



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on August 28, 2012

Rick Warren Cancels “Civil Forum” Featuring Romney and Obama

Rick Warren, pastor of California’s Saddleback mega-church, a best-selling author, and a member of the globalist Council on Foreign Relations, is cancelling his planned forum featuring presidential candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, citing the lack of civility that the two campaigns have taken in the run-up to the November election. Warren began the [Saddleback Civil Forum](#) at his Saddleback Church during the 2008 presidential election, inviting both Democratic candidate Barack Obama and GOP nominee John McCain to speak on issues of concern to American voters. But he said that this year’s campaign has taken a particularly nasty turn, with the two presidential candidates taking low blows at each other, and Warren wants no part of it.



“We created the civil forums to promote civility and personal respect between people with major differences,” Warren told the [Orange County Register](#) on August 23. “The forums are meant to be a place where people of goodwill can seriously disagree on significant issues without being disagreeable or resorting to personal attack and name-calling. But that is not the climate of today’s campaign. I’ve never seen more irresponsible personal attacks, mean-spirited slander, and flat-out dishonest attack ads, and I don’t expect that tone to change before the election.”

Warren insisted that “it would be hypocritical to pretend civility for one evening only to have the name-calling return the next day.”

While neither the Obama nor the Romney campaigns had confirmed that they would have attended the forum, scheduled for last week, Warren said that both had expressed interest.

[CNN](#), however, reported that neither candidate had agreed to attend, and that Warren may have canceled the forum for overall lack of interest. One senior Democratic campaign strategist told CNN that it was his understanding that Warren had “received tepid responses from both camps well before the supposed ‘cancellation.’ It appears that the event was cancelled because neither the Romney nor Obama campaigns thought it was in their interest to do.”

According to CNN, a “source close to the Romney campaign said that the former Massachusetts governor hadn’t planned on attending Warren’s event: ‘We were never going, ever. We offered to do a video.’”

Warren offered a second reason for scrapping the event, telling the [Orange County Register](#) that, in addition to the negative campaigns, an emerging hostility toward religious freedom was casting an



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ominous shadow over the forum. “This issue is more significant and has far greater implications for America’s future,” he said. “People have forgotten that America was founded by people who came here to escape religious persecution. Freedom of religion is the first freedom mentioned in the Bill of Rights — before freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to assemble, and every other freedom.”

He cited the plethora of local, state, and federal bureaucrats who “are daily trying to limit that freedom, impose restrictions, and stifle expressions of faith on campuses, in hospitals, and in businesses.” He added that “there are widespread attempts to redefine the First Amendment to simply mean, ‘You are free to believe anything at your place of worship, but you are not free to practice your conscience elsewhere.’”

Warren said that instead of the presidential forum, in September he would host a forum on religious freedom, inviting representatives from Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim persuasions to discuss their common concerns. He, apparently, will represent evangelical Christianity. “We obviously have different beliefs,” Warren conceded, “but we are all ‘neighbors’ in the national sense and the scriptures command us to ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’”

The Saddleback pastor was particularly critical of Obama’s views on religious freedom, saying that the president’s policies “clearly show what he values and I have told him that I adamantly disagree with those particular policies.” Warren said that he had not discussed religion with Romney, but imagined that “as a Mormon he’d obviously understand the importance of protecting all religions against persecution, and ensuring people’s rights to practice their conscience without government intervention.”

Photo of Rick Warren: AP Images



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