

This Is What Was Missing From CPAC 2017

Senior members of President Donald Trump's administration have appeared at CPAC this week and laid out the president's strongly conservative agenda; reestablishing our sovereignty by building a wall on our southern border, protecting the sanctity of human life, reestablishing federalism by confining the federal government to its constitutionally defined role and reestablishing the rule of law, especially regarding sanctuary cities and the deportation of illegal aliens.

White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon set the tone in his remarks saying, "I think one of the most pivotal moments in modern American history was his immediate withdrawal from TPP. It got us out of a trade deal and let our sovereignty come back to ourselves," referring to the massive Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement.

That decision, which he called just a first step in re-imagining U.S. trade policies, was just one of three steps Bannon identified as the important actions President Trump has taken since his inauguration.

On the national security front, Bannon highlighted President Trump's executive orders on building a border wall and reestablishing the rule of law by enforcing our existing immigration laws.

Finally, Steve Bannon pointed out that President Trump's plans for the "deconstruction of the administrative state" began when he appointed individuals from the private sector to key economic Cabinet positions who will work to strip down federal regulations.

Vice President Mike Pence keynoted Thursday evening's session and invoked President Ronald Reagan's fabled 1981 CPAC

address when he said, “fellow conservatives, our time is now.”

As our friend Claire Chretien reported for , much of his speech emphasized conservative national security policy and the longtime conservative goal of repealing Obamacare.

The vice president also listed “restoring the culture of life” and upholding the Constitution as among the ways President Trump is rebuilding the country.

“Because of President Donald Trump, life is winning in America again,” Vice President Pence said. “Last month he reinstated the Mexico City Policy ... and we will make the Hyde Amendment permanent.”

In January, the U.S. House voted to permanently ban taxpayer funding of abortion. The bill it passed would make the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits federal money from being used to fund abortions through Medicaid, permanent rather than subject to annual renewal. Trump promised to sign the legislation.

Vice President Pence also drew “roaring” applause for saying that no state would be forced to adopt Common Core reported Claire Chretien.

Even President Trump’s most establishment-friendly Cabinet member, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, said that she wants to return as much authority over education as possible to states and districts, and that she intends to identify programs and initiatives to cut at the Education Department. She has also made clear that she intends to use her platform to expand alternatives to public schools, including charter schools, online schools and private schools that students attend with the help of public funds—music to the ears of conservative education reformers.

However, for all the great beginnings members of President

Trump's team reported to the thousands of conservatives assembled at CPAC, something was missing.

What was missing was a steady parade of allegedly conservative Republican congressional leaders promising to partner with and support President Trump and his administration in pursuing these conservative policy goals.

Indeed, the Capitol Hill leadership of the Republican Party, allegedly the political home of President Trump's conservative-populist coalition was entirely absent from CPAC this year.

Fewer than half a dozen Members of Congress spoke at CPAC, and not one of them was a member of the House or Senate leadership.

Last year, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan attended CPAC and delivered a powerful address about raising Americans out of poverty, this year he was MIA when he had the opportunity to commit to joining President Trump in doing so.

When Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell last attended CPAC, it was 2014, and he was then the Senate Minority Leader facing a tough reelection campaign and an uncertain future for his Senate Republican Conference. In his remarks, McConnell suggested that Republicans could regain control of the Senate after the 2014 midterms (they did) and that he'd be ready to lead the Senate to accomplish a conservative agenda; "If I am given the opportunity to lead the U.S. Senate next year, I won't let you down," he said.

This year, when he had the opportunity to commit to joining President Trump in pursuing that conservative agenda he too was MIA.

In his book *Takeover*, CHQ Chairman Richard Viguerie made the point that the first and most troublesome impediment to governing America according to conservative principles isn't

the Democrats and liberals, it is the Republican establishment. And nothing demonstrates the importance of that truth more than the failure of the Republican congressional leadership to attend CPAC and commit to supporting President Trump's conservative agenda. {eo}

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