

TRUMP TRIPS OVER OWN FEET HASTENING PARALLEL RETREATS

It is official conventional wisdom.

Trump is retreating on Jeffrey Epstein.

Or rather, Democrats led by Ro Khanna, survivors, and a handful of Republicans who could not give a fuck, starting with Tom Massie, forced Trump to retreat.

Retreat. RETREAT!! Bill Kristol wrote.

And they're laughing at the position it puts Mike Johnson in. (Well, not CNN. CNN pretends Johnson had a "strategy" on Epstein.)

President Trump's stunning reversal on the "Epstein files" discharge petition has undercut months of work by Speaker Mike Johnson.

Why it matters: The Epstein issue has plagued the House since the summer. Now the speaker is about to suffer a clear defeat over Reps. Thomas Massie's (R-Ky.) and Ro Khanna's (D-Calif.) discharge petition.

- *Johnson cut the week short before the August recess after Democrats forced multiple votes on releasing the files. He then kept the House out of session for nearly two months – a move that, intentionally or not, delayed the discharge petition from*

reaching the floor.

- *“What I am opposed to is the reckless disregard that was used in drafting this discharge petition,” Johnson told reporters on Wednesday.*

But on Sunday, Trump reversed months of calls to block an Epstein vote, saying Republicans should vote for it. On Monday, he said he’d sign the bill.

- *Tuesday’s vote is expected to pick up significant GOP support, including from Rep. Lisa McClain (R-Mich.), the highest-ranking woman in the House GOP leadership.*

Zoom in: Johnson’s posture about the legislation hasn’t changed, a source familiar with his thinking told Axios.

- *But after months of railing against it, he opened the door Monday to supporting it.*

The focus here is on Mike Johnson. Not the way Democrats chased Johnson out of DC a week early this summer, literally stealing him of the power of his gavel, then forced his members to stay home (and Adelita Grijalva to wait to be serve her constituents) for two months while Americans suffered the costs of the shutdown.

It doesn’t consider that by undercutting Johnson, Trump risks destroying the way he set

Johnson up as his functionary. Trump and Johnson are both treated as the agents here.

Both NYT and CNN view this as a rare retreat from Trump.

For the first 10 months of his presidency, Mr. Trump has steered the narrative and bullied Congress into doing whatever he wanted with almost no pushback. But as Republicans gear up for midterm elections and some begin to plot a future after Mr. Trump, the Epstein episode is a rare instance in which he has lost control.

For months, House Republicans had dreaded the prospect of a vote on releasing the Epstein files. Such a moment would leave them torn between pressure from a fervent base demanding that they support the release of the files and a vengeful president who was demanding the opposite.

Mr. Trump's about-face was a bow to the inevitable that came after it had become clear that many, if not most, Republicans were planning to support the measure, wary of appearing to aid in a coverup for a sex offender.

Kyle Cheney is one of the only people noting that this is not coming in isolation, citing these six (he says seven) signs that Trump is losing his grip.

1. Republicans refuse to back down on Epstein vote
2. Indiana GOP lawmakers don't bite on redistricting
3. Warning signs appear for tariffs at the Supreme Court
4. No luck on the filibuster or the blue slip, either

5. Trump gets a one-two punch after pardoning 2020 allies
6. MAGA rebukes Trump on 50-year mortgages, H1B visas

He included seventh on social media: 7) Voters overwhelmingly rejects Rs in off-year elections.

I'd add to this list: Trump's coalition is also unraveling over whether they should be enthusiastic champions or opponents to Nazism, both a squalid fight played out in real life, and potentially useful given revelations that one of his House Nazis, Paul Ingrassia, also interceded to help accused sex trafficker Andrew Tate.

If we use it *right*, we can use the anti-Nazi backlash as a way to offer an exit ramp to Republicans fleeing the ship, one JD Vance, at least, intends to go down with.

But the Epstein retreat comes amid another important retreat, one only partly captured by Cheney's list. Last week, the reality that American can't grow (much) bananas or coffee caught up to Trump and after he single-handedly spiked the price of key breakfast goods, Trump started to retreat – like the Epstein vote – before his partners-in-crime, this time the Supreme Court, abandoned him.

Trump is trying to do with tariffs what he is also trying to do with Epstein, squeeze some victory out of his defeat, float rebates as a way to avoid explaining to voters that Trump single-handedly made Barbie unaffordable for Christmas and, depending on how SCOTUS rules, the possibility he created an enormous hole in his budget and the onerous process of paying back importers.

Both of these may be (attempted) tactical retreats. Pam Bondi may attempt to bottle up the Epstein files at DOJ. Some of Trump's stupid tariffs were lawfully enacted, *and also* stupid.

But it's important to note that these retreats are happening in parallel, not least because tariffs are one area where Republicans have always agreed with Democrats, even while hoping someone else would make the problem go away.