

Ted Cruz Announces Defection From Another Candidate's Camp

Jerry Behn is a pretty popular guy in Iowa Senate District 24, which he has been representing through various redistricting alignments for nearly 19 years. He's a former Senate Minority Leader and was briefly a gubernatorial candidate six years ago.

So in Boone County in the central part of the state, in which he served for two years on the County Board of Supervisors, his endorsement carries some weight. Monday, he threw his support behind U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) for the GOP presidential nomination.

"Ted Cruz is the proven and consistent conservative we need in order to turn this country around," Behn said during a "Cruzin' to Caucus" campaign event at King's Christian Book Store in Boone, Iowa. "Americans are looking for a leader that will stand for conservative principles, fight the Washington Cartel and restore the power back to the people. Ted Cruz is that leader."

The announcement might come as a surprise to some in the heart of the first-in-the-nation caucus state. Just four months ago, Behn took the stage at a Donald Trump rally at the town's annual Pufferbilly Days rally that drew an overflow crowd.

But in an object lesson about semantics—an "endorsement" isn't an official endorsement until the words "I endorse" are used—Behn never officially indicated he was supporting Trump's campaign. At the Trump event, he wore a "Behn for Iowa Senate" T-shirt, which he had worn during the parade that preceded the rally.

Regardless, Cruz was appreciative of the endorsement:

“Jerry is dedicated to God and country, family and farming. He stands for the principles that we all share, principles that this country was founded on. With Jerry’s leadership, it will help unite courageous conservatives across Iowa to reignite the promise of America. I am thrilled to have his support.”

Behn’s endorsement could have a positive impact for Cruz elsewhere in Iowa. Although he has fairly solid Christian conservative credentials, he also has strong ties with the party’s establishment and its political allies.

He is a long-time member of the Iowa Soybean Association, Iowa Farm Bureau and the Iowa Association of Business and Industry. As the former Senate Republican leader, he has a number of GOP establishment connections across the state.

When Behn ran for governor six years ago, he bowed out when Gov. Terry Branstad announced he would come out of retirement to seek re-election so as to not damage those relationships.

Monday was the first day of a six-day tour of Iowa in which Cruz will visit 28 of Iowa’s 99 counties. Most of the counties in which he plans to stop are counties he has not yet visited.