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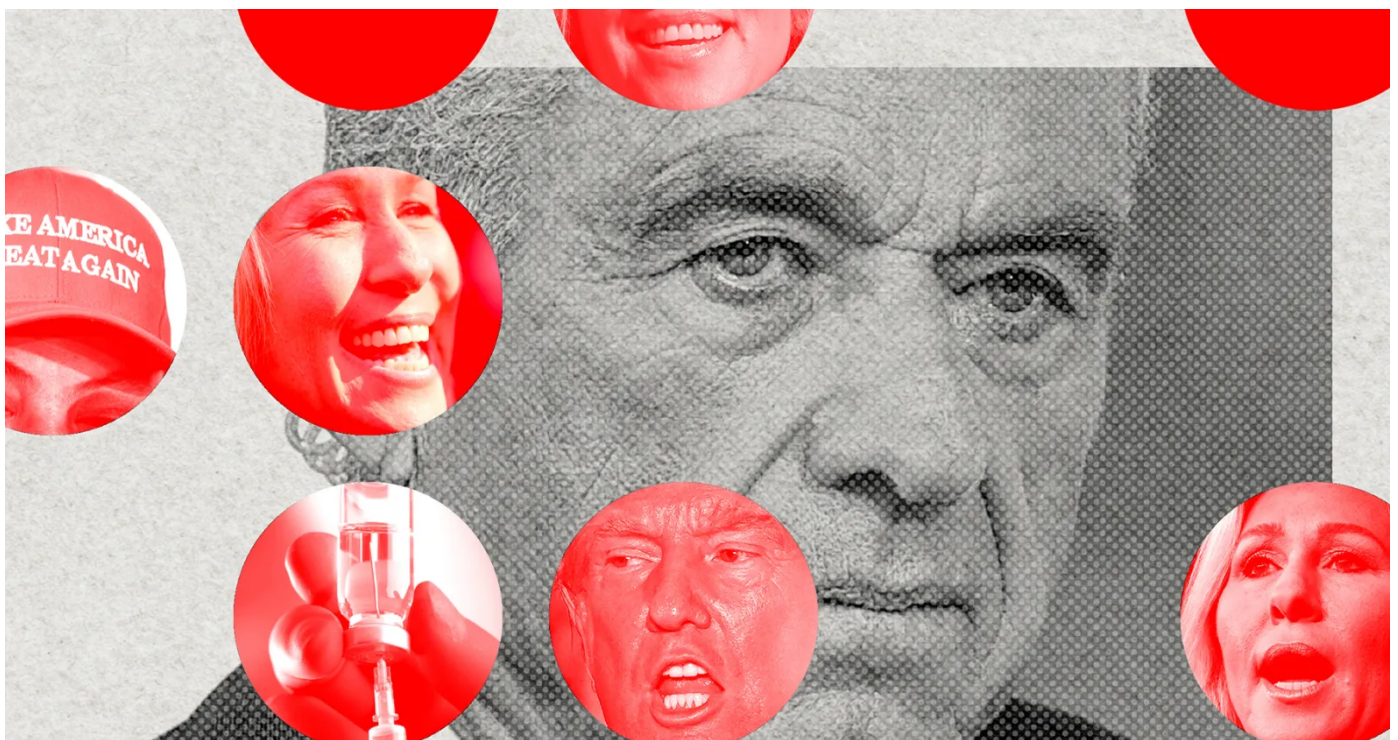
EXCLUSIVE

Pro-RFK Jr. Super PAC Has Deep Ties to Marjorie Taylor Greene, George Santos

The Super PAC is just one example of the nominally Democratic candidate running a campaign that's awash in support from backers of Donald Trump

BY ADAM RAWNSLEY, ASAWIN SUEBSAENG

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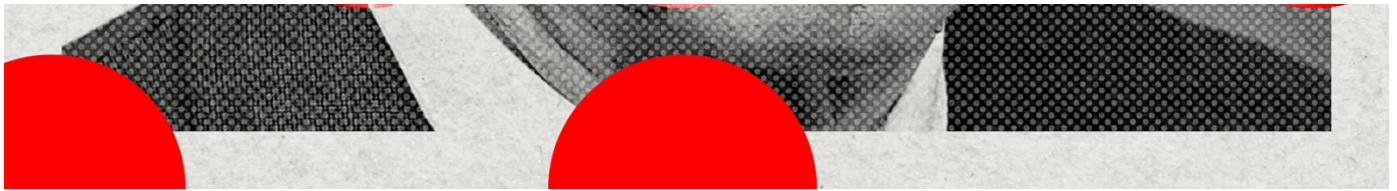


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LAST MONTH, SUPPORTERS of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s presidential bid created a Super PAC titled Heal the Divide. On its website, the group — whose name is borrowed from Kennedy's own campaign slogan — advises voters that “Only Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. can unite the Nation to start healing America,” and allows visitors to donate both in dollars and cryptocurrency.

There's nothing abnormal about a candidate getting a Super PAC, even a candidate making a long-shot bid like Kennedy's. What is abnormal, however, is that Kennedy is

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have a deeply pro-Donald Trump bent — including ties to anti-MSM officials such as Marjorie Taylor Greene, George Santos, and Herschel Walker.

Federal Election Commission filings list Jason D. Boles of RTA Strategy as its treasurer and use RTA's website and mailing address. In 2022, Greene's campaign and leadership PAC, Save America Stop Socialism, paid the firm more than \$372,000 for work on her 2022 congressional race, according to data compiled by OpenSecrets.

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The Georgia-based RTA, founded by political consultant Rick Thompson, also worked for Walker in his failed 2022 Senate race in Georgia. Thompson served as custodian for Walker's campaign committee and Boles worked as treasurer of the committee, earning the firm roughly \$50,000, according to campaign-finance records. More recently, Boles and Thompson have signed on as treasurer and designated agent, respectively, for the embattled Santos after the indicted congressman struggled to find personnel to handle his campaign finances.

Reached by phone, Thompson declined to comment on the Kennedy Super PAC. "We have a strict policy at our firm that we don't discuss our clients," he tells *Rolling Stone*. And the Heal the Divide site does not advertise its Republican backing. But a mistake on the group's website gives away its origins: The site's terms of service appear to have been copied and pasted from MAGA PAC, a Trump Super PAC, and incorrectly refers to the Heal the Divide site as MAGApac.com.

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It's not just one MAGAfied Super PAC, however, that's backing Kennedy's run against President Biden in the Democratic primary. His bid is awash in support from Donald Trump's allies in MAGA World, conservative media, and some of the Republican-donor elite. Broadly, they're hoping Kennedy will make Biden look weak in the primary, hurting his chances against Trump — or whichever candidate emerges from the GOP primary.

MAGA influencers and longtime Trump associates such as Roger Stone have praised Kennedy's candidacy as a way to “soften Joe Biden up.” Former top Trump political adviser and campaign strategist Steve Bannon also reportedly spent “months” encouraging Kennedy to run in order to energize anti-vaxxers who make up much of Trump's base, according to CBS News.

Kennedy's campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment, and the candidate has denied that he's effectively aimed at torpedoing Biden. He has at times criticized Trump, while also praising the former president on things like his draw among middle-class voters. And he has consistently attacked Biden on foreign policy and other subjects. “Our internal poll numbers are showing me stronger against both Republican candidates than President Biden,” Kennedy claimed to Fox News host Harris Faulkner early this month. “Democrats are going to want somebody who can beat Governor DeSantis and who can beat President Trump.”

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But whether he wants pro-Trump support or not — he's certainly getting it.

At Fox News, three staffers and a producer tell *Rolling Stone* that some higher-ups have privately discussed how much they value not just interviewing Kennedy on the network, but featuring segment after segment about his candidacy and his unexpected poll numbers in the 2024 Democratic field. “Management loves RFK [Jr.] coverage because it makes Biden look weak. You can expect a lot of it,” the Fox producer says.

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Before Tucker Carlson was fired by Fox in April, the network's then-top host would promote Kennedy and argue that the candidate somehow wasn't an extremist. "So, at this point, the question isn't who in public life is corrupt? Too many to count. The question is, who is telling the truth? There are not many of those. One of them is Robert F. Kennedy Jr.," Carlson said on Fox earlier this year.

In the time since, other hosts have praised or interviewed Kennedy, though some not quite as sympathetically as Carlson once did. Still, Kennedy has continued to enjoy a wellspring of backing from influential right-wing media outlets, including among the top tier at Fox.

Pete Hegseth, another Fox News host who, like Carlson, has privately advised Donald Trump on policy over the years, defended Kennedy in an April segment, saying: "The establishment will do whatever it takes to keep Biden in the White House. You know that. He's very useful to them.... The deep state gets deeper every day. They work quietly while Joe does other things. They're already trying to kneecap Joe's primary opponents. Robert F. Kennedy Jr. — he's surging in the polls.... Now that he's a threat, [the mainstream media is] going for his throat."

Meanwhile, Trump and some of his senior aides have delighted in Kennedy's presence in the 2024 race, viewing him as a useful anti-Biden agent of chaos, according to three sources on and close to the Trump campaign. The ex-president and 2024 GOP front-runner briefly praised Kennedy during this month's interview with Fox News' Bret

Baier, while getting his name wrong, calling Kennedy “very nice” and a “very, very fine person” who Trump knows “very well.”

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Members of Trump’s team are also pushing the message that Kennedy’s candidacy is a sign of Biden’s weakness. “The fact is, President Biden is a very weak incumbent. He’s just fortunate more opponents have not entered the primary. Ironically, the last time America had a failed Democratic incumbent president, Ted Kennedy ran against Jimmy Carter. Now, Robert Kennedy Jr. is running against Joe Biden,” says John McLaughlin, one of Trump’s top pollsters. “RFK Jr. is on a mission, and Joe Biden is weak and vulnerable. His poll numbers are extremely soft.”

Wealthy right-wing donors and activist groups have also pitched in to support and amplify the long-shot presidential campaign.

David Sacks, the South African-born venture capitalist who has donated to Ron DeSantis’ gubernatorial campaign and hosted his campaign launch on Twitter, recently held a fundraiser for Kennedy last week. He was joined by fellow venture-capital investor Chamath Palihapitiya. The event included “Democrats, Republicans, and Independents,” according to Palihapitiya.

The far-right anti-gay group Moms for Liberty has also scheduled Kennedy to speak at its annual summit in Philadelphia next week. In advertising the summit, the group

leads with a quote from conservative 2016 presidential-primary candidate Ben Carson: “A lot of individuals in the room have decided to get up and do something about what they believe because that is what is going to save us as a nation.”

Kennedy’s claim that he’s running to defeat Trump contrasts with his stance when the 45th president was first heading to the White House. During the Obama-Trump presidential transition in January 2017, Kennedy visited the then-president-elect at Trump Tower in Manhattan — for a job interview.

According to a former senior Trump transition official, Kennedy “wanted to have some kind of role in vaccine research and the questions he raised about the safety of the vaccines,” and had been following some of what Trump had been saying about vaccines, including regarding the widely debunked theories about links to autism. Just after Kennedy left this meeting, Trump said to staff, “Oh, he’s gonna help us with vaccines,” according to the former official. (Kennedy in 2005 popularized some of his anti-vaccine rhetoric in a since-debunked article in *Rolling Stone*. He has recently attacked the publication, falsely claiming editor-in-chief Noah Shachtman somehow played a hand in the story’s retraction in 2011 and subsequent removal from its website. Shachtman began his tenure in 2021.)

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Kennedy’s senior role on so-called “vaccine safety” never happened in Trump’s four years in office. Several of Trump’s closest advisers during the transition and early administration urged him never to appoint Kennedy to that kind of position, arguing that Kennedy had too much baggage and would be too much of a public-relations nightmare for the young presidency, former White House aides say. “It took longer to talk him out of it than it should have,” says a former senior administration official, who recalls trying to talk Trump out of officially appointing Kennedy in the Oval Office. But ultimately, Trump got talked out of it. In the years since, Kennedy has publicly trashed Trump for helping to launch the “tyranny” of Covid-19 vaccination.

The 2024 campaign is far from the first time that Kennedy has rubbed elbows with MAGA donors. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Kennedy's political ecosystem often tilted to the fringes of the left, capitalizing on liberal skepticism of large pharmaceutical companies. But as Trump pushed Covid-19 myths and attacked public-health experts in 2020, the far-right swelled the ranks of anti-vaccine conspiracy theorists and offered Kennedy a new audience.

In particular, Kennedy has courted Ty and Charlene Bollinger, two pro-Trump political activists who held a rally outside the Capitol on Jan. 6 to promote Trump's lies about a stolen election. The couple, labeled as members of the "Disinformation Dozen" for their prominence in posting vaccine myths on social media, have featured Kennedy in an interview on their United Medical Freedom Super PAC, and as a speaker at their Truth About Cancer Live anti-vaccine conference alongside Eric Trump.

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David and Leila Centner, two big-dollar donors who forked over \$1 million for Trump's 2020 reelection campaign and attended the former president's Jan. 6 Stop the Steal rally on the mall, also briefly served on the board of Kennedy's Children's Health Defense nonprofit.

But for all of the support and hype from the right wing, Kennedy polls at 14 percent, according to the RealClearPolitics polling aggregator, 50 points behind Biden's 64