction. Instead, it changes — instead of talking about higher gas prices, we are talking about this race, and that's better for—

PAYNE: What you don't want is a permission structure for anyone, if you are a Democrat, to be able to excuse not supporting Abdul El-Sayed —

SULLIVAN: That's it.

PAYNE: — and I think that that does give for some —

SULLIVAN: 100 percent.

PAYNE: — I think what helps mitigate that is how odd this was.

KING: But Terry, some people say it's already helping him because he raised over a million dollars in one day yesterday, a Democrat.

SULLIVAN: Right, but he never had a problem raising a bunch of money from activists who are extreme online. What where we're really fighting for are these voters in Oakland County, in Macomb County that are swing voters and trying to decide, and she gives — Joel is right. She gives them permission to say, you know what? I'm going to split tickets. I might still be mad at Donald Trump or I might not like Republicans all the time, but I like Mike Rogers, and it's okay to be a Democrat and vote for Mike Rogers.

O'DONNELL: Midterm elections are a referendum on the President of the United States. In this case, Donald Trump, who has record-low approval ratings. He spent the weekend before the campaign holding a Halloween party at Mar-a-Lago with his quote-unquote rich friends when the main issue is affordability. And then, today, he's going to be speaking in front of the Lincoln Memorial about the projects that he's doing in DC. Terry, is that staying on message?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, well, I don't think anybody has ever accused Donald Trump of staying on message, and I think the problem Republicans are in are exacerbated. Every president or every party loses seats in this midterm election; that's just historic. But I think Trump has made it worse by some candidate selections, getting involved in primaries, in things like Texas. If John Cornyn was the nominee, we would not be spending a penny in Texas, and it would be a safe seat. And so, there's case after — redistricting has actually backfired on Republicans possibly, where it took a lot of safe Republican and safe Democrat seats and made them swing seats. And now, they are going to become —

O'DONNELL: So what are we looking forward to tomorrow? Joel, I'll start with you.

PAYNE: One, how do Black voters respond to, frankly, the attack on Black voter agency in the South? You look at that *Callais* court decision that happened, and are you going to see a surge in Black voter turnout in places like Louisiana, in South Carolina, in Tennessee, in Mississippi, places that are Republican strongholds? Again, it is not that Democrats may win in those places, but, like, will the margins maybe shift?

O'DONNELL: Gotcha.

PAYNE: Will a race Donald Trump won by 18 points, will it be, like, within five points now? Those are the things I'm looking for. The other thing is, look, we talked about Michigan. There is a fight bubbling beneath the surface in the Democratic coalition. It kind of exploded in the last 24 hours —

KING: Is it a preview of what's to come?

O'DONNELL: Yes, yes. That's it! That's why this matters.

PAYNE: — and I think that's a forecast of what the next two years are going to be for the Democrats.

O'DONNELL: Agree, for the Democrats. Terry, what are you looking for tomorrow?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, we are ready to hand the ball to Democrats and let them have this fight on a national stage for a few years. It will be a nice break for us Republicans.

PAYNE: And it'll unify you.

SULLIVAN: Look, I think one thing that's important is to look at the down-ballot races. As Joel's right, in a lot of these states, it may not matter. We talk about these Senate races, these governor races, and sometimes congressional races, but what about these state house races that control these state houses that are going to matter when these — when the turnout swings a little bit? So, those races are going to be important to watch tomorrow, too.

BURLESON: All right. And when is the premiere of your new show *The Odd Couple* coming out?

[TABLE LAUGHS]

PAYNE: Oh, boy. Well — who's odd? [TO SULLIVAN] You're odd.

SULLIVAN: [INAUDIBLE]

PAYNE: We both are.

BURLESON: Coming soon. Coming soon to Paramount+. Joel Payne and Terry Sullivan, thank you so much. We always appreciate you coming and helping us unpack this.