

How Ted Cruz Is Using Donald Trump to His Advantage

Ted Cruz is languishing in the Republican primary race and hoping an unusual move will give him a boost: embracing Donald Trump instead of bashing him to get his message in front of more Republican voters.

The two White House rivals will share a rally stage Wednesday afternoon in the shadow of the U.S. Capitol to voice their opposition to the Iran nuclear deal. Cruz, a senator from Texas, was originally slated to be the solo headliner. But he has now invited rival Trump to join him.

Cruz, a Tea Party darling who reached out to Christian conservatives when he launched his bid for the White House, has failed to move into the top tier of candidates seeking the Republican nomination for the November 2016 presidential election. Trump, meanwhile, has rocketed to the top of the pack and is enjoying a massive lead.

Following the usual political playbook, Jeb Bush, the former Florida governor who had been considered by many the favorite for the Republican nomination, has gone on the attack, calling Trump a Democrat in disguise and bashing him for speaking highly of Democrat Hillary Clinton. The rest of the Republican field has been happy to pile on.

Cruz, however, previously has had some words of praise for Trump. Cruz, the son of a Cuban immigrant, in July said he stood with Trump on immigration after Trump said that many illegal immigrants from Mexico are criminals.

But in the unprecedented move by Cruz to hold a dual event is a hope that he will benefit from the media attention Trump receives and get the real estate mogul's fans to give Cruz a serious look if—or when—the front-runner falls.

The entire Republican field opposes the Iran deal, struck by President Barack Obama and five other world powers, which will lift sanctions on Iran in return for curbs on its nuclear program. On Tuesday, Obama secured 41 votes in the Senate for the deal, just enough to block a final vote on a measure for disapproval.

“Trump draws the media and we want to draw attention to the Iran deal,” Cruz campaign spokesman Rick Tyler said. “He brings a lot of people into the process who have been checked out of politics and I like to imagine that a lot of those people have not heard from Senator Cruz directly.”

Kellyanne Conway, a Republican pollster working for super PACs backing Cruz, said Republicans are missing a lesson by not looking more closely at what is attracting voters to Trump.

“I think it’s less Machiavellian and more immediately practical,” Conway said of Cruz’s embrace of Trump. “Donald Trump has captured a certain electorate zeitgeist among Republican primary and caucus goers. Senator Cruz is one of the few people willing to learn rather than criticize.”

Ronald Lippman, 67, of Buford, Georgia, is exactly the kind of voter Cruz is trying to target in holding the joint rally. He’s backing Trump, for now at least. And he is aware that the two are holding a rally together.

“I just really haven’t really been paying too much attention to (Cruz), there hasn’t been too much coverage of him on the news,” Lippman said. “He’s sort of in the background except for this thing he’s doing this week with Trump.”

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