

FLORIDA BAPTIST WITNESS

An interview with Bill McCollum, Republican candidate for governor

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Florida Baptist Witness

Editor's note: Executive Editor James A. Smith Sr. interviewed McCollum on Aug. 3 in Daytona Beach. The interview lasted 21:53 minutes. What follows is a transcript with limited editing. For more information, see www.BillMcCollum.com. Smith also [interviewed Rick Scott](#). Numerous candidates for local, state and federal offices are on the Aug. 24 primary election ballot. For information about candidates in your area, consult your county supervisor of elections.

Why do you want to be governor?



Courtesy Photo

My wife and I have been married for 38 years. We have three sons. We have two grandsons. We have one more grandchild on the way – we hope it's a girl, we think it is. And this election is about them. It's about our children. It's about the grandchildren and children of the people of Florida and making Florida a better place for them. That's why I'm running. I want to make Florida a better place and restore its greatness.

Tell me about your personal religious faith.

I'm Christian. I grew up in the Methodist Church. My wife and I have attended the Episcopal Church, which is her faith, for many years. I visit many churches. I believe in Christ. He's my Savior. I can tell you a lot of other things about my faith, but I do pray. I ask God for guidance and it's done regularly.

Are you a member of a local congregation?

I attend All Saints Episcopal Church in Winter Park.

Have you come to the point in your spiritual life where you know for certain that you'll be going to heaven when you die?

I believe I have. I come to the point of belief in my Savior, Jesus Christ.

If you were to stand before God He were to ask you, why should I let into My heaven, what would you say?

I'd say that Jesus died for my sins and I believe in Jesus and I believe in God. I believe that Christ is my Savior.

How do you think your faith will affect the way you govern?

It's going to govern me because the values that exist in my life in asking for guidance. When God asks, I listen. And one of the things that I never forget are the morals of Jesus of Nazareth. They guide me every day of my life.

Your opponent has made an issue of the fact that he's an outsider, whereas you have been in political office for a long time in various places. How should voters evaluate that issue?

I'm very proud of my public service. I was a Navy JAG. A congressman. Your attorney general for the last three and one-half years. I served in Congress with Ronald Reagan. I'm a Reagan conservative. I founded the House Task Force on Terrorism long before September 11th. I was there as a part of making the Contract with America work. I was there for the last balanced budget. And as attorney general I fought and still am fighting child pornography. I'm very proud of our team that goes after child predators before they get our kids. We've gone into every school – middle school, high school – with a program to educate children better how to protect themselves against these terrible people. And that's very, very important on the Internet today. I'm very proud of the efforts I've done in consumer protection and the other things I've done as a

public servant.

I have a record that I can stand on; a record that's very clear. I'm pro-life. I consistently voted that way in Congress. You can tell where I stand and what I believe in. Rick Scott has only what he tells us in the ads that he has spent now – between his wife and he – \$40 million, much of them saying things about me that just really aren't true. Then, what his record was at Columbia/HCA. I don't need probably to reiterate all of that, but either he knew about the fraud that was the largest, most massive fraud against senior citizens in American history and against Medicare, ripping off taxpayers and getting fined criminally for \$1.7 billion. Or, he was an incompetent manager. And certainly the latter was true. After 15 of his hospitals were raided, the board of directors fired him. And, as I say to Rick, who always says, "I take responsibility," I say, "Rick, let's get serious. You say you took responsibility. All you took was \$300 million."

And the question I pose to people when they ask the qualifications – who do you want to be your governor? Somebody you know who's a true, tested conservative, who has the values that you believe in, who has a proven record of that? Or somebody who says he's a business man and is going to run the state like he ran Columbia/HCA?

On the Arizona immigration law, at first you were opposed to it, it was amended and now you're in favor of it. Can you explain your position?

I strongly support the Arizona immigration law. I have actually interceded in the lawsuit to defend the law on its constitutional challenge. ... I believe that it's a state's rights issue, just as is the issue is over the health care lawsuit that I have right now. I think Obamacare is unconstitutional.

The Founding Fathers gave certain enumerated powers to the federal government; the rest they reserved to the states. One of those is the police power. So whether it's federal or state law, police have the right to enforce those laws. And President Obama is trying administer – take by administrative fiat – many powers that are far beyond what he should be doing.

What do we do with the maybe millions of undocumented workers in Florida?

I served on the immigration committee in Congress for a good number of years. I'm very versed in it. I strongly am committed to legal immigration. I believe that it's the foundation of our nation. But illegal immigration is wrong, especially those who come here simply to find a job. I do not favor amnesty. That is, the idea of giving a person who came here illegally the path to citizenship, to be rewarded that. I think that's wrong. I have opposed it in Congress. I fought against it. I oppose it right now. I believe that we need to enforce the laws that exist. I helped pass one that says that it's illegal to knowingly hire an illegal immigrant. The federal government has failed to fully enforce that. Failed to secure our borders. And we need to do that. We need to carry out those laws. Should we pass a comprehensive immigration bill? Yes, but not with amnesty in it. I would favor a worker program that allows those industries that we have in our state, in particular, but in the nation that can't get a workforce locally to do it to be able to have workers come here on a temporary basis and go back home. But they need to do it legally and they're not doing that now.

What is your position on off-shore drilling and has it changed in light of the BP oil disaster?

My position has never changed. I do not believe, never have favored drilling near the coast of Florida, always opposed it, do not think that there's any way we should be drilling three to ten miles off the coast.

Now, if you go further out and go out where this big spill occurred – it's not a spill, it's a blowout that BP created and, by the way, they're fully accountable for that and as attorney general and as governor my job is to hold them accountable; there's a lot more damages to the state they have to pay. I believe that we need to resume drilling out there as soon as practical and further out in the Gulf, much further out. Senators Martinez and Nelson drew the lines, they're in federal law today that are well off the shore of Florida, way out, and if it's beyond those lines and it's in the boundary areas where drilling can occur, I think it's in our national security interest that we continue to explore and retrieve oil from that part of the Gulf. But not near Florida.

Do you support civil rights protections on the basis of sexual preference?

There's a law in Florida that says that we have, and [as attorney general] I have a Civil Rights Division, that we have a hate crimes issue. And that's really where that comes in for me. Whether or not somebody is discriminated against on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation or whatever that they should not be. And if somebody commits a crime on that basis, solely on that basis, then they've committed a crime. Now we've had no reason to enforce a law on the basis of sexual orientation.

I believe that marriage should be between a man and a woman. I believe that a family should consist of one man and one

woman. I don't believe in gay adoption. I don't believe in involving the government in enforcing or encouraging the lifestyle of gays and homosexuals. I just don't believe that.

You've already mentioned that you support the ban on homosexuals to adopt, you've defended it in court as attorney general.

I have.

There's been a scandal in that defense in that one of the expert witnesses has come to have some question about his own personal life – George Rekkers. Do you think the urging by your office to include him in that case has ultimately undermined the ability to defend the law?

No, actually not. I believe that the law is very clear and I think we have a good chance to prevail on it in court. The courts of Florida previously upheld this law. But we're going through that appellate process right now.

I would never have chosen Rekkers had I know what we now know today, but the reality is my appellate lawyers – where this is ultimately going, to the state Supreme Court, because that's what the Department of Children and Families wants, they want to seek a determination of the constitutionality of that law and we're defending its constitutionality – my appellate lawyers tell me we needed a witness then, and I believed them to be correct, who could introduce materials, studies. Rekkers was not an authority on this issue. He was an authority in the sense that he was a scholar. He did research into papers that other people wrote. So he was able to be used to get into evidence these matters that we needed. And it's unfortunate that all this publicity has come up over it, but the lawsuit, I think, is on sound ground and we're carrying it forward.

Florida permits homosexuals to serve as foster parents. That has been used as an argument to undermine the ban on adoptions. Should homosexuals be permitted to serve as foster parents in Florida?

Well, I personally don't think so, but that is the law.

Should the law be changed?

I think that it would be advisable. I really do not think that we should have homosexuals guiding our children. I think that it's a lifestyle that I don't agree with. I realize a lot of people do. It's my personal faith, religious faith, that I don't believe that the people who do this should be raising our children. It's not a natural thing. You need a mother and a father. You need a man and a woman. That's what God intended.

Florida is one of the leading states in the nation in rates of divorce. What can the state do about that?

We can certainly encourage the kind of standards in divorce and marriage counseling that will encourage people to stay together. For example, the counseling that should go on right now before the marriage needs to be a lot stronger than it has been. There are a number of religious groups in Florida, including the Florida Family Policy Council has a great program for counseling. And I think that is as much as the state can do to encourage people to understand what they're getting into, what marriage really means, the obligations, the bonds of the marriage, the vows. You need to think about what it's going to be like.

I've be married now 38 years. My wife and I, not everything is rosy and beautiful about it, but I think we knew what we were getting into. We were making a commitment to God. We were making a commitment to each other. We were making a commitment to raise a family. We were making a commitment to understand that each other would have different perspectives on things, but that we would work those things out, that marriage was more important and that being together as a team, as a bond, that this is a holy matrimony. And it's something – at least in my view, marriage, I know there can be marriages that aren't church-bound, but I believe that in addition to the legal ceremony, the most important part is the commitment. And that's what it is, it is a commitment to be partners for life.

Is abortion a moral evil?

Yes. It's the taking of a life.

Gov. Crist vetoed legislation this summer that would have required ultrasounds in second and third trimester and ban government funding of abortion. If you had been governor would that bill have become law?

I would have signed it. I've been particularly concerned about both the ultrasound issue, but I had the dealing with the Hyde

Amendment in Congress for years. When this health care bill was passed, one of the egregious things about it was the deal that was cut at the end with a few Democrats who were pro-life. They should not have given in, but they did, to their party with an option. Instead of the federal government continue its historic ban that has been there since Henry Hyde – who’s my longtime friend, who’s now deceased – offered the amendment to bar federal funds from ever being used for elective abortions. Instead of that being carried forward in that health care bill, it was left to the states. So this legislation that Crist vetoed was our state option. When I’m governor, we’re going to sign that Hyde Amendment. We’re going to sign the ultrasound bill. We’re going to make it law. It’s something I’ve always voted for, believe in, do not think that we should be involving state or federal money with elective abortions.

What limitations on abortion as a matter of public policy would you support?

I only believe that abortions should be performed when the life of the mother is in danger. . . . I would change the constitutional decision that was made, *Roe v. Wade*. That’s what we’re getting back to. That’s the fundamental problem. And it requires us to have an opportunity. If I were there voting still in Congress, I would certainly reverse *Roe v. Wade*.

Once you do that the state has to act. What about parental notice, parental consent?

I certainly believe in all those things we’ve passed and still favor parental notice, parental consent. I think that you should have every impediment we can legally put in the way of a decision by a young woman – certainly a child – to be able to have an abortion.

Do you support the state of Florida funding embryonic stem cell research?

No. I’ve voted against embryonic stem cell research in Congress. I oppose embryonic stem cell research funding today.

Were you not at one time in favor of embryonic stem cell research?

I think that my position was misinterpreted back in 2004 in a Senate race where I said that I believe that if an embryo that had been created in vitro for the purposes of parents being able to produce a baby later was going to be flushed down the toilet, it would be better to use that for science than it would be to just end the life that way. I thought either way you were taking a life. I have since realized that I was going against the grain of my fundamental belief because I was taking an act in that process or having government take an act in that process that it should stay out of. But either way, my views were always on the sanctity of life. My view was that you should not destroy the embryo. So today my view is – and I’ve come to conclusion – it’s far better to urge in those cases of in vitro fertilization and those fertilized embryos that we find and hopefully get churches to find adoptive parents for the embryos. I do not believe in taking a life, either way.

You’ve been accused by the Scott campaign of getting support from lobbyists for Planned Parenthood.

This is one of many things that I regret Mr. Scott has chosen to do with his \$40 million plus he has spent in this campaign, he and his wife. He put out an effort to try to undermine my position in the Christian community that somehow Planned Parenthood supported me. There was a law firm in Washington that gave a \$1000, I think in one campaign, ’96 or so, and another congressional re-elect campaign in ’98, another \$1000, \$2000 altogether to my campaign. After I left Congress in 2000, I was not back there after January 2001, after that they began representing Planned Parenthood. I certainly have had a zero rating from Planned Parenthood, all the ratings, ever. They wouldn’t support me no matter what because my position is completely opposite of there’s. And I’ve never taken money from Planned Parenthood nor knowingly taken money from a firm that supports them. . . . So this is a huge, misleading manipulation of the facts to try to get votes, which is why I find Mr. Scott to be so difficult as a candidate and I cannot imagine him being governor of Florida, whether I am or not.

Do you think there’s too much, just enough, or not enough gambling in Florida?

I don’t like gambling. I don’t think it’s good for kids. I’ve never favored gambling. Period. It’s not good for people who are poor, who tend to throw their money away, if you ever look at the slot machines we do have. But let’s say where we are right now. I have opposed consistently the expansion of gambling in Florida. As governor I would continue to do that. I would not have gone along with the gaming compact the governor did. I thought that was a very bad compact. As you know, I fought that in terms of every way we could prior to it because I believe that for some time the Indian reservations’ gambling casinos were illegal in our state, under the law of Florida, and we couldn’t get the [National] Indian Gaming Commission to enforce that law. Florida officials could not enforce the law because it was on federal land, but it’s clearly against the law. So, I’m against any further expansion of gambling in Florida.

The law that was just passed – the Seminole compact and the expansion that just took place – if you were governor it would not have become law?

I would not have allowed that to happen. And I know Mr. Scott says that he believes that these decisions should be local decisions. I don't think that we should permit further expansion of gambling and I don't think we should be allowing referendums locally to have what some people want, which is full casino gambling in some of the counties of our state. I just don't think we should do that.

You're aware that there is support for more gambling in the Legislature.

I know that. Sure there are.

And as governor you would stand against that?

I would stand against that.

Why does this election matter?

This election matters because of two things. One, policy. And, two, leadership, character, integrity and honesty in government and in your governor. It matters because the future of our state. It matters great deal for the future of our nation. Florida is undergoing the greatest economic stress its had since the Great Depression. We have more than a million of our citizens out of work. We're hurting. We need leadership. We need somebody who can go out and knows how to operate the powers of government and more importantly to lead people to create the climate and recruit businesses, headquarters and production facilities, to our state. We need to be competitive with Texas and Mississippi and Georgia and Alabama in luring businesses here that want to relocate. And we're not doing that, especially in high-tech, biotech and aerospace, which are naturals for us. And I know how to do that. I've got a plan to create more than 500,000 jobs that Steve Forbes vetted with me, we announced on April 15. And I plan to be the chief economic development officer of this state when I'm governor. We absolutely have to alter the way we're doing business. Reduce the tax and regulatory burden on small businesses, improve our education system dramatically, eliminate the kind of lawsuit abuse that we have going on out that in order to create the climate that we need. And I'm prepared to lead that.

But it isn't just policy. It's also character, leadership. And records count in this campaign. My record versus Rick Scott's I'd put up any day. I have a record of public service I'm proud of. I've been endorsed by Jeb Bush. I've been endorsed by the Florida Chamber of Commerce. I've been endorsed by every one of the Republicans on the congressional delegation. Most of the legislative leaders in Florida. Newt Gingrich. Dick Armey. Phyllis Schlafly and the Eagle Forum the other day. John Stemberger. And many other Christian leaders who know my character and understand that the most valuable asset anybody has in being a leader is the value structure they live by. The family values that I am proud of that my family and I have represented for many years and would be honored to do as governor of Florida.

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