
Trump wins Iowa by a landslide. The results of the Republican caucuses are clear: he is the candidate in the presidential race.

(From New York) The caucus predictions have come true. Donald Trump has won a landslide victory in the Republican caucuses in Iowa, officially kicking off the US election season. On Monday night, in freezing temperatures of minus 20 degrees Celsius, the small Midwest state of just over 3 million people handed the former president a decisive victory that strengthens his grip on the Grand Old Party, despite numerous legal challenges that could ultimately complicate his return to the White House. The Republican caucuses, small gatherings where local members of a political party choose their candidates - in school facilities, churches and sports halls - began at 8pm in New York with a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance to the US flag. After a few technical steps, each candidate's representative gave a speech in support of their chosen candidate, and then the voters, strictly in person, expressed their preference via secret ballot. Trump emerged victorious with over 52% of the vote, while his two rivals, Ron DeSantis, Governor of Florida, and Nikki Haley, former Ambassador to the United Nations, received 21.2% and 19.1% respectively. The Iowa polls suggest that there are few alternatives to the former president, but Haley has proven to be a popular candidate, leading Ron DeSantis by more than 10 points in several states in polls conducted over the past few weeks. The former president appeared to have significant support in urban, small town and rural communities, according to an AP VoteCast poll. He also did well among evangelical Christians and people without a college degree, while a majority of caucus-goers said they identified with his 'Make America Great Again' ('MAGA') movement. According to an NBC News poll in December, the former president leads Ron DeSantis among likely Iowa caucus-goers, with 51% of evangelicals supporting Donald Trump, versus 26% for Ron DeSantis and 12% for Nikki Haley. Evangelical Christians were crucial to Trump's victory in this Midwest state. Many pastors began their sermons in the weeks leading up to the primary by focusing on the election. And while some did not endorse a specific candidate, many religious leaders appeared on a list of 300 Trump-supporting figures. Despite legal battles and conservative dissent over his refusal to endorse national abortion bans, white Christians remain loyal to Trump. Reasons for their loyalty include the fulfilment of promises regarding the appointment of three conservative Supreme Court justices, which led to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* regarding the constitutional right to abortion. Other factors include the decision to move the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the negotiation of the Abraham Accords, and the fact that members of the Trump administration had ties to religious communities, including fellow former President Mike Pence. Other evangelical leaders, such as Bob Vander Plaats, president and CEO of Family Leader, have endorsed Governor DeSantis because they are unhappy with the chaos surrounding the former US president. Christian conservatives in Iowa vote according to their religious beliefs, and for some, faith leads to MAGA and to restoring a religious-based America. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Trump's former press secretary, and her father, former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, a Baptist minister, planned a Trump Iowa Faith Tour that was postponed due to bad weather. But according to many political analysts, Trump's resilience is a byproduct of both American party weakness and contemporary right-wing extremism, which has emptied the Republican Party of its traditional values and filled its shell with a toxic form of reactionary populism. Monday's victory sent a clear message to the GOP: the nomination is Trump's, and it is still up to him to decide whether to withdraw or challenge his rivals - although the former US president is now preparing for a heated debate with Joe Biden. The Democrats also held their caucus on Monday, but only to settle internal party issues, as the Democratic National Convention, at the request of President Joe Biden, excluded Iowa from the early caucuses. Democrats in Iowa will have until 19 February to vote in the 'Presidential Preference Primary' and to get their ballots mailed in. The results will be announced on 5 March, 'Super Tuesday', when 16 US states hold their primaries and decide the future of both Trump and Biden.

