

John McCain's Surprising Comments about Trump, Carson

Senator John McCain knows something about winning over New Hampshire's Republican voters. He won the state's first-in-the-nation primary in both of his unsuccessful races for the Republican presidential nomination, in 2000 and 2008. So when the state's influential newspaper, The Union-Leader, recently endorsed New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, for the 2016 nomination, McCain took notice.

"It matters," he said. "It is one of the few endorsements honestly now that has significant influence. It'll help Christie a lot."

McCain took stock of the topsy-turvy 2016 Republican nomination fight at a breakfast with reporters sponsored by the Christian Science Monitor on Wednesday.

A firm backer of Senator Lindsey Graham's uphill bid for the nomination ("like a brother to me"), McCain nonetheless sees positives from some of the other candidates.

He likes Christie's "gumption," he said, and former Florida Governor Jeb Bush's policy-oriented campaign.

Senator Marco Rubio, he said, "I clearly view as the next generation of Republican leaders particularly on national security issues."

Denounced by Donald Trump as "not a war hero" last summer, McCain took pains not to punch back at Trump. He said Trump and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson have tapped into a well of voter angst over an economic recovery that has not lifted up everyone affected by the Great Recession of 2008-09. He said he is concerned that Hispanic voters might be alienated by some of the rhetoric flying around in the race that appeals to the "bad angels of our nature rather than 'the better angels of our nature.'"

"We cannot alienate the Hispanic voter and expect to win a general election. You can do the math. I worry about that a lot in that aspect of this campaign," he said.

McCain, when he was the 2008 Republican presidential nominee, once famously shut down a supporter who said he was afraid of an Obama presidency. The senator said it was not a good sign when a black protester was kicked by Trump supporters during a recent Trump rally.

"You have to do what's right," he said. "No matter what it costs you, you have to do what's right. Even if you win, you lose." {eo}

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