

Today's Meeting With Trump

I am writing this report from the Marriott Marquis in New York City, where I have been in meetings with Donald Trump and more than 1,000 religious leaders. There were household names like Franklin Graham, who opened the meeting with an incredibly moving prayer.

Others present included Dr. James Dobson, Tony Perkins, Dr. Ben Carson, Penny Nance and Jerry Falwell, Jr., who endorsed Trump early on in the primaries. Falwell cited his admiration for Trump based on years of personal friendship.

There was a smaller, private meeting before the main event, which I was pleased to attend. Trump caught me by surprise when he singled me out among those in the room and praised our work, which is only possible thanks to you!

Here are a few key points that stood out to me:

- In this meeting, Trump recapped his basic agenda. But I must say he spoke far more emphatically than I have ever heard him. For example, he vowed to rebuild our military, saying it would be far more expensive if we failed to do so because weakness invites war.
- As one might expect, Trump took a number of questions about major religious liberty issues in the news. He consistently referred to his list of judges, which has been widely praised by leading conservative organizations. Trump noted that they were pro-life, and that the courts were the key to addressing this problem because left-wing judges were the ones forcing this nonsense on the country. He is absolutely right.
- Trump also brought up the 1954 Johnson Amendment to the tax code. The amendment was authored by then-Senator Lyndon Johnson to muzzle pastors. Trump said he would work to repeal the Johnson Amendment so that religious leaders would no longer be afraid to speak up.
- Trump expressed 100% support for Israel, and ripped Obama for tilting U.S. policy toward Iran and against our most reliable ally. He promised that would end on the first day of his administration.
- Addressing concerns about his proposal to restrict Muslim immigration, Trump was unapologetic. He reiterated the need to be absolutely certain that our immigration policies are not putting Americans at risk. That is not xenophobia or bigotry. It's just common sense!

In conversations before, during and after the meeting, it was clear that many people there are still licking their wounds. My preferred candidate did not win the primary. Having said that, it was equally clear that everyone realized the risks we face this November. There is a coalescing taking place, and there must be.

In short, today's meeting was a positive for Donald Trump, and hopefully the beginning of an open and honest dialogue with values voters. I believe more evangelical leaders are on board today than yesterday.

While everyone who came to New York today wants to make America great again, we know greatness is measured in more ways than just balance sheets and GDP reports. We know our strength is more than just the number of carriers deployed or troops in uniform.

I believe America was a great, unique and blessed nation because our foundation rested upon the bedrock of Judeo-Christian values. I pray that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will maintain His hand of protection upon our nation. Men and women of faith have much to pray over in the days and weeks ahead.

Working together, I know we can make America "a shining city upon a hill."

Campaign Update

It is an understatement to say this campaign has been like no other in recent memory. It continues to be and will likely remain so until Election Day. With that in mind, here's a brief update on some recent headlines.

- In a column published yesterday at [USA Today](#), I noted the left's increasing appetite for violence, with some even justifying violence against supporters of Donald Trump.

On a related note, an illegal immigrant from England was arrested Saturday in Las Vegas. [Michael Steven Sandford](#) drove four hours to attend a Trump rally. While there, he attempted to grab a police officer's gun. Thankfully, he was tackled and escorted out of the room.

Sandford has reportedly confessed to the Secret Service that he "had been planning to attempt to kill Trump for about a year," even going to a gun range for target practice.

Will anyone on the left justifying hateful violence against Trump's supporters accept any responsibility for Sanford's actions? I won't hold my breath.

- Corey Lewandowski was fired yesterday as Donald Trump's campaign manager. The maverick political operative who successfully engineered Trump's primary victory reportedly clashed with family members and more seasoned hands brought in to assist with the general election campaign. Faced with disappointing fundraising reports and a deluge of negative press, Trump evidently felt a change was needed to reinvigorate the campaign.
- Polling continues to show a close race in November. A new national *CNN* poll finds Hillary Clinton leading Trump by just five points -- 47% to 42%. Twenty-two percent of voters are still undecided.

Meanwhile, polling in key battleground states finds Clinton leading in Florida, while the candidates are tied in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

The Senate & The Second Amendment

In response to the terrorist attack in Orlando, Democrats hijacked the Senate floor last week and demanded a series of votes on gun control measures. Last night they got their votes.

Democrats offered two amendments and Republicans offered two counterproposals. I won't bother going into the substance of each measure as none received the required threshold of 60 votes to pass.

The left's insistence on treating Orlando as an issue of "gun violence" is a total distraction. We should be attacking the terrorists, not the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding Americans.

But so long as the left continues to assault your rights, let me arm you with some facts:

- The term "assault weapon" is a manufactured phrase of the left intended to scare people. No one walks into a gun store and says, "I want to buy an assault weapon."
- It has been, generally speaking, illegal to purchase a machine gun or fully automatic weapon in this country since the 1930s. Laws regulating automatic weapons were further tightened in the 1980s. The "assault weapons" Democrats are referring to are, in fact, semi-automatic weapons. They fire one bullet each time the trigger is pulled, just like every handgun in America.

- According to FBI statistics, more people are physically [beaten to death](#) each year than are killed with rifles, including "assault weapons."
- The real culprit in "gun violence" -- another manufactured phrase of the left -- is, of course, the criminal. But handguns, not so-called "assault weapons," are used in the vast majority of shootings. According to the [Congressional Research Service](#), "assault weapons" were used in just 27% of mass shootings from 1999 to 2013.

* * * * *