

Marco Rubio Says He's Attracting This Kind of Evangelical

In an email sent out over the weekend by his campaign's "Faith Outreach" director, U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio suggested he was attracting evangelicals, just like front-runners Donald Trump and Ted Cruz.

Except, he says, he's attracting a different kind of evangelical.

The email actually references a statement made by Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, in an article for *Roll Call*. The article published a couple hours before the Rubio campaign email was sent out, and states:

"I would say that Ted Cruz is leading in the 'Jerry Falwell' wing, Marco Rubio is leading the 'Billy Graham' wing and Trump is leading the 'Jimmy Swaggart' wing," Moore said, meaning that Cruz has largely followed the classic Moral Majority model that was the face of the conservative movement – he has received endorsements from figures such as Focus on the Family founder James Dobson – while Trump "tends to work most closely with the prosperity wing of Pentecostalism" which tends to believe that God would financially reward believers.

The efficacy of the Rubio campaign's assertion was immediately questioned by *Breitbart News*. In his own analysis of the email, Michael Patrick Leahy suggests it does less to convince evangelicals they have an option in the Florida senator and more to muddy the waters of discernment for committed Christians:

The notion advanced by the Rubio campaign that the role of a presidential candidate is not merely to persuade voters why the candidate should be selected to head the executive branch, but is also to provide religious leadership to evangelical Christians in the way Billy Graham has for more than seven decades, appears to be at odds with the recent public messages of Franklin Graham, the son of Billy Graham and head of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

The younger Graham made it clear when he launched his 50-state "Decision America 2016" in Iowa last week that his purpose was to encourage Christians to participate in the political process by voting for candidates who support Biblical values. He was quite clear that he would not be endorsing any candidate of either party. That choice, he said, should be left to the discernment of individual Christians.

Graham also said in an exclusive interview with Breitbart last week that the government, by using taxpayer dollars to take over responsibilities previously handled by the church, "has marginalized the church."

What the *Roll Call* article, from which the email is based, does suggest, however, is that the Republican establishment in Iowa is beginning to rally behind Rubio's campaign. It featured a who's who of prominent Iowa GOP establishment figures, speaking glowingly about his campaign.