

Marianne Williamson Says Democrats Need to Fix 'Unjust' Economy to Win

Last UPDATED: March 13th, 2023, Marianne Williamson, the first Democrat to launch a major challenge to President Joe Biden in the 2024 presidential race, warned Democrats will have a "hard time" winning if they do not fix the country's "unjust" economic system in a new interview with Newsweek. Williamson, a bestselling author and spiritual leader who previously ran for president in 2020, launched her 2024 campaign earlier this month, contesting Biden for the Democratic presidential nomination. Thus far, her campaign has highlighted economic inequality, climate change, and health care as key policy areas where she differs from Biden. She is positioning herself to his left, who has faced scrutiny from progressives over key issues such as the economy and immigration. These voters largely backed other candidates in the 2020 race, such as Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who said this week that Williamson will raise important issues in the 2024 race. Meanwhile, polls show Biden's approval has struggled, including among many Democrats. The president has not officially announced a reelection campaign, but has consistently expressed his intent to seek a second term. Williamson told Newsweek that the economic message from Biden, who has highlighted economic gains even amid ongoing concerns, is "deeply disconnected" from voters' reality. She warned that if Democrats don't properly address income disparities, they could struggle to retain the White House in 2024.

Marianne Williamson campaigns in Portsmouth 2024 presidential candidate Marianne Williamson campaigns at a coffee shop in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, on March 9. Williamson, who announced her presidential bid in March, spoke about her campaign and the issues most important to her in an interview with Newsweek. JOSEPH PREZIOSO/AFP via Getty Images "The great unfinished business of the Democratic Party is to end an economically unjust system, not just make it more survivable," Williamson told Newsweek. "Anything short of that, and we will have a very hard time winning in 2024." Many political experts view Williamson's bid as a longshot, as incumbent presidents very rarely lose to primary challengers. A Morning Consult poll released after her announcement showed Biden leading Williamson by 74 points. However, Williamson told Newsweek she is not "too worried at this point about polling data," as she has only been in the race for a week. She expressed optimism about voters' reception to her message, noting that she believes Americans "have a deeper understanding of the fundamental flaws of modern capitalism." "People have a greater understanding, I think, than they did four years ago that the government too often supports that amoral bottom line," Williamson said. Williamson, while campaigning in New Hampshire, spoke with Newsweek by phone on Saturday to discuss her 2024 presidential campaign, the issues that compelled her to run, and how she would differ from Biden in her approach to governing. The interview has been lightly edited for brevity and clarity. What inspired you to run and challenge President Biden for the Democratic nomination? Was there a specific moment or decision that compelled you to run? It was a decision that was made over many months. The issues that I most cared about in 2020 have gotten better, but they are far short of the fundamental economic reform that we need in order to beat the Republicans in 2024 and in order to repair the country. What are specific ways President Biden has failed to deliver for

voters. Also as president, what would you have done differently to secure a better outcome? Americans deserve to have the same economic rights and opportunities that are considered moderate positions and granted to the citizens of every other advanced democracy—universal health care, tuition-free higher education and tech schools, free child care, paid family leave, sick pay, and a guaranteed living wage. We need a 21st Century Bill of Rights. Twenty percent of Americans are doing fine in today's economy. But that island of economic well-being is surrounded by a vast sea of economic despair. Going to the American people in 2024 with a message that the economy is doing well is deeply disconnected from the visceral experience of the majority of Americans. Sixty-four percent of Americans live paycheck-to-paycheck. Sixty percent of Americans can't afford a \$400 unexpected expenditure. Eighteen million people can't fulfill the prescriptions that their doctors give them. Eighty-five million Americans are underinsured or uninsured. One in four Americans carry medical debt. Half of our seniors live on less than \$25,000 a year and 12 million children are hungry in this country. All of this in the richest country in the world. We need more than the amelioration of stress. We need fundamental economic reform.

Marianne Williamson speaks to reporters Marianne Williamson is seen speaking to reporters July 31, 2019, in Detroit. Williamson, while campaigning in New Hampshire, spoke with Newsweek by phone on Saturday to discuss her 2024 presidential campaign. Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

How would you go about working with Congress, perhaps in a way that might be different from President Biden, to achieve these goals? When President Biden said that he would raise the minimum wage—when it came to going beyond federal workers, the parliamentarian stopped him. The Republicans would never hide behind the skirts of the parliamentarian. The president sided with the railroad companies rather than with the workers, although he says he's a labor president. The president says he understands that climate change is an existential threat, but he has given more oil drilling permits than [Donald] Trump did. And even now, his administration is approving a fossil fuel infrastructure plan in Alaska. He also could have and should have just canceled the entire college loan debt. I think that if he had done that immediately, the opponents of that move would not have had the chance to wage the kind of opposition that they have. President Biden is trying to help people survive what is basically an economically unjust system. The great unfinished business of the Democratic Party is to end an economically unjust system, not just make it more survivable. Anything short of that, and we will have a very hard time winning in 2024. Polls show Biden currently holding a substantial lead in the Democratic primary. How do you plan to overcome this polling gap and breakthrough, despite concerns from some progressives that the establishment will ignore your campaign? Of course they will—that's what they do. But voters are waking up to that. And I can tell you, for instance, that Granite Staters are not happy about it at all. This isn't 100 years ago, when men could just sit around the table smoking cigars and figuring out who the nominee should be. President Biden, and specifically the DNC [Democratic National Committee], should not be engineering a primary schedule in order to clear the decks of any serious challenger. It is unfortunately typical of the political media industrial complex to try to peripheralize anyone who comes to the agenda other than their own. As of today, I've been in the race for one week. I don't think that I should be too worried at this point about polling data. Can you speak to the reaction from how progressive politicians have reacted so far to your campaign? Do you anticipate any progressives backing your campaign? First of all, I'm honored that Senator

Sanders said that he thought I would run a strong campaign and that I would bring up very important issues. I certainly plan to try to do that. The Democratic Party is more than politicians. The Democratic Party is Democratic voters, so it doesn't really matter to me too much that progressive politicians are falling in line with the DNC's narrative. What matters to me is what, and what should matter to all of us, is what the voters will have to say on Election Day. Marianne Williamson endorses Bernie Sanders Marianne Williamson leaves the stage after endorsing Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders' 2020 presidential campaign in Austin, Texas, on February 23, 2020. Williamson told Newsweek that she was honored that Sanders said that he thought she would run a strong campaign in 2024. Drew Angerer/Getty Images As you've been campaigning, what have you found the response has been from voters? I think Americans have changed a lot actually in the last four years. I think people have a deeper understanding of the fundamental flaws of modern capitalism, and how we currently live in a system where short term profit optimization for huge corporate entities is put before the safety, health and well-being of the American people and the planet on which we live. People have a greater understanding, I think, than they did four years ago that the government too often supports that amoral bottom line. We are not right now functioning as a government of the people by the people and for the people. We are functioning as a government of the corporations, by the corporations and for the corporations. That means that we are a less vital democracy than we are oligarchy. What I sense is that people are ready to face that and challenge the status quo. What do you think has caused this change? Was it the pandemic? I think it was a gradual process, but yes, I absolutely think the pandemic showed a lot of people that there are aspects of the system as it currently exists, which would rather people drop dead than allow any serious challenge to short term corporate profit maximization. Tens of thousands of essential workers died while billionaires became \$2 trillion richer. Winston Churchill said you can always count on Americans to do the right thing after they have exhausted every other option. Sometimes Americans are slow to get it with things, but once we do get it, we slam it like nobody's business. Americans are recognizing, on both the right as well as the left, there's a layer of corporate tyranny that is baked into the cake in this country of this point. If the status quo will not disrupt itself, we the people will do that. Marianne Williamson attends AIDS monument groundbreaking Marianne Williamson attends the AIDS Monument Groundbreaking on June 5, 2021, in West Hollywood, California. Williamson told Newsweek that she thinks people have a greater understanding than they did four years ago that the government too often supports an amoral bottom line. Emma McIntyre/Getty Images for Foundation for the AIDS Monument Why do you believe you would be the best candidate to go against a Republican? How would your approach to handling them differ from President Biden? The Republican Party, as it's now constituted, spews big lies. And the only thing that will override that is big truths. Too often, the corporatist Democrats will tell the truth, but they won't tell the whole truth and they won't tell nothing but the truth. I will. The Democratic Party has swerved from the traditional Rooseveltian advocacy—unabashed unequivocal advocacy for the well-being of the American worker. The corporatist wing of the Democratic Party tries to have it both ways. They try to help people on the periphery to help people alleviate stress. But too often they are unwilling to challenge the underlying corporate forces that make the return of that stress inevitable. The Party has to look in the mirror and heal itself in order to become the conduit this country needs to really heal our broken society. What would you say to voters

who might be skeptical of your campaign? The Democratic voters sometimes have this co-dependent relationship to the DNC. It's not healthy. We should all be independent thinkers. This is a democracy, and the American people deserve to have as wide an array of options before them as possible. President Biden should present to the Democratic voters his agenda for the next four years. I, and any other candidate, will submit to the American people our agenda for the next four years. It should not be the DNC. It should not be the Democratic elite, and it should not be just Democratic politicians who decide which way we will go. It should be the Democratic voters. That is democracy. If every candidate has a chance, without smear, without dirty tricks, to present our agenda, and then the voters choose Joe Biden, then God bless him. But that should be a decision made by the voters and no one else. Marianne Williamson speaks during 2020 debate Marianne Williamson speaks during a presidential debate in Detroit on July 30, 2019. Williamson told Newsweek that Democratic voters sometimes have a co-dependent relationship to the DNC, which she said is not healthy. Justin Sullivan/Getty Images What was your biggest takeaway from your 2020 campaign, and what will you do differently this time around? The system is even more corrupt than I feared, but people were even more wonderful than I hoped. So I came away with an appropriate skepticism about how the system operates, and even more inspiration and dedication than ever about the possibilities of American democracy. I can tell you this. The American people are not the problem. What else do you want to share with Newsweek's readers about your campaign or your vision for the United States? We have a serious Neofascist authoritarian threat in our midst. None of us can afford to sit out this moment. But I think that this generation is up to the task of handling that threat, just as other generations have handled the threats in their time. It's a tough moment, but there have been tough moments in American history before. Let's not be the first generation in American history to wimp out on doing what it takes to put the country back on track. [Fyi07 Gy6Vx S3mjP Lki7Y](#)