

Rick Santorum Makes His Case for Someone Else

Wednesday evening, Rick Santorum took the stage in New Hampshire with the candidate he says he is now backing for the 2016 GOP presidential nomination.

But a few hours beforehand, he announced his endorsement on FOX News Channel's *On the Record With Greta Van Susteren*. He milked it for all the air time he could get, telling Van Susteren he wanted to find a candidate who "really espoused" the values he believes in: helping those who don't have a college degree and who are struggling on the margins, and someone who understands the central role of the family and that family breakdown is one of the key reasons that Middle America is "hollowing out." He also said he was looking for someone who understood the threat posed by ISIS.

At one point, Van Susteren interrupted, saying, "You're killing all the political people out there. They are waiting for the name."

The name they were waiting for was Marco Rubio.

"I don't endorse lightly," Santorum said of the Florida senator. "As many people know, I have been at this for 25 years. That's not, unfortunately, an asset in this election cycle to have invested your life in trying to shape the future of our country."

He said Rubio was a "tremendously gifted young man" and a "born leader." He said he felt Rubio is "the new generation," and someone who can unite the country—not just moderates and conservatives, but young and old—with an optimistic message.

"In a sense, [he has] taken the wine I have been trying to sell and putting it in new wine skins," Santorum said. "And

that can be a very powerful thing.”

Just before he announced his endorsement, Santorum sent out an email to key supporters, further explaining his decision. He also held a telephone conference call with top-level volunteers.

“As Karen and I discussed leaving the presidential race, we also talked about whom we should support now that I am stepping aside. There are many qualified, conservative candidates in the race for the White House,” he said. “But when it comes to the issues that we care about the most—restoring the American dream for hardworking families, standing up for the rights of the unborn, protecting our nation’s security, and fighting for international religious freedom—we believe Marco Rubio’s positions are right on, and he has earned our endorsement.”

Santorum said that running for president afforded him a “unique look into the candidates’ positions and temperament” and this further reinforced his decision to back Rubio. He urged his supporters to coalesce around “the strongest candidate who will stand up for conservative values, be a statesman on the world stage, and has the ability to win a general election”—and that candidate is Rubio.

Afterward, the Florida senator said Santorum’s endorsement “means a lot,” and that he has tremendous respect for his former competitor. He signaled his intent to earn the votes of blue collar Americans, which he said would help the Republican Party grow.

“Rick, I think, has a message for them that is phenomenal,” he said. “So we look forward to teaming up and he is going to be, hopefully, very active in our campaign. We want to use him as much as he is willing to work for us, and we are excited about it.”