

Cruz targets conservatives as he starts White House run

By PHILIP ELLIOTT
Associated Press

LYNCHBURG, Va. — Launching his bid for the Republican presidential nomination, Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas asked Christian conservative voters to imagine a United States without the IRS, Obamacare or abortion rights — and to imagine they can make that happen by supporting him.

His aspirational appeal on Monday, aimed at America's most conservative voters, could quickly run into challenges in winning over moderate voters — and eventually deep difficulties in governing should Cruz win the White House.

But it's a message that Cruz, the first major 2016 contender to declare himself a candidate, is expected to forcefully emphasize in the coming year before voters start to pick nominees.

"God's blessing has been on America from the very beginning of this nation, and I believe that God isn't done with Americans," Cruz declared at Liberty University, a Christian school founded by the late Rev. Jerry Falwell.

"I believe in you. I believe in the power of millions of courageous conservatives rising up to reignite the promise of America. And that is that is why, today, I am announcing that I am running for president of the United States of America."

Cruz won't be the sole GOP contender for long. Two Senate colleagues, Kentucky's Rand Paul and Florida's Marco Rubio, are eyeing campaign launches soon. And former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, are



Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, his wife Heidi, and their two daughters Catherine, 4, left, and Caroline, 6, right, wave on stage after he announced his campaign for president, Monday at Liberty University, founded by the late Rev. Jerry Falwell, in Lynchburg, Va. Cruz, who announced his candidacy on twitter in the early morning hours, is the first major candidate in the 2016 race for president.

expected to follow, among others.

The 44-year-old Cruz is betting his White House hopes on profoundly conservative voters and their opposition to policies they find abhorrent.

Within such circles, there is deep distrust of the IRS, which was revealed last year to have been scrutinizing tea party groups' nonprofit status.

Scuttling President Barack Obama's health care legislation, called by some "Obamacare," is a rallying cry, as well. And abortion is a major issue for Christian conservatives who have tremendous sway in the lead-off caucus and primary election states of Iowa and South Carolina.

During his 30-minute kickoff speech, delivered like a sermon without notes or cue

cards, Cruz made clear he sees electoral potential in his unbending advocacy.

"Today, roughly half of born-again Christians aren't voting — they're staying home," Cruz said. "Imagine, instead, millions of people of faith all across America coming out to the polls and voting our values."

Following his election to the Senate in 2012, the former Texas solicitor general quickly established himself as an uncompromising figure willing to take on Democrats and sometimes Republicans, too. Divisive within his own GOP, he won praise from tea party activists for leading the effort to shut the federal government during an unsuccessful bid to block money for the health law.

He spoke on the fifth anniversary of that law — legis-

lation that prompted Cruz to stand for more than 21 hours in the Senate to denounce it in a speech that delighted his supporters and other Obamacare foes.

Cheers rose Monday in the hall when Cruz reminded the crowd that Liberty University filed a suit against the law right after its enactment.

But the partial government shutdown was not widely popular, and Democrats signaled that it would be central to their criticism of the first-term senator.

"His reckless approach to governing would make life worse, not better, for Americans and he isn't the type of fighter that America's middle-class families need," Democratic National Committee chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz said in a statement.

Fuel producers, truckers sue to block Oregon low-carbon fuel standard

By HILLARY BORRUD
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Fuel producers and truckers are suing to stop Oregon from implementing the state's low-carbon fuel standard.

Industry groups filed a federal lawsuit in the U.S. District Court in Portland on Monday against Gov. Kate Brown, members of the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission and employees of the state Department of Environmental Quality. The plaintiffs asked the court to issue a preliminary injunction to stop the state from implementing the program while the case proceeds.

A similar federal lawsuit in California slowed the roll-out of that state's low-carbon fuel program but did not stop it.

The Western States Petroleum Association already filed a challenge to the low-carbon fuel program at the Oregon Court of Appeals earlier this month.

The state Environmental Quality Commission voted in January to adopt regulations that will require fuel importers and producers to reduce the carbon content of transportation fuels by 10 percent during the next decade, starting in January 2016. The rules were based on a 2009 bill, which was set to sunset this year before the state could implement the program.

Lawmakers passed the controversial Senate Bill 324 earlier this year to make the program permanent, and Gov. Kate Brown signed the bill into law March 12. Brown did not immediately respond to a

request for comment Monday afternoon on whether the lawsuit might affect the state's implementation of the low-carbon fuel standard.

In a court filing Monday, lawyers for the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers, American Trucking Associations, Inc., and Consumer Energy Alliance said the low-carbon fuel standard violates the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution because it discriminates against fuel imported into the state and attempts to regulate fuel production activities outside Oregon.

For example, the plaintiffs stated the Oregon program was designed to close the state's fuel market to certain types of corn ethanol and other renewable fuels and therefore interferes with "the congressional purpose of ensuring a continued market nationwide for this corn ethanol."

The groups also stated the Oregon low-carbon fuel program is pre-empted by federal laws including the Clean Air Act and federal renewable fuel standard.

The Western States Petroleum Association filed a petition March 9 asking the Oregon Court of Appeals to review the low-carbon fuel standard regulations the environmental commission adopted in January based on the existing state law. The court has yet to schedule oral arguments in the case, and it's not unusual for the court to take a year to reach a decision.

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BRIEFLY

Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu apologizes for offending Arab citizens

JERUSALEM (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu apologized to Israel's Arab citizens on Monday for remarks he made during last week's parliament election that offended members of the community.

The move appeared to be an attempt to heal rifts and mute criticism at home and in the United States. Netanyahu drew accusations of racism in Israel, especially from its Arab minority, and a White House rebuke when, just a few hours before polling stations were to close across the country, he warned that Arab citizens were voting "in droves."

But President Barack Obama's chief of staff, Denis McDonough, rejected Netanyahu's attempt to distance himself from his comments, telling an Israel advocacy group Monday that the U.S. can't just overlook what Netanyahu said on the eve of his re-election.

Netanyahu, whose Likud Party won re-election in the vote, met with members of the Arab community at the prime minister's residence in Jerusalem on Monday and apologized.

He said he knows his "comments last week offended some Israeli citizens and offended members of the Israeli-Arab community."

3 dead in scaffolding collapse at 11-story high-rise under construction

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Workers were dismantling a scaffold at a high-rise construction project on Monday when a piece of it fell to the ground in downtown Raleigh, killing three men and sending another to a hospital.

All four men were involved in the construction of Charter Square, a glass and steel building in downtown Raleigh, said Jeffrey Hammerstein, community outreach chief for Wake County EMS.

A 911 caller told the operator that men were working on the scaffold when it fell about 11 a.m. The equipment, known as a mast climber scaffold, moves up and down a building's facade to take workers to different floors.

"We just had a mast climber fall off. There were men on it," the caller said, estimating the men fell 200 feet.

The operator asked if the victims were awake, to which the caller responded: "No, they're dead."

Utah Governor approves firing squads if lethal drugs are unavailable

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Utah became the only state to allow firing squads for executions Monday when Gov. Gary Herbert signed a law approving the method's use when no lethal-injection drugs are available.

Herbert has said he finds the firing squad "a little bit gruesome," but Utah is a capital punishment state and needs a backup execution method in case a shortage of the drugs persists.

"We regret anyone ever commits the heinous crime of aggravated murder to merit the death penalty, and we prefer to use our primary method of lethal injection when such a sentence is issued," Herbert spokesman Marty Carpenter said. "However, when a jury makes the decision and a judge signs a death warrant, enforcing that lawful decision is the obligation of the executive branch."

The measure's approval is the latest illustration of some states' frustration over bungled executions and difficulty obtaining the drugs. Utah is one of several states seeking new forms of capital punishment after a botched Oklahoma lethal injection last year.

States have struggled to keep up their drug inventories as European manufacturers opposed to capital punishment refuse to sell the components of lethal injections to U.S. prisons.

Police: No evidence of gang-rape at University of Virginia

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (AP) — A four-month police investigation into an alleged gang rape at the University of Virginia that Rolling Stone magazine described in graphic detail produced no evidence of the attack and was stymied by the accuser's unwillingness to cooperate, authorities said Monday.

The article, titled "A rape on campus," focused on a student identified only as "Jackie" who said she was raped at the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity more than two years earlier.

It described a hidden culture of sexual violence fueled by binge drinking at the college. Police said they found no evidence of that either.

There were numerous discrepancies between the article, published in November 2014, and what investigators found, said Charlottesville Police Chief Timothy Longo, who took care not to accuse Jackie of lying.

The case is suspended, not closed, and the fact that investigators could not find evidence years later

"doesn't mean that something terrible didn't happen to Jackie," Longo said.

He appealed for anyone with information about any sexual violence to immediately alert police, and expressed hope that Jackie may one day feel comfortable explaining what really happened.

"There's a difference between a false allegation and something that happened that may have been different than what was described in that article," Longo said.

Asked if Jackie would

be charged with making a false report, he said: "Absolutely not."

Jackie's attorney, Palma Pustilnik, said she would have no comment on the investigation.

Accurate or not, the article heightened scrutiny of campus sexual assaults amid a campaign by President Barack Obama to end them. The University of Virginia had already been on the Department of Education's list of 55 colleges under investigation for their handling of sex assault violations.

East Oregonian

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