

CLIENT ALERT

What to Expect at the Republican National Convention

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Last week, Crowell & Moring kicked off our [Election 2020 series](#) with a look at the [Democratic National Convention](#) and the impact of the downsized and digitized events as we race to November. This week, we look at the Republican National Convention.

Much like his 2016 campaign and throughout his time in the White House, President Donald J. Trump will seek to make the RNC a can't miss event that will dominate the national conversation and energize his base. Coming on the heels of last week's virtual DNC, at which President Trump's record and rhetoric were repeatedly criticized, Republicans are expected to deliver a direct rebuttal to voters—especially Democrats and independents - who supported President Trump in 2016. They'll make the case that the president's domestic and foreign policy has been a success and significant risk awaits if Democrats regain control of both the White House and Congress.

President Trump's argument for a second term is largely based on the country's strong economic record during his first three years in office. He will point to unemployment figures reaching their lowest rate in more than 20 years—before the COVID-19 pandemic shut stores, schools, restaurants, and factories. President Trump and his supporters are expected to use the RNC to argue that he was able to revitalize the economy once and that he can do it again—but only if the United States sticks to his agenda of prioritizing American jobs and manufacturing, clamping down on unfair trade practices by China, and reducing the regulatory burdens faced by small businesses and other job creators.

Although some official business and the official nominating vote will occur in person in Charlotte, N.C., many of the RNC's speeches will take place at various locales in Washington, D.C., including from the White House and the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium. They will be broadcast with only a limited in-person audience on television and the internet, which may make it difficult for President Trump to generate the same buzz and level of excitement he has come to expect from in-person rallies.

President Trump will try to use the RNC to draw a contrast with his opponents, former Vice President Joseph Biden and Sen. Kamala Harris, by portraying them as beholden to the far-left and out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Americans. While President Trump's approval ratings took a significant dip in the first half of the summer, recent polling suggests the race has narrowed in several key battleground states over the past month. A successful RNC may help President Trump generate the momentum needed in the final months of the campaign to win re-election on November 3rd.

Although President Trump has focused on a number of current events in speeches leading up to the convention, which may be a preview for his acceptance speech, corporate America should expect to hear more about a pro-business agenda for a second term that is rooted in the Republican orthodoxy of lower taxes, reduced regulatory burdens, and support for domestic manufacturing and jobs from the President and numerous other speakers. President Trump and his supporters are expected to highlight the following issues at the RNC and during his fall campaign:

Economic Prosperity: First and foremost, President Trump will showcase the American economic growth enjoyed during his first term, especially the record low unemployment rate. At the end of 2019, the national unemployment rate was 3.5 percent and the unemployment rates for African Americans and Hispanic or Latino Americans were the lowest in a generation, at 5.9 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively.

Regulatory Certainty: President Trump will highlight his Administration's efforts to cut regulatory costs by more than \$50 billion by taking seven deregulatory actions for every significant regulatory action. President Trump will argue that a Biden-Harris Administration will suppress any chance at a swift economic recovery through heavy-handed and costly regulations.

Foreign Policy: President Trump will argue that only he can be trusted to stand up against China, and he is likely to paint his Democratic rival as too cozy with that country. He will also tout his record of thwarting ISIS, removing U.S. troops stationed abroad, pulling out of the Obama Administration's deal with Iran and the Paris climate accord, and supporting Israel. He will also try to portray himself as clear-eyed to the threats posed by Russia and North Korea, while encouraging further dialogue with the leaders of those countries.

Law and Order: Differing views toward police, race, and the protests occurring across the country are perhaps the most significant wedge issue of the fall campaign season. President Trump has already sought to position himself as the "law and order" candidate while accusing his Democratic rivals of contributing to a surge in violent crime in American cities and of opposing law enforcement, whereas Democrats have sought to focus on police reform and racial justice.

Immigration: The issue of undocumented immigrants was central to President Trump's election in 2016 and has continued to animate both his supporters and detractors during his first term. President Trump is expected to highlight alleged examples of violent crimes committed by undocumented immigrants, especially in cities and states governed by Democrats, as justification for his policies on immigration. He is also expected to cite the construction of approximately 300 miles of physical barriers along the southern U.S. border as an example of his ability to deliver on a campaign promise.

COVID-19: President Trump will argue that his administration has engaged in a comprehensive and timely response to the COVID-19 pandemic and that his critics are distorting his record for politics. He will continue to assert that his early decision to restrict travel between the U.S. and China, a decision former Vice President Biden initially opposed, was a key to minimizing the U.S. death rate, and to argue that Vice President Biden would have been too deferential to China to take such decisive action.

Racial Equality: President Trump will try to deflect from criticism that his comments are racist and that he does not do enough to combat racism by arguing that his economic record has benefited all Americans while touting his support for the First Step Act to address inequality in the criminal justice system.

In addition to the acceptance speech by President Trump, the RNC is expected to feature speeches from: First Lady Melania Trump; Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina; former Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley; Governor of South Dakota Kristi Noem; Alice Johnson, a former federal prisoner whose sentence was commuted by President Trump; and Nick Sandmann, the Kentucky high school student who was featured in a viral video filmed at the Lincoln Memorial during the 2019 March for Life rally.

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