

Presidential Elections, The View from the Italian-American Community. John J. LaValle on Trump: “Why He Is Best for the American People”

La Valle John J. (September 16, 2016)



John J. LaValle, Chairman of the Suffolk County Republican Committee: “Actually, Mr. Trump is not divisive. He stands against political correctness when doing so hurts national security and our economy. In fact, under Barack Obama’s failed leadership, the United States is more divided economically and racially. Donald Trump, as President, has the fortitude to fix that.”

Mr. LaValle, you were a delegate to the GOP Convention that nominated Trump. You have been with Trump from the outset, even when it looked like he could tear the GOP apart. Why do you feel that Trump was and is the best presidential candidate for your Party?

Before we are Republicans and Democrats, we are Americans. And, regardless of party affiliation, our Federal Government isn’t working for many Americans. Be it the economy or national security, Donald Trump will put America first and I want a President who will put American families first.

Your passion for politics runs deep into your family. Your older cousin Kenneth P. LaValle has been a Long Island NYS Senator since 1976. When did you figure that politics was in your blood?

Growing up, my family always discussed politics at the dinner table. In fact, my father used to make us read the newspaper and tell him about current events, which provided a firm foundation for our



interest in public policy. As you said, my cousin is one of the longest serving Senators in New York State. And, my younger brother was recently elected as a Councilman in Brookhaven, a Town with a population similar to Rhode Island, Idaho or Montana.

Your political base is in Suffolk County, Long Island, where you grew to become the Chairman of the County Republican Committee. This is one of the most Italian counties outside NYC. How does your Italian-American background relate to your politics, if it does at all?

My great grandparents are from Italy and they instilled a strong sense of work ethic, commitment to family and community in our family. Those are qualities that are necessary to run a political committee as well as to successfully hold public office.

It often happens in Long Island that harsh political battles take place within the Italian-American community. How do you feel when you find yourself on the opposite side from a fellow Italian? In other words, if Donald Trump ran against an Italian-American candidate, someone like, say, the late Mario Cuomo... Would you feel torn between political loyalty and ethnic attachment?

Italian Americans have such a significant influence on Long Island politics, on both sides of the aisle, that it is not unlike a race that might take place in Italy between two Italians. As for my political choices, I choose candidates based on who can best govern. It would be extremely short-sighted to choose a candidate based on ethnicity rather than ideology. Decades ago, I actually supported NY Governor George Pataki, who is of Hungarian descent over Former Governor Mario Cuomo.

Let's go back to the Trump campaign. Definitely Mr Trump is not a moderate, middle-of-the ground man. Indeed he is somehow a divisive figure. Why do you feel that this is what America needs today?

Actually, Mr. Trump is not divisive. He stands against political correctness when doing so hurts national security and our economy. In fact, under Barack Obama's failed leadership, the United States is more divided economically and racially. Donald Trump, as President, has the fortitude to fix that.

Donald Trump is very tough on illegal immigrants. Since Italian immigrants were harshly discriminated when they first came here—though they came legally, in the main—some feel that their descendants should be softer on this issue. You certainly do not agree with this, so we would like your opinion.

In a country like the United States, in order for a Democracy to truly work, everyone must follow the rules. Under Barack Obama, those rules are not being followed and injustice is that legal immigrants are underemployed while illegal immigrants are receiving countless taxpayer benefits. The fact that ISIS and other groups are targeting Europe, the US and other western nations, makes it even more imperative that we are tough on illegal immigration.

Europeans who follow Mr. Trump's campaign are especially struck by his proposal to build an anti-immigrants wall between the US and Mexico as well as by his treatment of the Muslims. These are very sensitive topics and we would be grateful if you would share your thoughts with us.

While the Federal Government's Accountability Office research has shown that there are an estimated half million illegal entries into the United States each year, there are also many well-documented incidents of drug dealers and violent criminals crossing our southern border. As President, Bill Clinton and as Senator, Hillary Clinton advocated for building a wall and limitations on Muslim immigrants when they held elected office. These are practical answers to a practical problem and shouldn't be dismissed or, worse, chalked up to xenophobia.



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