

Summer's the perfect time for Trump to announce 2024 plans

Despite how high the temperatures are already, the summer of 2022 is going to get hotter.

Domestically, gas prices are at historic highs, inflation is at 9%, a level unseen in 40 years, and our neglected southern border has a welcome sign that says, "We don't care if you cross illegally."

Internationally, the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine is producing historic food shortages, the U.S. dollar risks being supplanted by the Chinese yuan as the reserve currency, and the once-proud and energy-independent United States of America is begging Iran, Venezuela and OPEC for petroleum that can be produced domestically. President Joe Biden, aka the "gaffe factory," has transformed our robust nation into a three-ring circus.

It would be reasonable



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to anticipate that Democrats would act quickly and effectively to both domestic and international issues given the crucial midterm elections looming large. Respond they did — with

an all-but partisan January 6th committee, making history as America's first congressional kangaroo court. It is evident that the January 6th committee's aim is to hurl everything at the wall and hope something sticks. This is a sheer act of desperation by Democrats, who are signaling that they have given up on their capacity to beat Republicans in the midterms on their own accomplishments while in the majority in both the House and Senate. The Democrats' most consistent message to the American people, who have to choose between buying groceries or filling up the tank is a resound-



BACK ON THE TRAIL: Former President Donald Trump could seize the initiative by announcing he was running for president in 2024.

ing "drop dead."

The Democrats are floundering. According to a recent poll by the New York Times/Siena College, a majority of Democratic primary voters (64%) would rather see the party pick someone other than Biden for the 2024 race. Another statistical body blow to the Democrats comes from a

June 1–20, 2022 Gallup survey, which shows that just 16% of Americans approve of the way Congress is handling its job, while 82% disapprove. These poll results paint a very bleak picture for a Democratic victory in the 2022 midterms and the 2024 presidential election. When there's blood in the water, sharks will swarm,

and in the world of politics, the biggest shark is former President Donald Trump.

With a war chest of more than \$100 million, a large, energized base that flocks to Save America Trump rallies, and several electoral wins for Trump-backed Republican candidates, the former president is in a very good position to push the GOP to victory in 2022. However, nothing will shake up stumbling Democrats and political opponents in his own party more than the announcement of a presidential run in 2024. Trump told New York Magazine, "I've already made that choice" regarding 2024.

Trump should make his candidacy for the 2024 election known this summer. The numerous Republican candidates in the midterm elections will receive a huge boost from Trump's visibility as the party's leader. The morale of the candidates will be lifted by large-

scale Trump rallies. Early data from congressional and gubernatorial races in critical battleground states will allow the Trump campaign to pinpoint initiatives and observe what works in real time. Efforts made at the grass-roots level to aid midterm candidates will, in turn, help Trump garner more of the support crucial to his eventual success in securing the Republican nomination.

It's not necessary for Trump to campaign on the slogan "Save America" or "Make America Great Again" to be a strong contender in 2024; "Do You Like \$5 Gas?" would do just fine. The summer of 2022 is a prime time for Donald Trump to make his presidential campaign announcement.

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TICKETMASTER

Did Springsteen freeze out fans with high ticket prices?

By Tony Norman
Tribune News Service

There's a line that comes immediately to mind about the latest kerfuffle between Bruce Springsteen and Ticketmaster that has seen tickets for his upcoming tour surge as high as \$5,000 a pop: "Well, I got a job and tried to put my money away / But I got debts no honest man can pay."

Hardcore fans, especially those desperately trying to get tickets to a Springsteen show in the era of dynamic pricing, will connect with those lyrics from "Atlantic City," arguably the best cut from his spare and haunting 1982 masterpiece "Nebraska."

We've all seen the headlines in recent days about ridiculously high ticket prices "angering" the

Boss' longtime working- and middle-class fans who've waited to buy tickets since his last tour seven years ago.

They want to know why it should cost several paychecks to cover one or two tickets plus gas, a dinner, parking and a souvenir T-shirt or two.

The angriest of them took to social media denouncing both Springsteen and Ticketmaster. You can't just blame the algorithms, they said. Someone saw the first Springsteen tour in seven years as a golden opportunity to make killing.

"I have nothing whatsoever to do with the price of tickets," E Street Band guitarist Stevie Van Zandt wrote on Twitter.

Springsteen fans know this. They aren't naive about supply and demand. They've done the math:

According to every actuarial table, Springsteen, 73, is likely in the twilight of the touring phase of his career.

For older boomers, this may be their last chance to see him before the Grim Reaper comes knocking on their doors, too. Consequently, everyone expects to pay a premium to see the Boss at this point, especially if he's only averaging two tours a decade.

No one expects him to be doing three-hour shows well into his 80s like some Jersey Turnpike version of Mick Jagger. Still, seeing Springsteen shouldn't require refinancing a mortgage just to sit in the nosebleeds.

Once the hysteria died down a bit, it was discovered that 88% of the concert tickets were sold at face value, in the \$60 to

\$400 range before service fees, not the dynamic pricing markups only Russian oligarchs can afford.

According to Ticketmaster, 18% of all tickets sold were under \$99, 27% were \$100 to \$150 and 11% were \$150 and \$200.

The average price of all tickets sold was \$202. Of those, 11.8% were designated Platinum, but only 1.3% of those tickets sold for more than \$1,000. It's still not an ideal situation even at those prices, but it is far more tolerable than the outrage would suggest.

I suspect that a lot of anger directed at Springsteen comes from those disappointed in the gap between his working-class lyrics and the perception that he's an out-of-touch shill for the Democratic Party.

A lot of his conservative

fans, of which there are many millions, see their hero palling around with Barack Obama and the Clintons and performing at President Joe Biden's inauguration and feel the sting of an indirect political rebuke. This makes many of them hypersensitive to every perceived hypocrisy — like apparent collusion with Ticketmaster to rip off longtime fans.

The one thing that everyone of every political stripe agrees on is that Ticketmaster has done nothing to deserve the windfall it receives as the middleman in its near monopolistic ticket empire.

And why can't artists and venues be trusted to work out ticket prices with input from fans who will ultimately buy the tickets? Why is a middleman like Ticketmaster al-

lowed to insert itself into the relationship?

For some reason, the American political and business class is perfectly comfortable with brutal and stupid market practices that are self-defeating in the long run. No one is fooled by what's going on. We just tolerate it until the day we won't tolerate it anymore.

Meanwhile, the anger at Bruce is subsiding. Folks realize that, yes, he could've done more to use his enormous influence to set prices for his shows "every honest man can pay," but they're going to give him the benefit of the doubt because they love him and have loved him for five decades. Short of selling a kidney, his true fans are always going to be there waiting for him with fists in the air when the lights come up.