

Wanted: A bold leader

I've been to many conservative conferences over the years, and I've heard many politicians speak at those meetings, but not long ago, there was a first.

Tim Pawlenty, the governor of Minnesota, was addressing the annual Values Voter Summit in Washington, D.C., and near the conclusion of his speech, he recited a very familiar portion of Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14. It says, "... if My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from Heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

I don't think Gov. Pawlenty realized it, but as he recited that verse, the audience of nearly 2,000 began to quote it with him, until, by the end, a full chorus was under way. It was so spontaneous that I believe the people themselves were surprised.

That moment was a metaphor for the state of mind among social conservatives at this point in time. They are hungry for leadership, so edge-of-the-chair eager to join the campaign to restore righteous leadership to our nation that, given a chance, they'll even help a speaker with his speech.

Ever since President Barack Obama took office last winter and began steering his administration Leftward, I've often thought that the real question was not whether people would begin to chafe against his plans, but whether there would be conservative politicians ready to rise and lead a charge in a different direction.

After sitting through a weekend's worth of speeches by contenders for the Republican mantle, the early crop of candidates looked impressive. Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee is a gifted communicator who genuinely stirred the crowd as he focused directly on moral themes. Whether his message can move a broader audience as the 2012 cycle approaches is unknown.

Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney spoke forcefully and comprehensively about the sins of the Obama administration, but his deliv-

ery still lacked a full measure of passion to move this crowd.

Other aspirants who addressed these social conservatives are still largely unknown by them, although this tier of candidates was uniformly received warmly and respectfully — including one of the House Republican leaders, Mike Pence of Indiana, Texas Gov. Rick Perry and Pawlenty.

Social conservatives have seen the Left-liberalism of the Obama administration and are truly alarmed. They earnestly seek a leader with bold ideas and fearless rhetoric who not only stands up to the Left, but begins to drive the conversation in the other direction.

These times cry for articulation, power and resolve. And if the values voters at this year's conference sense any sluggish steering on the paramount issues of marriage and the right to life, they'll change tires quickly. These voters are headed for the White House, and they want reliable wheels to get them there.

What they want is exactly the kind of bold freshness we're seeing

in the governor's race in Iowa. As you can read in this issue of *Citizen* (Page 4), Bob Vander Plaats, one of the Republican candidates for governor, has thrown down the gauntlet against the Iowa court that somehow found in the state's constitution a right for same-sex couples to marry.

Note from values voters to would-be candidates: We are ready to leap ahead. Give us half a chance, and we'll even help you finish your speech. ●

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