

Update: Tragic News for Ben Carson Campaign in Iowa

Dr. Ben Carson suspended all campaign activities Tuesday to be at the Omaha hospital where a volunteer was in critical condition following a crash.

That volunteer, 25-year-old Braden Joplin of Midland, Texas, passed away as a result of his injuries in the crash, according to University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha. The exact time of the crash has not yet been released by the Iowa State Patrol, but the Carson campaign said it happened Tuesday morning in an official statement that afternoon:

Earlier today in Iowa, a van transporting three campaign volunteers and a Carson campaign employee hit a patch of ice and flipped on its side where it was struck by another vehicle. Three of the passengers, including the campaign staffer driving, are currently being checked out at Cass County Memorial Hospital in Atlantic, Iowa. One volunteer is being transported to the trauma center at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska.

Dr. Carson has spoken with the family of the volunteer being transported to Omaha, as well as the attending physician. Dr. Carson has cancelled all remaining campaign events today and will be traveling to Omaha this afternoon to be with the family during this difficult time.

Dr. Carson is asking people to join him in prayer for all the individuals and families involved.

Carson was campaigning in South Carolina when he was told of the crash. He immediately suspended all campaign activity and rushed to Omaha. Many of his opponents joined in the call to prayer, and social media was abuzz much of Tuesday afternoon

and evening with calls for prayer for everyone involved, their families, and those who were effected by the tragedy.

The crash occurred at Exit 54 on Interstate Highway 80, about six miles northwest of Atlantic in Cass County in western Iowa. Much of the southern two-thirds of Iowa was hit by a snow storm that dropped a couple of inches of snow, but included heavy winds that created dangerous driving conditions in many areas of the state.

The truck that struck the Carson campaign van was driven by a local mother, who was transporting her three children. According to Omaha ABC affiliate KETV, all of them received medical attention for non-life-threatening injuries, but two of the children were taken to Children's Hospital in Omaha, where they both underwent surgery.

Joplin, who was a student at Texas Tech University, passed away shortly after 4:30 p.m. Central Time. His parents arrived in Omaha about 30 minutes later on an aircraft chartered by the Carson campaign.

Carson made the following statement Tuesday evening:

One of the precious few joys of campaigning is the privilege of meeting bright young men and women who are so enthusiastic about their country that they will freely give of their time and energy to work on its behalf. America lost one of those bright young men today. I had the privilege of knowing Braden Joplin personally, and am filled with a deep and profound sadness at his passing. While we mourn this profound loss, I am thankful that our other campaign colleagues, Drew McCall, Aaron Ohnemus and Ryan Patrick Shellooe, have all been treated and released from the hospital.

A presidential candidate asks a lot of his or her volunteers, working long hours in the cold, under-appreciated. They are the unsung heroes of the political process. The outpouring of support for Braden and his family from fellow candidates, as

well as their staffs and volunteers, demonstrates that life will always transcend politics, and I thank them for their kind words. Please continue to keep Braden's family and friends in your prayers as they struggle through this difficult time.

Even after more than 30 years experience counseling parents and family members in the most difficult of times, it never gets easier. But I find solace in the knowledge of God's redeeming grace, and I pray that Braden's family finds comfort in the mercy of the Lord. Across America today, I ask everyone to take a moment to reflect on the preciousness of life and remember and honor the memory of Braden Joplin.

The Carson campaign said it expects their candidate to return to the trail on Thursday, when he has a number of events planned in Iowa. The first-in-the-nation Iowa Republican Caucus is now just 12 days away.