

Was Donald Trump's Abortion Comment a Teachable Moment?

There's no other way to spin Donald Trump's controversial comments on abortion: it was a "cringe-worthy" moment. There are now lingering questions going forward: can he recover from it and what lesson did he learn? The Brody File has a few observations.

First of all, let me say that as I was watching Donald Trump answer Chris Matthews's questions on abortion, the scene reminded me of *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* Matthews was the game show host, Trump was the contestant in the hot seat and the audience surrounded both of them. When Trump was asked what kind of punishment he had in mind on abortion, especially when pressed on whether women should be punished, he should have asked for a lifeline. He could have "phoned a friend" or, better yet, forget the game show theatrics and just not go there since he clearly didn't know the standard pro-life answer on it. At the very least, he should have punted the question with the "I'll get back to you on that" answer. The last thing you want to do in that situation is "wing it." You don't "wing it" on abortion. Plus, politics 101 is that you never answer a hypothetical question, and since abortion is not illegal in this country, the question was a hypothetical one. Sometimes it pays to be a savvy politician.

So can Trump recover from this? First of all, the fact that he put out a statement that essentially retracted his earlier comments is a good first step. Yes, considerable damage was done, but at least Trump didn't dig in his heels on this. His campaign realized he had "stepped in it" and tried to reverse the damage. They had no choice. Putting the general election aside for a moment, the problem here is that Trump managed to tick off the pro-life women that he'll need on his side in the upcoming GOP primaries to secure the 1,237 delegates. That's

the more pressing concern at this stage. He can ill-afford to lose this key constituency. His loyal female supporters will always stay with him, but it's the ones on the fence that he needs to be more concerned about.

The bigger question for Trump is whether he will learn a lesson from all of this. In his book, *The Art Of The Deal*, he constantly talks about the lessons he learned after each business deal that either went good or bad. Here is an instance of a "deal" that went bad. What lesson will he draw from it? I think the lesson is pretty clear. He must be humble enough to understand that he lacks sufficient knowledge of the pro-life movement and needs to surround himself with a team of trusted and respected pro-life leaders who will give him wise counsel. Then he must listen and put it into practice. If he can do that, it will show that he's teachable and cares enough to get it right on the pro-life issue.

Finally, let me just say that some have suggested that Trump said those words because he's really pro-choice. I don't buy it. Only Trump and God know the answer to that. Everybody else is judging. The problem here is a lack of information and investment of his time understanding the pro-life movement. It's not a bread and butter issue for him, so he's spent very little time delving into it. That's the real issue. Now Trump needs to pivot to show he's serious about educating himself on it. If he does that, it will be a step in the right direction.

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