

CAMPAIGN 2016

GOP 2016 FAMILY TIES

A Bush can survive in Trump political world

By Will Weisert
The Associated Press



Bush

DALLAS — George P. Bush was talking about his future political plans — and how Donald Trump wouldn't reshape them — when two women approached, giddy with excitement.

They wanted pictures with a man whose photogenic smile once landed him on People magazine's most-eligible bachelors list. Up close, though, they saw something unexpected.

"You look like your dad," Ruth Ann Pratt, a retired college math teacher from Lake Jackson, near Houston, finally exclaimed. "You turn slightly to the side, and you ARE your dad."

Bush only smiled. These days, being associated with his father, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, may not be such a great thing.

Eighteen months after he was elected Texas land commissioner and a few weeks past his 40th birthday, Bush is quietly continuing his family's legacy. The grandson of one former president and nephew of another, he remains a rising star in America's largest conservative state and is keeping alive the possibility that a political dynasty declared dead by many when his dad flamed out of the presidential race could yet again return to national prominence.

What remains to be seen,

though, is if a third George Bush can survive in a political world turned upside down by Trump — where Republican primary voters overwhelmingly have embraced the ultimate outsider who promises to smash the political establishment the Bushes embodied for decades.

"Regardless of what comes at me, I'll be prepared," Bush said of the possibility his last name has shifted from GOP royalty to a liability.

In an interview during the recent Texas Republican

Convention in Dallas, Bush said that, like his father, grandfather and uncle, he isn't endorsing Trump or attending the Republican National Convention in Cleveland.

Bush said he was part of a national conservative movement concerned about Trump's candidacy.

"He has the ability to win us over if he clarifies many of his remarks and he demonstrates that he doesn't besmirch peoples' character as the motivating factor for

why he's running for office," Bush said.

Joe Brettell, a former GOP congressional staffer now based in Houston said "George P. has one of the brightest political futures in the country."

"He is absolutely on any smart Republican's radar," Brettell said. "When the party begins to rebuild after Trump, Marco Rubio and George P. Bush will be two people that they look at as a blueprint for potential good times ahead."

GRASSROOTS

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Two weeks ago, Governor Cuomo created his own "Task Force to Combat Heroin" comprised of experts in health care, drug policy, advocacy, education, and recovery. This group is currently conducting a series of listening sessions statewide with the goal of recommending a comprehensive plan to be acted on before the end of the current legislative session. The Senate is hopeful that many of the recommendations from the governor's task force will mesh with many of our Senate actions and that agreement on badly needed, final actions will come together in short order.

What's encouraging to me is that there's an unmistakable sense of urgency surrounding this crisis, from all sides, which more often than not leads to something concrete and productive getting done.

The fact is: there's no choice. We can't wait to build on the

foundations we've already put in place and make them stronger. What's forthcoming won't end this crisis — we all recognize that this is a long-haul challenge — but it will mean that action by action, step by step, we will make progress to begin turning the tide.

For the Senate's part, our recommendations have been gleaned from testimony from regional law enforcement officers, first responders and district attorneys, drug addiction counselors and treatment providers, recovering addicts and family members, social services and health professionals, educators and other experts about the range of complex challenges posed by heroin including addiction prevention and treatment options, drug-related crimes, and other community and public health and safety impacts.

Our legislative package (which you can find in its entirety on my Senate website, <http://www.omara.nysenate.gov>), which I co-sponsor, together with funding in this year's state budget, seeks to build on existing laws, programs

and services enacted over the past few years to bolster awareness and education, prevention and treatment, and enforcement efforts.

Overall, our updated strategy is focused on a four-pronged approach: prevention, treatment, recovery and enforcement. It includes a series of legislative actions, but it also issues directives to various state agencies that we believe are critical to cutting through a number of bureaucratic shortcomings and tangles which currently stand in the way of the most effective responses and available, meaningful help.

It's also critical to stress that the 2016-2017 state budget includes \$167 million in funding to continue enhancing and expanding heroin and opioid addiction prevention, treatment, recovery, and education services. How best to distribute and utilize this funding remains one of the key agreements that must be reached between the Legislature and the governor before the end of the current legislative session.

Toward this end, the Senate has outlined several funding priorities including: increased Family Support Navigators and Navigator training programs; peer programs; Recovery Community and Outreach

Centers; transitional housing and post-recovery employment; and local government block grants.

The bipartisan Senate task force was created in 2014 at a time when local police departments and addiction

centers, including many across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, were pointing to the alarming rise in the availability and use of heroin. The alarm has only grown louder over time, and it can't be ignored.



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