

Sean Hannity Speaks Out on 'Disconcerting' Election

Sean Hannity, the longtime Fox News Channel anchor and strong voice for American conservatives, is used to taking criticism from all comers, but it was his own unhappiness with his flabby self last year that pushed him to take up a new fight—that of “street” martial artist.

“It’s a tough, tough workout,” the 52-year-old said of his regimen of jiu-jitsu, blade and firearm training. “It’s also really great self-defense ... I’m building muscles that I’ve never had before.”

Hannity, whose eponymous weeknight show averages 1.7 million viewers and ranks in the top five of cable news programs, spoke to Reuters about the upcoming U.S. midterm elections, problems the Republican party faces and playing matchmaker to staffers.

Q: You notably started as a small-market radio host. What first turned you on to politics and news?

A: I’ve absorbed it since I was a kid and delivered newspapers, reading the newspaper. My parents were screaming at me to put the paper down and get out and go deliver them.

I still get the hard papers every day. I have on my lap right now the *New York Daily News*, the *New York Post*, *USA Today*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*, although I won’t admit that publicly.

Q: Actors fear being type-cast, but you’ve made your career working a brand of conservative ...

A: I think that ship has sailed. I am a conservative. That’s who I am. It’s in my DNA. I believe that if we would govern conservatively, meaning limited government, balanced budgets, greater freedom, that people took greater responsibility for

their lives, etc. I think society would be better off if we were energy independent, if we secure our borders, free market capitalism in the healthcare system, not a top-down heavy system.

Q: Why have conservatives been unable to make strong gains despite public disapproval of President Barack Obama?

A: I think Republicans have fallen way short. I'm not a registered Republican. I'm a registered conservative. There has been a lack of vision. ... Why when we have more energy, more natural gas than Saudi Arabia, why are we importing those things from countries that hate us? With Ebola and ISIS, why are we not securing our southern border and all of our borders?

My biggest criticism of Republicans is they have the power of the purse and they have been unwilling to use it—some Republicans, I think there are some real good conservatives out there —and Republicans have also lacked a vision in terms of showing people there's another way to do things.

Q: Do you believe they will be able to take control of the Senate in midterm elections?

A: It's actually a hard year to read. My gut is the Republicans will get the six seats.

The thing that's a little bit disconcerting to me is you have states like Georgia, where both the Senate and gubernatorial races are so close. I wouldn't have expected that. ... I don't know if it's an anti-incumbent year, an anti-Obama year, anti-establishment year.

Q: You're also known as an amateur matchmaker. How did it come about setting up staffers on dates?

A: I have an outgoing personality, and I notice that everybody else does not. You can almost tell sometimes that people really like each other but are both afraid to make the first move or say anything. I'm like, "Why don't you guys go out on

a date, and I'll send you guys to Ruth's Chris (restaurant). But it has to be a date and you have to hold hands and you have to give her a kiss at the end of the night." I'll do stuff like that to mess around with people.

Q: Do you keep track of your batting average, so to speak?

A: I'm up in the .800 range.

Editing by Mary Milliken and Cynthia Osterman

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