



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on February 27, 2015

Boos, Walkout Greet Jeb Bush at CPAC Conference

Some attendees booed, some cheered, and some got up and walked out as former Florida Governor Jeb Bush received a mixed response to his appearance at the Conservative Political Action Conference in National Harbor, Maryland, Friday afternoon. Boos were mixed in with cheers when the likely 2016 presidential candidate spoke on immigration reform and other issues in a question-and-answer session with *Fox News Channel* host Sean Hannity.



About two dozen people walked out when Bush appeared, with a steady stream following, though “not really a significant portion of the thousands here,” [The Guardian reported](#) from the conference site. Bush drew unmixed applause when he spoke of his opposition to abortion and when he took a hard line on dealing with the terrorists in the Middle East who call themselves the Islamic State. His description of Barack Obama as a “failed president” elicited no noticeable dissent from the conservative crowd.

Arriving for the opening day of the conference Thursday, William Temple of the Golden Isles Tea Party in Brunswick, Georgia, announced the planned walkout on Bush. “We are going to get up en masse, and we are going to walk out on him,” Temple, said. “We are not going to interrupt anyone’s speech,” he explained, “but we are all going to exercise our right to [use] the bathroom at the same time.”

The former governor is leading in many of the early GOP presidential polls, but is opposed by many conservatives because of his support for the Common Core educational standards, which some see as a nationalization of public schools, and his backing of immigration reform that would allow millions of people now living in the United States illegally to become legal residents. Some also see Bush’s place in a Republican family dynasty as a liability rather than an asset. His father, President George H.W. Bush, was never a favorite with the conservative activists and his brother, George W. Bush, left the White House with unpopular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan still raging and the nation’s financial system in collapse in the midst of a deepening recession.

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“A lot of people were not going to come here because they heard Jeb Bush was speaking,” Temple told the *Washington Times*. The Tea Party activist came to his sixth CPAC gathering [clad in 1770s Scottish and German war garb](#) and carrying a giant flag bearing the message, “Don’t Tread On Me.” The nation doesn’t need another Bush in the White House, he said.

While none of the dozen or more Republicans expected to enter primary and caucus contests for the GOP presidential nomination has made a formal declaration of candidacy, several have waded fairly deeply into the water they are ostensibly testing. Bush appears well ahead of the rest in unofficial fundraising. That is not unrelated to his status as the candidate favored by the party’s Washington establishment, especially since 2012 nominee Mitt Romney took himself out of the race.

“Like father, like son, Bush seems intent on surrounding himself with advisers who care more about their standing in the Beltway and what the permanent political and media establishments think of them



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than conservatives,” wrote Tony Lee at the conservative [Breitbart News site](#). Lee cited unspecified reports that Bush has a goal of raising \$100 million before even declaring his candidacy later this year. Much of the money is coming from donors supporting causes that are anathema to the party’s social conservatives, including Common Core and same-sex “marriage.” The roster of campaign staffers and advisors suggests that Bush, despite his stated opposition to “gay marriage,” may be becoming the next campaign’s “gay-friendly Republican,” wrote McKay Coppins at the [liberal website BuzzFeed](#).

“When Bush officially launches his presidential bid later this year,” wrote Coppins, “he will likely do so with a campaign manager who has urged the Republican Party to adopt a pro-gay agenda; a chief strategist who signed a Supreme Court amicus brief arguing for marriage equality in California; a longtime adviser who once encouraged her minister to stick to his guns in preaching equality for same-sex couples; and a communications director who is openly gay.” Bush’s official stance is that he believes marriage should be between a man and a woman, and the matter is one for state legislation and not federal court decrees, Coppins noted. “But inside Bush’s orbit, some believe his personal feelings on the subject may have evolved beyond his on-the-record statements. Three Republican supporters who have recently spoken with Bush as he’s blitzed the GOP fundraising circuit told BuzzFeed News they came away with the impression that on the question of marriage equality, he was supportive at best and agnostic at worst.”

When addressing the CPAC conference two years ago, Bush suggested the party needed to move away from some of the controversial social issues he said was giving the party a negative image. “All too often we’re associated with being ‘anti’ everything,” Bush said in 2013. “Way too many people believe Republicans are anti-immigrant, anti-woman, anti-science, anti-gay, anti-worker, and the list goes on.”

Ken Mehlman, the former Republican national chairman and manager of the George W. Bush reelection campaign, is reported to be introducing Jeb Bush to some of the party’s deep-pocket donors. Mehlman has also been traveling through Iowa, where the lead-off caucuses will be held next year, advising GOP leaders in the Hawkeye State to come out in favor of legal status for same-sex “marriage” or, as supporters call it “marriage equality.”

“Republicans have an opportunity to both stand up for values that are core to our philosophy — freedom, family values and the golden rule — and to do the right thing politically by allowing adults who love one another to have access to civil marriage,” [Mehlman said](#) in an interview with the Des Moines Register. David Kochel, the top Iowa advisor for Mitt Romney’s 2012 campaign, is also [calling for the party’s conversion](#) on the marriage issue. “You talk to younger people, they want to move past some of the old arguments we’ve been having on the culture wars,” Kochel said. “Frankly the culture wars are kind of over, and Republicans largely lost.”

But if the culture wars are over, someone forget to tell the culture warriors, a category that may be broad enough to include the majority of voters in 31 consecutive state referenda who affirmed marriage as a union between one man and one woman. And it seems a safe bet that some of the culture warriors are yet to be heard from at this weekend’s CPAC event.

The introduction and title of this article were changed after Jeb Bush went on stage at CPAC to keep the article up to date. — editors

Photo of Jeb Bush: AP Images



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