



AP Photo/Isaac Brekken

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump smiles as he speaks during a campaign rally on Thursday in Las Vegas.

Donald Trump: 'A little establishment' doesn't hurt

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS, Nevada (AP) — Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said Thursday there's nothing wrong with a little deal-making to get things done.

"You know what? There's a point at which: Let's get to be a little establishment," Trump told about 1,500 people at a rally at the Las Vegas South Point Resort and Casino. "We've got to get things done folks, OK? Believe me, don't worry. We're going to make such great deals."

It was an effort by the billionaire developer to draw contrasts with Ted Cruz, his top rival in the Feb. 1 Iowa caucuses.

The author of "The Art of the Deal" suggested that Cruz, largely boxed out of Senate deal-making circles, can't operate effectively in office.

"Guys like Ted Cruz will never make a deal because he's a strident guy," Trump said.

Trump, who is dominating national polls, highlighted his endorsement this week from tea party darling Sarah Palin as validation of his outsider status. But he also pushed back against the idea that collaboration is a dirty word.

He pointed to the famous relationship between Republican President Ronald

Reagan and Democratic House Speaker Tip O'Neill in the 1980s. "That's what the country's about really, isn't it?"

The attack comes as Trump and Cruz are locked in a tight battle in Iowa. Cruz is an ideological purist who has long argued that Republicans need to elect a conservative who will energize the base instead of another moderate.

Speaking to reporters in New Hampshire, Cruz repeated his charge that the Republican establishment is "rushing to support Donald Trump."

"So if as a voter you think what we need is more Republicans in Washington to cut a deal with" congressional Democratic leaders, Cruz said, "then I guess Donald Trump is your guy."

Trump, who has questioned Cruz's eligibility to serve as president because he was born in Canada, also noted that none of Cruz's Senate colleagues had come to his defense on the issue.

"There's something wrong there. And I can tell you, they like me, those guys. And there's nothing wrong with that, folks. We've got to make deals!"

he said, shouldn't have to rely on executive orders to push through his agenda on issues like improving trade imbalances with countries like China.

Some Democrats fear Clinton's message is failing

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Hillary Clinton has questioned Bernie Sanders' electability. She's criticized his plans for health care, foreign policy and Wall Street. And she's tagged him with flip-flopping on gun control.

None of it appears to be sticking — and that's raising concerns among Democrats who fear that a months-long primary campaign could create lasting damage for their party.

While most believe Clinton will still capture the nomination, some say she is failing to respond effectively to Sanders, fueling both his primary rise and strengthening the Republican argument against her. Others say she got too late of a start going after Sanders and is still not hitting him enough — eroding her lead in states that should be safe.

"They didn't take him seriously enough because they thought they had a gadfly," said John Morgan, a Florida attorney and Clinton donor. "The gadfly wasn't a gadfly — he was a lightning bug. And people have been following that lightning bug all over America."

Though Sanders has dismissed questions about Clinton's use of a private email account and server as secretary of state and how she responded to the deadly 2012 Benghazi attacks, some Democrats say she needs a better response to his critique of her ties to Wall Street, which they argue reinforces months of Republican attacks on her character.

"The better she does, the more those stories seem to recede in the minds of voters," said Boston-based Democratic strategist Mary Anne Marsh. "Now, Benghazi seems to be back. Email seems to be back. A number of other things seem to be back."

Though the tightening nature of the race, particularly in Iowa, hasn't sparked widespread panic among her supporters quite yet, it's worrying some donors, as well as Bill Clinton and their daughter, Chelsea, who shared her concerns at a meeting with supporters in New York this week, according to people close to the campaign, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss private conversations.

Democratic donors, strategists and pollsters, including some aligned with Clinton, expressed their concerns in nearly two dozen interviews with The Associated Press.

Clinton has long struggled to connect with liberal activists, who have gained influence as the party has shifted left during President Barack Obama's



AP Photo/Jae C. Hong

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton speaks during a rally Thursday in Vinton, Iowa.

"They didn't take (Sanders) seriously enough."

— John Morgan, Clinton donor

two terms in office.

"Clinton's message has always been more effective for a general election audience than the primary activist base," said strategist Ben LaBolt, a former Obama campaign aide.

Sanders released a gauzy, uplifting ad on Thursday with images of his overflowing rallies over a soundtrack of Simon and Garfunkel's "America." The wordless spot contrasts with a recent Clinton ad New Hampshire that's about her experience and plans.

In recent days, Sanders has intensified his critique of Clinton with rhetoric that's edged toward breaking one of his core campaign pledges — no attacks.

"Without naming any names, Goldman Sachs also provides very, very generous speaking fees to some unnamed candidates" he said this week in Iowa, meaning her.

His argument hasn't gone unnoticed by Republicans. The Republican National Committee jumped to Sanders' defense during the last debate, blasting out emails undercutting her.

It's all a win-win for Republicans, potentially bolstering Sanders, who they see as the less formidable general election opponent, and reinforcing negative impressions of Clinton.

Clinton's campaign released a statement accusing Sanders of following Republican cues to go after

her (as much as it seems the other way around). The campaign's communications director, Jen Palmieri, said it's obvious that Clinton is the candidate Republicans are afraid to face.

During Sanders' rise in the summer, Clinton's campaign avoided criticizing Sanders out of fear that would alienate his liberal supporters who will be important to the Democratic nominee this fall. That hesitancy has changed in recent weeks. Recent preference polls suggest her lead in Iowa has evaporated and in New Hampshire, Sanders has opened up a significant edge.

Clinton and her team believe they can still win the Feb. 1 caucuses in Iowa, arguing that her broader support will help her pick up more delegates, due to the proportional nature of their allocation in the state.

Her strategists have long seen New Hampshire as a tougher race, given Sanders' decades of representing a neighboring state. They've believed the nomination would be won in South Carolina, Nevada and the Southern states that vote on March 1. The larger numbers of minority voters in the later contests benefit Clinton. But even in Southern states, Democrats increasingly see a path for Sanders to cobble together a coalition of liberal whites, independents and younger black supporters. And caucuses — which tend to reward liberal candidates — in March and in April in states such as Maine, Colorado and Wyoming could favor Sanders.

"Nobody ever stops running for president, they just run out of money," said former Indiana Sen. Evan Bayh, a Clinton fundraiser. "Bernie has enough money for a long time."

1st of 9 defendants sentenced in Navy bribery case

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The first of nine defendants in a massive U.S. Navy bribery case was sentenced to 27 months in prison Thursday for providing classified military information to a Malaysian defense contractor in exchange for an iPad, hotel stays, monthly cash payments and other gifts.

Petty Officer 1st Class Daniel Layug told the court

that he made a mistake and let his ego and greed lead him to betray his country.

Layug faced up to five years behind bars. Prosecutors asked for the 27-month term, saying Layug was the least culpable in the investigation centered on Leonard Glenn Francis, president of Singapore-based Glenn Defense Marine Asia Ltd., or GDMA.

Nicknamed "Fat Leonard" for his girth, Francis has admitted to bribing numerous Navy officials with lavish gifts, including prostitutes, luxury hotels stays, and Cuban cigars. He used the bribes to obtain information that helped him beat out the competition and get Navy captains to steer ships to Pacific ports where he overcharged the Navy.

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