

Downballot: The 10 weirdest politicians on your 2024 ballot

OPINION: Spoiler alert — JD Vance did not make our list of the strangest, most bizarre candidates on the 2024 general election ballots.

Editor's note: The following article is an op-ed, and the views expressed are the author's own. Read more [opinions](#) on theGrio.

[“Weird”](#) isn't necessarily an insult.

It's an adjective used to describe something that is “different from the ordinary in a way that causes curiosity or suspicion.” The term [defines](#) something that is “strange, of extraordinary character, odd or fantastic.” I've never met someone who didn't have at least one weird peculiarity or idiosyncrasy. But having a few unique traits doesn't necessarily make a person weird.

For instance, like most people raised in a God-fearing household that believes in freedom, justice and the American way, I put salt on my grits. But people who prefer stone-ground candy corn for breakfast aren't necessarily *weird*. About 30% of American adults [fear snakes](#). But being afraid of snakes isn't *strange* or *extraordinary*. And even though most Americans are heterosexual, Christian and white, I wouldn't think an interracial same-sex relationship between a Muslim and a Presbyterian was more “odd” or “fantastic” than a sugar grits eater who is scared of a boa constrictor.

Being weird is different.

We've all been approached by a weird guy at the state fair or the homecoming game who insists that you pet the giant snake dangling around his neck. Even if you aren't afraid of snakes, the “you wanna play with my snake” guy is just weird. The goth girl in high school just wants to be different. However, if she ran for class president on a campaign platform that *everyone* should wear smokey eyes and dress like a steampunk witch, that would be weird.

There's absolutely nothing wrong with being a white, heterosexual Christian who loves America. But considering the wide variety of issues facing this country, it would be weird if a legislature banned restaurants from serving sugar grits. Or if a Supreme Court banned abortions. Or if a president banned Muslims. Or if a state banned Black history.

And yes, there are quite a few weirdos on your 2024 ballot. These candidates are *obsessed* with demonizing immigrants, forcing women to carry babies to full term and preventing kids from knowing that LGBTQ people exist. They are so preoccupied with imaginary threats like Sharia law, third-graders learning critical race theory, DEI pilots, Haitian dog-eaters and dead illegal immigrants stealing elections that they don't even have “concepts of a plan” for issues like health care, climate change and police reform.

But who's going to tell them?

Since theGrio believes in diversity, equity and inclusion, we decided to celebrate the worst and whitest weirdos running for office in 2024. Our list includes Christian nationalists, obsessive-compulsive racists and good, old-fashioned crackpots.

Here are the top 10 weirdos asking voters to play with their salty, anti-Black, islamophobic, misogynistic, poisonous snake.

10. State Rep. RJ May III

Running for: South Carolina House of Representatives

The weird thing: Really loves the kids

Rep. Robert J. May III, R-Columbia, insists on being called “RJ” — no periods, no spaces. The two-term, Trump-loving state representative [campaigns](#) as a “conservative champion” who is taking on the “Columbia swamp, liberal establishment and career politicians.” As vice chair of the ultra-conservative S.C. Freedom Caucus, it’s not shocking that May has sponsored dozens of [anti-trans](#) and [anti-abortion](#) bills that claim to “protect children.” But May’s recent bills banning the use of Medicare funds for [abortion](#) and [gender-affirming care](#) are somewhat odd, especially since May’s GOP colleagues’ rejection of the Affordable Care Act’s Medicare expansion blocks millions of children *from having any kind of health care*.

May [sponsored a bill](#) designating Jan. 24 as “Moms For Liberty Day,” so it’s unsurprising that May’s website lists an endorsement from the Ku Klux Karens. However, it’s pretty suspicious that May isn’t listed among the candidates who signed [Moms For Liberty’s](#) pledge to defend parents’ right to “direct the education, medical care and moral upbringing of their children.”

What happened?

In August, officers from the S.C. Law Enforcement Division and federal agents from the Department of Homeland Security [raided May’s home](#). While a federal prosecutor [would](#) “neither confirm nor deny” that May was the target of an ongoing investigation, the raid was conducted by Homeland Security Investigations. Notably, that particular [HSI division](#) is billed as “the global leader in the fight against child exploitation.” A [local news outlet](#) reportedly confirmed that authorities were “probing allegations related to ‘child exploitation’ – specifically allegations tied to child sex abuse materials (or ‘CSAM’), more commonly known as child pornography.”

Then he disappeared.

Since the raid, the SC legislator hasn’t held a single campaign event. He stopped [tweeting](#), and his [Facebook page](#) is disabled (Everyone knows how much white moms love Facebook). To be fair, it is quite possible that the Jesus-loving conservative warrior is not weird. Maybe “the global leader in the fight against child exploitation” made a mistake. How do we know what “RJ” actually means?

Maybe he *Really Just* loves the kids.

9. Katy Stamper

Running for: Georgia's 11th Congressional District seat in the U.S. House of Representatives

The weird thing: Democratic plant

Katy Stamper is a Republican.

She [supports](#) Trump, Ron DeSantis and Matt Gaetz. Stamper also [thinks](#) homosexuals should be barred from adopting children, transgender people need Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapy, and Supreme Court justices who support gay marriage should be impeached. As a lawyer, Stamper represented the head of the [Dustin Inman Society](#), an anti-immigrant extremist group [that](#) "works very hard to make Georgia as inhospitable to illegal foreign nationals as possible." While right-wing Republicans share Stamper's ideology, one thing makes Stamper different.

Stamper is running as a Democrat.

Even though she won the Democratic primary in Georgia's newly redrawn 11th Congressional District, MAGA Maggie ["identifies"](#) as bi or trans – a *bipartisan* candidate who *transferred* to the Democratic Party because it gave her a better chance to get on the general election ballot. Now voters in GA-11 get to choose between an extremist, election-denying [MAGA Republican](#) or Katy Stamper.

Democracy is weird.

8. Thomas Leager

Running for: U.S. Senate for Wisconsin

The weird thing: His kidnapping hobby

If "Second Amendment maximalist" and customer service representative [Thomas Leager](#) could be any fictional character, he'd choose Gandalf the White from "Lord of The Rings."

Unfortunately, Leager is a white non-fictional character. His resume includes community organizing, civil rights work and allegedly trying to jump-start [a civil war](#) by kidnapping a sitting governor. Since the Gandalf job was already filled, Leager decided to become the America First Party nominee for the Wisconsin Senate seat. Before he became a politician, Leager served as the executive director of Wisconsin Gun Owners Inc. and organized armed protests against Wisconsin's COVID shutdown and vaccine mandates, according to the [Associated Press](#). He wants to ban gender-affirming care, protect the border and put America first.

He is also an [unindicted co-conspirator](#) in the plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

"I was the Wisconsin target for the FBI in the Whitmer case," Leager confessed on his podcast. "We just happened to slip through their nets." But Leager is not a kidnapping newbie. According to federal prosecutors, the judge in the Whitmer trial allowed Leager to exercise his Fifth Amendment right because Leager was "under investigation for a similar plot involving a different" politician. No, that's not the weird part.

The largest contributor to Leager's political campaign is [David Steinglass](#), a wealthy Democratic donor whose Patriots Run organization funds far-right candidates. Steinglass recruited the Lord of the Kidnapping Rings as a third-party candidate because Leager is *more extreme* than far-right GOP nominee Eric Hovde, who is challenging Democratic incumbent Tammy Baldwin's Senate seat.

Leager is an anti-trans activist who was born human but identify as a wizard if he had the opportunity. He is a conservative secretly funded by Democrats but is "running on a platform of [transparency and accountability](#)." He loves freedom, liberty and individual rights so much that he's willing to take away people's freedom, liberty and individual rights.

You can't make it make sense.

7. Micah Beckwith

Running for: Lieutenant governor of Indiana

His weird thing: Demon sex

Micah Beckwith is a self-professed "[Christian nationalist](#)" who [believes](#) the Jan. 6 was "divinely inspired," and wants to outlaw women's access to "[vile](#)," "[demonic](#)" reproductive rights. But more than anything, Micah Beckwith hates sex. He wants to [ban books about sex](#) and is really concerned about teachers giving [oral sex](#) lessons to second-graders and the Democratic Party's "[Jezebel spirit](#)." If you'd like to hear more, you can just check out Beckwith's podcast: "[Jesus. Sex and Politics](#)."

It's weird AF.

6. Anna Luna

Running for: U.S. House of Representatives for Florida

Her weird thing: Shapeshifting and Whitewashing

Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla, is a Christian anti-immigrant, anti-trans second-generation immigrant who identifies as a Jewish white woman ...

Sometimes.

Eight years after Luna [identified](#) her race as "white, not of Hispanic origin" on her voter registration, she [threw a party](#) to celebrate becoming the first Mexican-American woman elected to represent Florida in the House of Representatives. None of her high school, college or military friends knew she was Hispanic. Then again, she changed her name from Mayerhofer to

Luna when she was 29, the [Tampa Bay Times](#) reports. Sometimes Luna tells people she was raised Jewish and that her “entire mother's side of the family and father's side of the family on both sides are from Mexico,” even though her family said she was raised Catholic. Other times, Luna claims that her grandfather was an Ashkenazi Jew ... until her family members admitted that Grandpa Heinrich served in the Nazi Army in the 1940s.

To be fair, Luna might have lost her memory during a traumatic home invasion in 2019 that threatened her life. But the police report says someone just left Luna's apartment door open. Or maybe she was traumatized by her grandma, who died from AIDS, which never happened. Perhaps she just misses her dad, who was a drug dealer who was never convicted of dealing drugs.

Regardless of Luna's lies, you can count on her to stop voter fraud (except for Donald Trump), [critical race theory](#) (except for her false history), unwanted immigrants (except Nazis) and lying politicians not named Anna whatever-her-last-name-is.

5. Katrina Pierson

Running for: Texas House of Representatives

Her weird thing: Oxy moron

[Katrina Pierson](#) is a [pro-secession](#) Republican who loves America. She once worked as the [spokesperson for the Tea Party](#), the national spokesperson for the Donald Trump campaign and the [liaison](#) between the White House and the organizers of the Jan. 6 rally (Yes, that one). Pierson is a [single mom](#) who was raised on welfare in a fatherless home by a mother who suffered from drug addiction but trumpets “[family values](#).” She sued an employer for [discrimination](#) and but defended the MAGA administration's lack of diversity. Her [arrest for shoplifting](#) was dismissed, but she praises Trump's stance on “[law and order president](#).”

She faces no challenger in the general election.

Katrina Pierson is a Black woman.

4. Jeff Zink

Running for: U.S. House of Representatives for Arizona

His weird thing: Living in an alternate reality

If you've ever wondered what Kari Lake would look like if she were a cowboy, meet Rep. [Jeff Zink](#), R-Nowhere.

Zink refers to himself as pastor, referee and first-term congressman for Arizona's 3rd Congressional District. Aside from attending pro-Trump, pro-insurrection and [pro-Hitler rallies](#), Zink spends his time wearing cowboy hats, referees basketball and promotes “the core principles that have shaped our nation: family, faith, and the fundamental freedoms we all enjoy

as Americans.” As a God-fearing American who loves everyone (besides Democrats, illegals and laws), there’s one thing Zink hates:

Reality.

Zink’s faith in God, the Constitution and family values doesn’t stop him from defending the Jan. 6 insurrectionists, including Zink’s own [son](#). Zink, who was also there, claims his boy [was falsely arrested](#) on trumped-up charges and blamed the damage on Antifa operatives dressed in all-black. The [FBI concedes](#) the only evidence they had was security camera footage, location data and *pics from the son’s own Facebook page* that showed MAGA Zink Jr. damaging property. Oh, there’s one more thing:

Zink isn’t really a congressman.

He just plays one in his head. Like his idol Donald Trump, [Zink](#) still [refuses to admit](#) that his opponent beat him when he ran for Congress in 2022. In Zink’s defense, Arizona stopped a recount, so we don’t know if it was a voting machine malfunction. After all, Zink only lost by a mere 54 percentage points.

3. Michelle Morrow

Running for: North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction

Her weird thing: Pro-murder

Michele Morrow is a big proponent of murder.

If Morrow wasn’t a white woman, she’d be called a right-wing extremist or a terrorist. Her [hit list](#) includes Ilhan Omar, Joe Biden and the televised, pay-per-view execution of Barack Obama.



The Deplorable Choir ★★ ★ @DeplorableChoir · May 12

Who wants to see Obama tossed into Gitmo for treason?!



Michele Morrow

@_stand_firm

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I prefer a Pay Per View of him in front of the firing squad

I do not want to waste another dime on supporting his life.

We could make some money back from televising his death.

#Obamagate

7:01 PM - 13 May 2020



Aside from sharing weirdo beliefs (like believing that the “+” in LGBTQIA+ stands for [pedophilia](#)), the most peculiar thing about Morrow is that she is *anti-school*. The white-wing extremist prefers to homeschool her five children and urged others not to send their children to public schools. During her [2022 campaign to sit on her local school board](#), Morrow referred to public schools as “socialism centers” and “indoctrination centers.” She has no experience, training or expertise in schooling or instruction and supports a [constitutional amendment](#) to get rid of the North Carolina Board of Education.

Sure, let’s put Murder Morrow in charge of our children’s education.

2. Mark Robinson

Running for: Governor of North Carolina

His weird thing: Urine trouble.

Even though NC Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson claims [God sent him to North Carolina's voters](#) to fight the scourge of [gay rights](#), gender-affirming care and the loss of family values, theGrio doesn't believe in kink-shaming. Every American should have the right to identify as a Nazi when writing about having sex with their sister-in-law. It's what the founders wanted. Some people's families have different values.

But why is Robinson so obsessed with urine?

Look, I'm not peepee-phobic. Perhaps he wants to [control where trans people use the bathroom](#) because he's worried about long lines at the urinal. Maybe Robinson [couldn't vote](#) on Gov. Roy Cooper's emergency declaration after Hurricane Irene because he had to go to the boys' room. But judging from Robinson's alleged posts on [NudeAfrica](#), the GOP candidate's [urophilia](#) endangers the lives of all North Carolinians.

Until his "[investigation](#)" is finished, I guess we'll never know.

Honorable Mentions:

Marjorie Taylor Greene's [Jewish space lasers](#), Lauren Boebert's "[thug](#)" love, JD Vance's [love seat](#) and Kari Lake's "[passing](#)."

(Seriously, [who's going to tell her?](#))

1. Cornel West

Running for: President of the United States

His weird thing: Cornel West

"How does it free us?"

These five words are not just a guiding principle. For many people, this statement defines the entirety of their political activism. For some, voting is an act of protest and a sacrament to the ancestors. For others, this intensely personal revolutionary act is the literal manifestation of our imagination thrown into wishing well of the body politic. It is *just one* of the tools that free us.

While no candidate will ever check off every box on a voter's political wish list, I understand why some people do not accept the pragmatic premise that voting is a binary choice. As a Black voter who spent most of my adult years in South Carolina and Alabama, I do not believe that casting a ballot for someone who can't possibly win is equivalent to "throwing away" one's vote. Breaking the two-party system's stranglehold on American politics requires voting for someone who most represents one's values – even if they are not represented by the two major political factions. Even if that candidate loses, their ultimate goal is not lost. I understand all of this.

What I do not understand is how voting for Cornel West achieves this objective.

Why not Yeezy or Jill Stein or [Harambe](#) or my mama? The stated [goal of the Cornel West campaign is](#) “to unite in solidarity with movements of truth and justice, who seek a choice beyond empire, white supremacy, capitalism, patriarchy, and the confines of the corporate-dominated two-party system.” While noble and ambitious, West’s [platform](#) is just a list of goals pandering to our desire to get free; not demonstrably different than the Democratic Party’s panders to our desire to get free. But West’s campaign is so narrowly focused that it only addresses the concerns of one constituency:

Cornel West.

As brilliant as West may be – *and he is* – it is clear that West still envisions himself as a bastion of moral clarity and radical liberation politics. However, to some – including those who are inclined to vote for a third-party candidate – the once-revered scholar is not just trying to dismantle mainstream politics. He has become a cartoonish phantasm who hates everything. He hates [Ta-Nehisi Coates](#) and [Michael Eric Dyson](#) and [Melissa Harris Perry](#) and [Barack Obama](#) and the [Democratic Party](#) and [Kamala Harris](#) and anyone occupying the spotlight that casts a shadow on the beloved revolutionary thinker once known as Cornel West.

But how does it free us?

It is fair for West to criticize the Democratic Party (many of the party’s staunchest Black supporters share his opinions). As a people, we are sometimes reluctant to accept criticism of something we love, including our mamas, Black Democrats and our heroes. Barack Obama was too moderate and compromised to anti-Black conservatives *and* he was the best president of my lifetime. The Democratic Party takes Black voters for granted, is funding an apartheid state’s genocide, *and is* leaps and bounds better than the GOP.

And yes, Cornel West is a trailblazing revolutionary truth-teller. He *is also* a self-obsessed caricature so blinded by his dazzling vocabulary and academic brilliance that he is using our desire to be free as the wage for his cultural relevance. He is an icon *and* a tragic figure — a curiously odd, strange caricature of an extraordinary character.

But who’s going to tell him?

Even saying it makes me feel weird.

Michael Harriot is an economist, cultural critic and championship-level Spades player. His New York Times bestseller *Black AF History: The Unwhitewashed Story of America* is available everywhere books are sold.