

# Trump Promises to Help Pastors Stand Up for Faith in Politics

I joined pastors from across the country for prayer, worship and political mobilization at “Rediscovering God in America.” The event—held in Orlando, Florida, by David Lane’s American Renewal Project—celebrated the United States’ Christian heritage, encouraged evangelical voters to get out the vote, and promoted Donald Trump for President of the United States.

The event’s main focus was repealing the 1954 Johnson amendment, which prevents pastors from openly endorsing specific candidates for political office. Trump was the featured speaker at the event, and he knew exactly what his audience was craving. In his speech, Trump promised to make repealing the Johnson amendment one of his first acts as President.

“If I get elected President, one of the early things, one of the absolute first things I’m going to do is work on totally knocking out the Johnson Amendment,” Trump said. “It’s not going to be that hard. Because ... the power you have is enormous. It’s not like you represent 2 percent of the country or it’s going to be difficult. You probably represent 75-80 percent, and if you want to put your full weight—I mean, can you imagine if all your people started calling up the local congressman and their local Senator? I mean, they don’t have a chance of winning that one.”

But before Trump spoke, I heard several other pastors, politicians and spiritual leaders lay the groundwork for his momentous promise. Quite simply, they explained how the Johnson amendment contradicts the very values of our country.

Some of the speakers were more surprising than others. I was

at first puzzled by the inclusion of a Christian rapper, Joe Story. But his emotional songs about America's covenant with God and the tragedy of abortion stirred the hearts of the crowd—and even earned a standing ovation from some. Though he was an unusual pick, he effectively set the tone for the day. Story wasn't the only musician either; a local worship team later led the crowd in thunderous praise.

Other speakers informed pastors about programs like Issachar Training, which encourages Christian clergy to run for public office, and Stand Up Sundays. Churches which participate in Stand Up Sundays encourage congregants to “stand up” in the pew if they are registered to vote—and hand out voter registration forms to still-seated congregants. The program also provides the opportunity for pastors to talk about the need to vote for Biblical principles.

Bishop E.W. Jackson's powerful message was a highlight of the day. He galvanized attendees to bring God back into politics. He chastised those who seek to divide the body of Christ on racial issues, crying, “It's not the skin—it's the sin!” He affirmed traditional marriage. And he quoted America's original President, George Washington: “It is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor.”

Jackson received a standing ovation for his final words, when he exhorted preachers, “Even if they call you a bigot or prejudiced, stand up for what you believe. Rise up on wings like eagles!”

Even Mike Huckabee, Trump's former rival in the 2016 Republican presidential primary, gave a speech to endorse Trump. He admitted Trump wasn't his first choice—“I was,” he cheekily added—but said the alternatives are dire. He assured undecided pastors that Trump's integrity and staffing choices would be far superior to Hillary Clinton's. Huckabee's

endorsement—given his history of standing up for evangelicals and pastors—lent ethos to the Trump campaign and carried significant weight for the pastors gathered.

Before Trump took the stage, Huckabee left everyone in the room with a final warning: “Every year, everyone says it’s the most important election of our lifetime. But folks, I’m not messing—this really is the most important election of our lifetime.”

I believe 700 pastors left convinced of the need to get out the vote this election. And if churches nationwide can seize that political power, this election could truly change the electoral landscape forever.