

Why Is the Rubio Campaign Asking Ohio Supporters to Vote for John Kasich?

An interview between CNN and U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio's spokesman took an odd turn after he had his logic turned back on him.

Alex Conant, a veteran communications specialist, was discussing the Florida senator's efforts to win his candidate's winner-take-all home state primary on Tuesday when he repeated a claim the campaign has made repeatedly in the past few days. If voters in the Sunshine State want to prevent Donald Trump from winning the GOP nomination, they should vote for Rubio.

"Any vote for someone other than Marco Rubio is effectively a vote for Donald Trump," Conant said. "It's so important that Republicans who don't want Donald Trump to be our nominee, they vote for Marco Rubio here in Florida, that's why we've been 100-percent focused here for the last couple weeks."

CNN's John Berman then flipped the logic on the spokesman's statement, and asked, if that then meant that any vote in Ohio for someone other than John Kasich was then a vote for Donald Trump. Without hesitating, Conant—surprisingly—agreed.

"There's no question that John Kasich has the best chance to beat Donald Trump in Ohio," he said.

Berman, incredulously, asked Conant if he was then asking Rubio voters to vote for the Ohio governor in that state. Perhaps realizing what he'd actually said, the spokesman stammered for a bit before saying he was "just stating the obvious" that Kasich was the only candidate with a legitimate chance to beat Trump in the Buckeye State.

He then repeated his call for Kasich and Cruz supporters to vote for his candidate in Florida.

“If you’re a voter and Marco Rubio isn’t necessarily your first choice—if you like John Kasich, or you like Ted Cruz—and you’re here in Florida, you need to vote for Marco Rubio, because he is the only candidate who can deprive Donald Trump of those 99 delegates. And if we stop Donald Trump here in Florida, we can stop him in Cleveland. He will not be the Republican nominee.”

Currently, according to the Real Clear Politics polling average in Florida, Trump holds a 45-25 lead over Rubio. In Ohio, the GOP front-runner has a 37-34 lead over Kasich. In Illinois, another winner-take-all state on Tuesday, Trump has a 12-point lead over Cruz.

Brenan came back to the earlier statement, saying he wanted to be sure they were clear about what Conant was saying. He asked again if the Rubio campaign was calling on its supporters to back Kasich in Ohio.

“Yeah. I think I’m just stating the obvious,” he said, repeating his earlier statement. “If you are a Republican primary voter in Ohio and you wanted to beat Donald Trump, your best choice in Ohio is John Kasich, because John Kasich is the sitting governor and he’s very close to Donald Trump in some of the polls there.

“The same is true here in Florida, where if you want to defeat Donald Trump here in Florida, where there’s 99 delegates at stake, you need to vote for Marco Rubio, because he’s the only one with a mathematical shot.”

Berman’s co-host, Kate Bolduan, appearing to be in complete disbelief, asked a third time for a yes or no answer: was Conant telling Rubio supporters to vote for Kasich in Ohio. The spokesman’s unflinching answer: Yes.