

This Is the Glaring Omission of President Trump's First 100 Days

As conservatives assess President Trump's first 100 days, most of us are satisfied with the president's executive actions. Congressional inaction on the conservative agenda is of course fodder for many more columns, but Donald Trump has fulfilled his campaign promises to conservatives in many areas, however, there is one glaring omission: action on religious liberty.

Well before the 2016 presidential campaign reached its final phase, a broad coalition of Christian leaders recognized that Hillary Clinton was an existential threat to religious liberty, and especially to traditional Catholic values and Biblical teachings, such as the right to life and the definition of marriage.

Rolling back Obama's assault on religious liberty is especially important to the Catholic voters who broke the Democrats' "blue wall" and arguably gave Donald Trump the margin of victory in Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania and the swing state of Florida.

Informed Catholics knew Hillary Clinton was easily the most pro-abortion candidate ever to run for President.

In 2003, Hillary Clinton voted with 32 other Senators against the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, which prohibited doctors from knowingly performing an "intact dilation and extraction" which involves causing a breach birth and then extracting the infant's brain and collapsing its skull.

Informed Catholics also knew that Hillary Clinton would further erode religious liberty—she had said as much when speaking before the 2015 Women in the World Summit, Hillary

Clinton issued a warning to Christians that remains mostly unreported by the mainstream media to this day:

“... deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed.”

However, all the smart people were telling Catholic voters that Hillary Clinton was the sure winner, so why should the average Catholic voter even turn out?

In September of 2016, at the time when all the smart people on TV and the editorial pages said Hillary Clinton was a lock to win the presidency, then-candidate Donald Trump rolled out a Catholic voter advisory group.

At that time, Mr. Trump articulated his dedication to a number of issues of crucial importance to American Catholics, including his commitment to defend religious liberty.

Among his many promises, then-candidate Donald Trump pledged to defend the right to life, saying, “I am and will remain pro-life. Public funding of abortion providers is an insult to people of faith at the least, and is an affront to good government and governance, at best. I will work to support the dignity of human life from conception to natural, dignified death.”

Mr. Trump also pledged to sign the First Amendment Defense Act (FADA) if Congress were to pass the legislation during his presidency. The bill by Senator Mike Lee of Utah is tailored to protect from government discrimination those religious Americans who believe that marriage is a union between one man and one woman.

Suddenly, Catholic voters had an alternative candidate whom we believed would actually fight for religious liberty and our right to practice our faith in the public square.

FedUp PAC, which I founded and Chair, played a role in helping

get that message out to Catholic voters, to swing Catholics to Donald Trump, and ultimately to deny Hillary Clinton the presidency.

FedUp PAC sent 3 million emails and oversized post cards to Catholics in 14 key battleground states detailing vital information the biased liberal media were deliberately withholding about Hillary Clinton's anti-Catholic, anti-religious liberty agenda.

Other Catholic lay organizations and leaders sent out millions more.

Dr. Deal Hudson, Joseph Cella, Fr. Frank Pavone of Priests for Life, Brian Burch of Catholic Vote, Marjorie Dannenfelser, Matt Schlapp and Mercedes Schlapp, Gov. Sam Brownback, Ed Martin, Rick Santorum, Jim Nicholson and many other Catholic lay leaders offered advice and counsel and used their own channels to independently tell the story of just how damaging to religious liberty and traditional Catholic values a Hillary Clinton presidency would be.

We also reached millions of Catholic voters with powerful online ads with the same message... and the results of our efforts were stunning.

On Election Day, Donald Trump soundly defeated Hillary Clinton and won the Catholic vote by a margin of 52 to 45 percent, and won 8 of our 14 targeted states in the process.

That is a big turnaround from 2008, when Obama won 54 percent of the Catholic vote, while McCain took only 45 percent, and from 2012, when President Obama won the Catholic vote by a margin of 52-48 percent and beat Mitt Romney in 13 of those 14 target states.

In the top four battleground states, Trump won Wisconsin (where 31 percent identify as Catholic) by 22,177 votes. In Pennsylvania (where 27.4 percent identify as Catholic), Trump

won by 67,416 votes. In Florida (where 26 percent identify as Catholic), Trump won by 134,000 votes and in Michigan (where 23 percent identify as Catholic), Trump won by 10,704 votes.

Don't get me wrong—it's not that President Trump has gone back on his word to Catholics—he hasn't.

Indeed, on April 13 he signed into law a bill that allows states to redirect Title X family planning funding away from clinics that perform abortions and to community clinics that provide comprehensive health care for women and children.

The new law overrode a rule change made in the last days of the Obama administration that prevented states from doing so.

My friend Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List, counted Trump's signature on the bill as the second of "two huge victories" she said the pro-life movement saw in a week. The first was the April 10 swearing-in of Justice Neil Gorsuch, who filled the seat left vacant by the death of Antonin Scalia in February 2016.

Marjorie Dannenfelser was right—thanks to President Trump Catholics have had two big victories, but the president's failure to act during his first 100 days on the larger issue of protecting religious liberty remains a glaring omission in an otherwise positive start to the Trump administration. {eo}

Richard Viguerie transformed American politics in the 1960s and '70s by pioneering the use of direct mail fundraising in the political and ideological spheres. He used computerized direct mail fundraising to help build the conservative movement, which then elected Ronald Reagan as the first conservative president of the modern era. As the "Funding Father of the conservative movement," Viguerie motivated millions of Americans to participate in politics for the first time, greatly expanding the base of active citizenship.

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