



Bannon's Nationalist Agenda At Odds With Free Market Policies

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October 18, 2017

Former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon was among one of the most prominent speakers to address the Family Research Council's Values Voter Summit over the weekend.

The Republican media executive, who has returned to Breitbart since leaving the Trump administration, stirred the crowd as he rattled off a list of "establishment" GOP senators who are on his list of lawmakers he aims to primary out of office.

"There's a time and season for everything, and right now it's a season of war against the GOP establishment. It's no longer acceptable to come and pat you on the head, tell you everything is going to be fine, just get these guys in office. Those days are over. We need to move with urgency. The president of the United States deserves their respect and deserves their support," Bannon warned.

"Senator Barrasso and Senator Fischer and Senator Heller and the other one of you folks — Senator Hatch — if you do that (openly support Trump's agenda), they may reconsider. But until that time, they're coming for you."

Bannon talked about the special Senate primary election in Alabama, where Roy Moore bested establishment-backed Sen. Luther Strange, as an example of his power to generate grassroots support. The former White House aide laid bare his intention to mount strong primary challenges against any establishment GOP senator that has blocked progress in Congress.

The speech — which only clarified his already-public intentions — made enormous rounds in the media, so much so that President Donald Trump was forced to comment about it.

"I'm going to see if we talk him out of that," Trump said at a news conference at the Rose Garden on Monday, according to [Politico](#). The president did not sound supportive of Bannon's plan to oust so-called establishment GOP senators, despite the plan being conducted with the apparent intent of boosting Trump's legislative priorities.

However, threats of primary challenges were not the only things Bannon said on Saturday that caught the eye of many observers. During his speech at the Values Voter Summit, the former Trump campaign chairman said the ideal political philosophy of the country was not traditional conservatism, but economic nationalism.

“Why is this a populist revolt? You guys have more common sense, more understanding of what we need to do. More understanding. And the first order of business is to undo all the damage of globalism, right?” Bannon began to explain to the crowd.

“Why are we nationalist? It is not ethnonationalism. (The media) can run that drill all they want. It’s economic nationalism. It doesn’t matter what your race is or ethnicity, your gender, your religion, your sexual preference, it doesn’t matter,” he added, according to [Real Clear Politics](#).

“It does not matter. As long as you are a citizen of this republic, that is what matters,” he said.

The 63-year old graduate of Georgetown and Harvard University placed the blame on globalism and “political elites” for letting many jobs leave the country for cheaper markets abroad.

“Economic nationalism is what combines us together. [Economic nationalism](#) is understanding that we are going to bring those jobs back. It’s not the second law of thermodynamics why (jobs) left,” he said. “There is no law that took those jobs to Asia and those factories to Asia and left us with gutted communities and opioid addicts. That was human agency. That was decisions, our men and women, that did that.”

Like his calls to remove Republican lawmakers from office, Bannon’s open support for nationalism was not a breaking revelation. Since his entrance into Trump’s orbit, Bannon’s unique philosophy has drawn the curiosity of media outlets around the country. Many pundits have interpreted this self-branding as a [dog whistle](#) to white nationalism — something Bannon has vehemently denied.

The former White House aide shares much of the same populist outlook as the Republican president, a reluctance of free-trade deals like NAFTA, a desire to see immigration into the country reduced and a newfound admiration for the American blue-collar worker.

While this populist form of conservatism has been present within the current Republican Party tent for years, it has never taken such a front row seat in GOP politics until the election of Trump. This philosophy also takes sharp contrast to many Republican free-market ideals. Free trade, unrestricted markets and an unregulated labor force are mainstays of the more libertarian wing of the GOP.

In fact, during his speech at the Values Voter Summit, Bannon specifically called out free market think tanks such as the Cato Institute, the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation as organizations that likely oppose his way of thinking.

“We have a disruptive moment that has generally allowed those with a common interest in lower taxes, less regulation and less redistribution to connect and make progress educationally. We certainly have with students — there’s a whole new receptivity to learning about the bedrock ideas of classical liberalism, and of course that includes Ayn Rand — who is President Trump’s favorite author,” said Jennifer Grossman in a statement to Western Journalism.

Grossman serves as the CEO of the Atlas Society, an objectivist think tank based of the philosophy of Ayn Rand. The Atlas Society generally favors free markets, individuality and unabashed deregulation. While these positions may seem at odds with many of Trump’s executive priorities, Grossman did not seem overly pessimistic about the president’s performance in office.

“We don’t have to agree on everything — in fact there’s much on which we disagree — but overall we believe that if we are right we have nothing to fear, and if we are wrong we have something to learn,” she said.