

# Tampa Bay Times

## Only three candidates can win the GOP nomination. DeSantis is one of them | Column

*"Republicans have a critical decision to make in this nominating contest."*

*By Alfredo Rodriguez III  
March 18, 2023*

There are a lot of names thrown around as potential candidates who will seek the Republican nomination in hope of becoming president. Many of those names are just that – names. The truth is there are only three candidates with a credible chance of earning the GOP nomination.

Donald Trump, despite ongoing investigations, potential criminal charges, a resurgent conversation of January 6<sup>th</sup>, and polling numbers among Republican primary voters considerably softer from their height still has a chance to win the GOP nomination.

Whether they are deluded, don't care about the lies, or simply and inherently contrarian to a fault, there still exists enough Republican primary voters for Trump to win enough delegates to earn the Republican nomination for president. However, just as 2020 and 2022 proved, Trump and Trump handpicked candidates can't win competitive statewide general elections.

Governor Ron DeSantis has clearly garnered the most attention among the media, early primary state voters, grassroots leaders, influential donors, and former Trump loyalists as the alternative to Trump. DeSantis is a conservative governor of a large and diverse state.

He's shown an ability to raise large sums of money. His book tour could not be going any better. He is a sought-after speaker at local and state Republican party events and his numbers in early primary states are very competitive with Trump.

DeSantis has endeared himself with a significant segment of GOP voters through his anti-woke agenda in schools and businesses, support for the right to life and Second Amendment, forcefully denouncing illegal immigration, and passing tax and regulatory

policies to help Florida grow its economy and continue to attract individuals, families, and businesses to relocate to the Florida.

DeSantis has largely ignored Trump's childish ridicule and nicknames and focused his grievances and attacks on Biden and his policies rather than other Republicans. What we haven't seen yet from him is whether he can counterpunch following an attack or if he has the charisma needed for the retail politics game needed in Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina.

Both will be important to winning.

The third candidate who can win the Republican nomination is United States Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina. Scott is a bona-fide conservative, but works with Democrats without compromising his conservative values.

Scott refuses to shy away from tough issues, and attacks them with the same vigor as your traditional policy discussions. He possesses charisma, has a diligent understanding of policy, speaks with command, and does not avoid talking about his strong faith and its importance and necessity to the American family and dream.

Scott is a dark horse candidate with strong appeal, but little-known outside Washington DC circles. This is both an advantage and disadvantage. He can either translate this appeal and build a unique brand to broaden and grow his support. Or he can squander it by peaking too early and introducing nothing new or substantive when Republican primary voters begin paying attention. The latter will force him to quickly become an afterthought.

Donald Trump, Ron DeSantis, or Tim Scott will be the Republican nominee for president. All the other names should quickly realize this and step aside rather than splitting the vote so much that Donald Trump once again becomes our nominee, we lose again in November, and have four more years of Joe Biden.

Republicans have a critical decision to make in this nominating contest. Don't make the wrong one.

*Alfredo Rodriguez III is the founder and president of Dyce Communications, a national strategic communications, public affairs, media and Republican political consulting firm.*