



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on June 11, 2018

Western Conservative Summit Draws Attacks From Far-left Groups

A few thousand conservatives from around the country [descended on Denver, Colorado](#) over the weekend to hear numerous prominent conservative speakers and politicians at the annual Western Conservative Summit (WCS) — touted as “the largest gathering of conservatives outside Washington, D.C.” — to attend workshops, and generally to enjoy friendly company of those with similar ideologies.



The event also drew scurrilous and borderline libelous attacks from such far-left groups as The Young Turks (TYT) and the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC).

In the past, the WCS has used themes such as “Freedom’s New Day” in 2013, “American at its Best” in 2014, and “Your Story: Freedom Alive” in 2015. This year the theme was “Fortifying Freedom,” an obvious reference to the new administration that is working to expand freedoms through regulatory rollbacks and tax cuts through tax reform.

Accordingly, this year’s summit, organized by the Centennial Institute and Colorado Christian University, was addressed by Attorney General Jeff Sessions, EPA director Scott Pruitt, former Attorney General Edwin Meese, and a number of current legislators including Republican House members Ken Buck from Colorado and North Carolina’s Mark Meadows, chairman of the House’s Freedom Caucus. Diamond and Silk, the live-stream video bloggers and social-media personalities, lit up the audience, according to those in attendance, in their lively support of Donald Trump’s presidency.

According to Blair Miller, a reporter tasked by Denver’s Channel 7 News to attend the conference, Attorney General Sessions delighted the crowd by reminding them that “elections have consequences,” directing his ire at the MS-13 gang, supporting religious freedom, and pleasing his audience by affirming that, in the Trump administration, they will not be called “deplorables or bitter clingers anymore.”

Sessions also referred to the move he announced on Thursday that he wouldn’t defend the constitutionality of ObamaCare in a suit being brought by several states: “It’s a rare step,” he declared, “but one I felt was necessary when it comes to this law — a monumental law of historical government proportions that moved the entire healthcare system and the entire economy in America.”

He touted several victories and promised to keep up the pressure, stating, “In the Trump era, we’ve already seen a historic string of victories for conservatives and the American people. We are going to keep up this pace. We are not slowing down. We are determined to keep winning, and winning, and winning!”

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt also touted various environmental rollbacks of rules that he said were too restrictive, and pushed “federalism” — cooperation between states and the federal government — as a way to resolve environmental issues: “We must as an agency embody that partnership, that



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federalism concept, to make sure we advance these principles. So we have given a rebirth to the rule of law, a rebirth to process, and we've renewed our focus.... We're going to engage in true federalism and partnering together to improve air quality and water quality. A one-size-fits-all strategy with respect to these issues does not work."

The summit drew the attention of the SPLC, which noted that the lineup of speakers and workshop leaders would be "rhetorical hardliners and members of the new generation of far-right social media propagandists." In particular, the SPLC singled out Sessions: "Attorney General Jeff Sessions, well known for his anti-immigrant positions and policies as well as ties to anti-LGBT hate group Alliance Defending Freedom (which is also well-represented at this year's WCS), is the scheduled headliner — assuming he still has a job at the end of a week where President Trump has attacked him once again on Twitter."

It attacked Turning Point USA, the conservative student group founded in 2012 by Charlie Kirk, whose mission is to "educate students about true free market values," by attempting to link the group to racists:

The new generation of hard-right social media conservatives will be well-represented alongside the old guard. At least three representatives of Turning Point USA, the nationwide conservative college organization which regularly flirts with the racist alt-right, are listed as scheduled speakers at WCS, including its founder, Charlie Kirk, and communications director Candace Owens, in the news recently for being Kanye West's far-right red-pill supplier.

The SPLC is notorious for promoting the idea that the United States is racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, and Islamophobic. Accordingly, it tracks groups that appear to be guilty of such sins, in its own opinion, on its list of "hate groups." It qualifies for 27 pages of tightly-drawn commentary at DiscoverTheNetworks.com, which notes:

Many of the organizations targeted by SPLC are not "hate" groups in any legitimate sense of the word. Rather, they are thoughtful, articulate conveyors of conservative values and principles that are anathema to SPLC, and their inclusion in SPLC's list of "hate groups" constitutes an egregious libel that is based on nothing more than SPLC's intolerance for ideas with which it does not agree.

SPLC senior fellow Mark Potok actually acknowledged this himself when he stated that his organization's blacklists have "nothing to do with criminality or violence or any kind of guess we're making about 'this group could be dangerous.' It's strictly ideological."

By conflating actual hate groups on the one hand, with respectable conservative organizations on the other — and thereby giving the impression that conservative values are somehow inherently hateful, racist, or otherwise repugnant — SPLC seeks to shut down debate, shut down free speech, and delegitimize conservatives as odious monsters whose viewpoints do not even merit a fair hearing.

But SPLC's spite paled in comparison to the screed published by The Young Turks, which from the very first paragraph of its attack was a lie: "At least two Trump administration cabinet members will be speaking on Friday at a conservative summit cosponsored by the John Birch Society, the notorious right-wing group that became one of the leading organized forces in modern American history advocating for systemic racism."

Alex Kotch, the writer for TYT, needs to check his facts. The John Birch Society, and its sister organization, the Law Enforcement Charitable Foundation (LECF), Inc., had two tables in the exhibit



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hall. But other than that it was far from “cosponsoring” the Denver event. As for the scurrilous lie about the society “advocating for systemic racism”, Kotch may have crossed the line that separates uninformed opinion from libel.

Kotch went on to say: “In addition to the John Birch Society, a notable sponsor is the far-right campus activist group Turning Point USA, led by Charlie Kirk and Candace Owens, both of whom are speaking at the conference. The organization has a history of hiring racist, upper-level employees.”

None of these left-wing rants seemed to impress the audience which was, according to observers, generous in its applause and attentive in the workshops. For the John Birch Society, its table was visited by dozens of attendees with at least eight of them getting involved in the freedom fight by joining the society.

And the LECF table, manned by former law-enforcement official Jim Fitzgerald, also enjoyed significant attention. Once observers learned of the foundation’s purposes — offering charitable support for families of police officers killed in the line of duty and grants to law-enforcement agencies for protective equipment and other material — many of them asked to be informed of the charity’s activities with several offering significant financial contributions to its cause.

The summit in Denver drew thousands, while the attacks from such groups as The Young Turks and the SPLC merely prove that the conference must be doing something right in the freedom fight.

Photo: AP Images

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