

# Why the Nation's Largest Conservative Group Is Mad at Marco Rubio

A controversy has erupted involving U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and the nation's biggest conservative group, the American Conservative Union.

According to a press release from ACU, the Florida senator turned down Tuesday an invitation to speak at this year's Conservative Political Action Conference, the pre-eminent conservative political forum in the U.S. That prompted the following angry response from its organizers.

"Although Marco Rubio has built a conservative record and has a high ACU rating, he and his campaign have made a rookie mistake. Today the Rubio campaign informed ACU's chairman that their candidate is unwilling to make time to meet with activists and answer their questions at CPAC 2016."

"Sen. Rubio cannot have it both ways: He cannot hope to be the inspirational leader of conservatives and at the same time hide at the very moments when activists who comprise the heart and soul of the movement assemble and organize. For 43 years CPAC has been that critical moment, and this year's conference will be the biggest yet."

The Rubio campaign dismissed the statement as false, saying that it was struggling to find time in the busy campaign schedule to fit in a CPAC appearance. Surprisingly, he found an unlikely defender in Red State, a website that has been very supportive of his closest competitor for the GOP presidential nomination, Ted Cruz.

"I reached out to the Rubio campaign, and they provided me with the email exchange between the campaign and ACU

representatives this morning, and it seems to essentially confirm their side of the story,” Red State Executive Editor Leon H. Wolf wrote.

The notion that any Republican presidential candidate would want to skip out on CPAC seems laughable on its face. It is where conservatives—not just politicians—of all sorts go to be seen. It’s been the launching post of so many conservative careers, as well, particularly that of Ronald Reagan.

The theme for CPAC 2016 is “Our Time Is Now,” an homage to Reagan’s first public speech after winning the presidency in 1980. The event’s speaker list currently includes GOP presidential candidates Ted Cruz, Donald Trump and Ben Carson.