

Tim Walz for Kamala's Vice President: Barely Noticed or Noticeable

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Region: [USA](#)
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While the Kamala Harris coronation for Democratic presidential nomination continues in its safely shielded path, her sacred status among party members growing with each day, the decision to select Governor Tim Walz of Minnesota as Vice Presidential running mate had all the hallmarks of unbearable caution. Caution for being secure from any ambition on his part (Presidential contenders tend to pick running mates unlikely to go off the reservation or eclipse them during their time in office.) Caution, as well, from other factions in the party that may make things interesting at the Chicago Democratic Convention slated to start on August 19.

Caution, also, from any disturbance posed by overtly visible talent, which can be something of a handicap for higher office. The Minnesota governor had certainly received attention from Harris for his less than profound suggestion that comments made by Republican contenders Donald Trump and J. D. Vance were “weird”. In [an interview](#) with MSNBC, Walz declared that “These are weird people on the other side.” He [reiterated the view](#) at a campaign event in which he claimed that the Trump-Vance ticket was a “threat to democracy” that would see rights removed and people placed in danger.

I’m telling you: these guys are weird. pic.twitter.com/fvNRNf7T7T

— Tim Walz (@Tim_Walz) [July 24, 2024](#)

Given that much media coverage involves skipping over garbage cans rather than scouring the garbage, this was a perfect illustration about a figure who should, at best, stick to mediocre party slogans. But no. Harris, the Democratic anointed papier-mâché candidate for the White House, thought differently.

Many Democrats revelled in the fatuity of it all. “Tim’s signature is his ability to talk like a human being and treat everyone with decency and respect,” [said](#) former President Barack Obama in a statement. The *Los Angeles Times* [was told](#) by a Democratic source allegedly close to Harris that Walz revealed much “ease in cutting through political jargon to deliver a straight message,” something that appealed to her.

Walz may have an advantage insofar as he is utterly unknown to the voters that will swing

the election. Outside his state, he is clean, cold tabula rasa and utterly without distinction. The figure of no record can create something anew. But the person overlooked for his role – Governor Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania – may well cause tongues wagging, not least through his supporters.

Shapiro certainly would have been a far more interesting choice. Hypocritically, he was attacked by members of his own party for adopting an enthusiastically pro-Israeli position in the Israel-Hamas War, one that most Democrats implicitly, or explicitly support through the continued supply of arms sales to the Netanyahu government. But perfumed cant and ham performances are everything in Washington, and Shapiro's refusal to condemn the slaughter of tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza with appropriate ceremony [drew such labels](#) as "Genocide Josh".

A perplexed Jared Moskowitz, Democratic Representative from Florida, summarised the issue with lean clarity: "Josh's position on Israel is almost identical to everybody else, but he's being held to a different standard. So you have to ask yourself why." Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, also from Florida, [noted](#) with suspicion that Shapiro, as "the only Jewish candidate is getting excruciating, very specific scrutiny, particularly around his positions on Israel."

William A. Galston, chair and senior fellow of governance studies at the Brookings Institution, [suggests](#) two possible pitfalls to the Walz pick. For one, he opens a flank for Republicans to argue that Harris has yielded to the more progressive side of the political aisle.

While there is much to rebut and rebuke about the Harris-is-Progressive position, her stances on the Green New Deal, supporting Medicare for All, among others, will provide ammunition for the GOP squirrels that will hardly be defused by this choice. Walz is obviously there as stuffing for the moderate, even conservative voters, though this a severe misreading. The days of Walz as a pro-gun rights member of the National Rifle Association are now the stuff of dusty archives and amnesiac diarists.

The notion that he is a siren to working-class voters and those from the rural constituency is also highly questionable. Between 2018 and 2022, the gloss, notably in the rural areas, wore off. In 2022, his re-election was largely attributable to the suburbanites of Minneapolis. The current version of Walz is [one endorsed](#) by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who has been enthusiastic, along with other progressive voices, for his selection.

In another sense, as Galston goes on to suggest, this Harris pick could well aggravate some Democratic voters and squander the chance of a VP running mate able to draw in voters from a swinging state. The solidly safe Democratic state of Minnesota is hardly likely to make a dent in the campaign funds of the major parties, let alone disrupt the electoral compass.

Shapiro, being the governor of one of the presumptive jewels of the Electoral College, [exceeded](#) President Joe Biden's 2020 share in the state by some margin in a number of salient groups: seven points among rural and provincial voters; seven points among non-college voters; nine among Republicans and voters inclined to the Republicans, and five among Independents.

In the final count, the VP running mates of either side are unlikely to redirect navigation in

any significant way. Such candidates generally count as embroidery for the campaign, and, when in office, function accordingly. That said, embroidery can still be noticed, and in this regard, Walz is remarkably unnoticeable.

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Featured image: Governor Tim Walz at Bemidji Steel on July 1, 2024. (From the Public Domain)

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