

Iowa Pro-Family Organization's Leader Just Endorsed This GOP Candidate

The Iowa-based pro-family group The FAMiLY LEADER's presidential endorsement was expected to be the most coveted in the first-in-the-nation state. Evangelical Christians in the Hawkeye State got the next best thing.

Just moments before TFL's leadership was expected to take the stage to make a presidential endorsement, the organization released a statement that it would not be making any endorsement. Instead, its CEO, Bob Vander Plaats, personally endorsed U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas).

"The FAMiLY LEADER organization will not be issuing an endorsement of a candidate prior to the Iowa Caucus," the statement—posted to TFL's website said. "The ministry of The FAMiLY LEADER has grown in recent years to encompass far more than elections and candidates. Especially with the growing, global impact of the If 7:14 call to prayer for revival, our focus is on transforming culture, strengthening families, and inspiring Christ-like leadership. Our work with pastors and churches has grown as well, and it's critical that none of our ministry efforts be seen as being co-opted by a partisan agenda.

"For these reasons and others, our board unanimously decided The FAMiLY LEADER needs to remain a standard bearer for Christian principles in our culture and government, and not endeavor to be a kingmaker in the election process."

The statement says TFL's board of directors encouraged the organization's leadership to remain engaged in the political process. Vander Plaats was joined at the endorsement announcement by Robert Cramer, chairman of TFL's board, and

the organization's vice president and chief counsel, Chuck Hurley.

"When picking a candidate for president, I have long stated that I'm looking for someone who has the character to withstand the attacks that inevitably come during a campaign, has proven himself competent, surrounds himself with the company of trustworthy advisers, and who has demonstrated the ability to raise enough campaign cash to go the distance," Vander Plaats said. "Many of the candidates running met several of these criteria, but only one brings all four to the table. That man is Ted Cruz."

Vander Plaats said Cruz has proven to be a man of character who is trustworthy in all areas, a dedicated husband and father, and a proven public servant. He said Cruz has repeatedly "stood in the gap on principle" when political expediency would have caused a lesser man to compromise and capitulate.

"Ted Cruz has shocked the political establishment by raising more money than they ever thought possible. With more cash on hand at the end of the last quarter than any other campaign on the Republican side, Ted Cruz has proven that the grassroots can and does show up to support a candidate who truly represents them," he said. "He has built an organization that stretches not just to New Hampshire and South Carolina, but through the March primary states and beyond. Unlike years past where we worked so hard to elevate a conservative candidate only to watch that momentum stall for lack of resources, Ted Cruz offers us an opportunity to launch a candidate who has what it takes to win the nomination and ultimately to become the next President of the United States."

Vander Plaats said he will "fully engage" in the Cruz campaign, and called on conservatives to support Ted Cruz. He echoed previous calls for Christians and conservatives to "coalesce" around the freshman senator.

"If we coalesce and work together, we have a very real opportunity to elevate someone who not only shares our values, but who has a proven track record of actually doing what he says he will do," he said. "I trust Ted Cruz. I am asking the people of Iowa to join me on February 1st as we go to Caucus and cast our votes for the next president of the United States, Ted Cruz."

Vander Plaats' endorsement was not a surprise to most Iowa political observers, given the close relationship the two men have forged over the past four years. Most assumed, however, the endorsement would come with TFL's backing, as well.

Regardless, it is likely to be a watershed moment for Cruz' campaign, which has just begun to surge into a true contender for the GOP nomination.

"After Bob makes his decision today, I predict you will see a tidal wave of conservative leaders to follow," nationally syndicated radio host Steve Deace, who has also publicly endorsed Cruz, said before the Vander Plaats' endorsement was announced. "He has a lot of pull within the movement. I've seen it myself. In fact, that tidal wave may have begun yesterday."

This is the fourth high-profile endorsement for Cruz in slightly more than 24 hours, following endorsements from the National Organization for Marriage, long-time conservative activist Richard Viguerie, and former Bush administration EPA official Alan Steinberg.