

The powerful influence of Valerie Biden Owens—Joe’s ‘final gut check’

By Isabel Vincent and
Miranda Devine
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The IRS was stopped from questioning Joe Biden’s sister, Valerie Biden Owens — said to be the president’s “final gut-check” in decision-making — about cash she received from Hunter Biden, a [whistleblower](#) has claimed.

Biden Owens received a payment via Venmo from the first son, according to an interview with IRS whistleblower [Joseph Ziegler](#), a 13-year IRS veteran who gave testimony to the House Committee on Ways and Means last month.

“So I continually ask, ‘Can I go and interview them?’ And those were always met with ‘no,’” said Ziegler, who was known as “whistleblower #2” in the Ways and Means transcripts. “And I think one of them was Valerie Owens that we talked about that I wasn’t allowed to go and interview.”

Ziegler, a Democrat and the lead investigator in the agency’s IRS investigation into Hunter Biden, [testified Wednesday](#) at the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability about how efforts to interview Biden family members were rejected — and the probe into the first son’s lucrative consulting work with foreign countries was blocked by prosecutors at the US Attorney’s Office in Delaware.



Valerie Biden Owens is one of her brother Joe Biden's most trusted political allies, newly released emails reveal, and has micromanage many aspects of the family's life and her sibling's career path. Boston Globe via Getty Images



Valerie Biden Owens is the unofficial chief of staff to her older brother Joe Biden. She has run his political campaigns since he ran for New Castle County Council in Delaware in 1969. ZUMAPRESS.com

While it's not clear how much Biden Owens received from her nephew via Venmo, the exchange sheds new light on her powerful place at the heart of the Biden's family and political operation.

The sheer force and single-minded purpose that characterizes Biden Owen's work on her older brother's political campaigns has earned her the nickname "Hurricane" — a moniker she adopted as one of her email addresses.

One former aide who worked on Biden's failed 1988 campaign for president said that Biden Owens's "amazing personality" often "compensated" for what they described as Biden's [short temper with staff members](#).



Hunter Biden, Joe Biden and Valerie Biden Owens in Ireland were overcome with emotion while reading a plaque in honor of Beau Biden, the president's late son, in Ireland earlier this year. AP

"She is gregarious, funny and gets rid of any tension immediately," the former aide said. "There were seven or eight people who had Joe's ear when he was senator, and she was definitely one of them."

Biden Owens is still in the background calling the shots in the White House, according to former aides who spoke to The Post this week.

"She was never part of Joe's strategic team," said a former White House aide. "But she is his final gut check. They're best friends and the president values her opinion, but she's not sitting in the Oval Office with him. She's there for dinner at the White House, talking to him and the First Lady over a meal."



The sheer force and single-minded purpose that characterizes Biden Owen’s work on her older brother’s political campaigns has earned her the nickname “Hurricane” — which she even uses in an e-mail address. Sarah Silbiger/POOL/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

New emails, published last month by a conservative non-profit, shed light on Biden Owens’ role as an important confidante to her brother. Biden Owens, 77, has managed the president’s political campaigns since his first foray into politics when he ran for Delaware’s New Castle County Council in 1969.

The emails, which date from between December 2009 and March 2019 and are culled from [Hunter Biden’s abandoned laptop](#), show Biden Owens as the final arbiter and micro-manager on everything that has to do with her brother and the Biden family.

Biden Owens stressed over the wording in a flyer for a 10-km fundraising race for the Beau Biden Foundation and offered strong suggestions over who should be invited to a St. Patrick’s Day breakfast in 2016 (“Unless there is a particular reason JRB wants the Bell family, I would delete,” she writes). She also had strong opinions about which photograph of Biden should be used in a promotional video.



Valerie Biden Owens worked on her older brother's senate campaign back in 1972. Penske Media via Getty Images

“Before you send the final cut, I would like to change a picture of Joe,” wrote Biden Owens in a July 17, 2016, email to Mike Donilon, a senior advisor to Biden. “His eyes are squeezed shut and you know I always want him to look good.”

But it is her central role orchestrating the family which the trove of emails really sheds new light on — and particularly raising money for the Bidens' many projects.

In a series of emails between Hunter Biden and Biden Owens, she brainstormed ideas for a logo for the Beau Biden Foundation, which she helped set up weeks after the president's eldest son's death in 2015. “Idea: eagle in flight made with children's block in its talons,” Biden Owens wrote on June 12, 2015, in an email chain that includes Hunter, Beau's widow Hallie Biden and Josh Alcorn, former chief financial officer of the foundation, which is dedicated to the protection of children.

There are also intensely personal emails to Hunter Biden after the death of his brother in May 2015.



Valerie Biden Owens (in pink) sat beside her nephew Hunter Biden during their trip to Ireland earlier this yearAP

In November 2016, Biden Owens reached out to Hunter, who had been in and out of drug and alcohol rehab facilities.

“I can’t reach you to talk to you,” Biden Owen wrote to Hunter on November 14, 2016. “I am happy that you can breathe freely now — your world will be much better my love. Call me when you can so I can hear your voice.”

In a subsequent email on the same day, she wrote, “I have been trying and trying you.” A phone number with a Washington, DC, area code follows the plea.

In October 2016, police in Prescott, Arizona, found a glass pipe and a Ziploc bag with “a white powdery substance” on the passenger seat of a Jeep that Hunter had rented. No charges were brought against Hunter because authorities claimed that they could not prove that he had actually used the pipe that contained cocaine residue. He began dating his brother’s widow, Hallie, not long after, according to his book, [“Beautiful Things.”](#)



Biden Owens has managed the president's political campaigns since his first foray into politics when he ran for Delaware's New Castle County Council in 1969. trail in the 1970s.Ira Wyman

Aunt Val, as she is known to her nephew, became a surrogate mother to Hunter and Beau after Biden's first wife, Neilia Hunter Biden, and their 1-year-old daughter Naomi were killed in a traffic accident in December 1972 shortly after Biden won his first US Senate race. Biden Owens moved into her brother's home to look after the toddlers.

A grieving Biden was famously sworn in as senator in the boys' hospital room on January 3, 1973—a memorable photo op orchestrated by Biden and his sister largely because the politician refused to leave his sons' side during their recovery, according to Biden Owens' 2022 memoir, "[Growing Up Biden](#)."

Even after Biden married his second wife, Jill, in 1977, Biden Owens remained close to the boys. In a March 13, 2013, email to Hunter from her private account, Biden Owens attempted to set up a meeting with Ron Klain, Biden's chief of staff from 2009 to 2011 when Biden was vice-president.



Hunter Biden was in and out of rehab facilities following his brother's death in 2015.

“Sorry I am such a difficult nephew,” wrote Hunter in response to his aunt's request to set a date. His email signature is Rosemount Seneca, the Washington, DC, investment and advisory firm he co-founded.

“You are a wonderful nephew,” Biden Owens replied. “Never gave me any trouble. We have to meet with Ron Klain so will do when you get back. Xo.”

In an email sent from her personal account two days before Hunter's 45th birthday and a few months before Beau's death in 2015, Biden Owens described her close relationship with her nephews.

“You gave me new life — Neilia, Mommy gave you to me — a gift which I tried hard to live up to,” she wrote in the Feb. 2, 2015, email with the subject line “My Boys.”



Joe Biden, his wife Jill Biden and Valerie Biden Owens posed with widow Hallie Biden, her children and Hunter during a trip to Kosovo to name a road for Beau Biden in 2016. David Lienemann/The White House

In addition to her role as a family matriarch, Biden Owens' main job for more than a half-century has been to make her older brother look good. Not only has she been a key player on Biden's senate and three presidential campaigns, she is the chair of the Joseph R. Biden Jr Institute of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Delaware.

"Women didn't manage Senate campaigns in 1972," she writes in her memoir, "But I did. So, sometimes I had to set the guys straight. I wasn't dubbed 'the Hurricane' by happenstance."

Email exchanges involved aides and members of the Biden family discussing news coverage of Biden and ways to build his appeal. In a May 2012 email sent from Biden confidant Ted Kaufman to Biden Owens, Hunter, Beau and Smith he praises the team for inviting the University of Delaware's women's basketball team to the White House.



Hunter Biden began a romantic relationship with Hallie Biden, his older brother's widow, a year after Beau's death in 2015.

"This was a stroke of genius," writes Kaufman. "I bet it did more to build his positives in DE than anything else he has done as VP. It should be a model of how he keeps his hand in Delaware."

Biden Owens, a former social studies teacher at a Quaker private school in Wilmington, writes in her book that during her brother's early political campaigns she marshaled her high-school students as volunteers to make signs and travel throughout Delaware to help Biden, a political unknown in the state, get elected.

"I would be fired for this today, but I told them that if they didn't work for my brother, I would flunk them," she writes.



Joe Biden was sworn in as a US Senator in the hospital room where sons Beau and Hunter were recovering in January, 1973, after the car accident that killed their mother and sister. Bettmann Archive

Biden Owens is so trusted by her brother that, when he suffered a devastating loss in the 2020 New Hampshire primary, she was tapped to give a speech on his behalf while Biden headed to a campaign event in South Carolina.

"While the results don't seem to be what we hoped, we're going to take our campaign to every corner of this country," Biden Owens said.

"There's no question that it's a close family and politics are the family's affair," said the former White House aide.

Biden Owens did not return a request for comment.