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## Former Pa. resident gets on his soapbox on Capitol steps to criticize Trump, Perry

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Douglas Wentz, a Mechanicsburg high school graduate who since relocated to Florida, returned to the area on Wednesday to give a two-and-a-half hour oratory critical of GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump and incumbent GOP congressman Scott Perry.

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Forty-six years ago Mechanicsburg resident Douglas Wentz stood on the state Capitol steps to issue a diatribe about government corruption. He spoke for 31 hours, trying to land his name in the Guinness Book of Records.

On Wednesday, Wentz, who traveled from his home in Winter Park, Fla., took to the Capitol steps again, this time to make a case for voting against two high-profile Republicans in November.

Wentz thinks GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump and incumbent Republican congressman Scott Perry are unfit to serve in public office.

But the drizzle that fell during the two-and-a-half hours he spoke limited his audience mainly to a few friends who came out to support him and the few others watching the livestream on [Facebook](#).

Wentz aired his criticisms of Trump and his legal entanglements and his role in the Jan. 6, attack on the U.S. Capitol. [Trump has denied any culpability](#) for the events that transpired on Jan. 6 and trumpets how several court cases against him have been dismissed.

Wentz's remarks also touched on Perry's involvement with the Jan. 6 riot, including the testimony that came out in the House J-6 committee, saying [Perry sought a presidential pardon](#) for attempting to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

At the time, Perry's spokesman Jay Ostrich called that testimony "laughable, ludicrous and a thoroughly soulless lie."

On Wednesday, Perry's campaign spokesman Matt Beynon said this about Wentz's criticisms: "Congressman Perry would be happy to respond to the concerns of a constituent – as always; but we'll refrain from commenting on the ravings of someone who drove 2,000 miles to rant on the steps of the Pennsylvania State Capitol."

Wentz, a former Republican, said he is supporting Democrats Kamala Harris and Janelle Stelson, mainly because they are not Trump or Perry.

"I'm coming at this from somebody who admired President [George H.W.] Bush and worked for the Republican Party," said Wentz, now an independent. "I'm interested in promoting moderation and politics. This frenzy of chaos that Trump and Perry and folks in their camp cause, it's just so discouraging."

What's more, the retired corporate lawyer said he was tired of Floridians badmouthing his hometown of Mechanicsburg.

When he tells people that's where he grew up, they recognize it as the area Perry represents and where [Riley Williams](#), who was convicted of participating in theft of Nancy Pelosi's laptop during the Capitol riot, once lived.

"It's incredibly frustrating to me," Wentz said. "They get this impression that somehow everybody in Mechanicsburg, this is what they're like."

Wentz was 20 when he last spoke on the Capitol steps, talking for 31 straight hours about corruption in state government in a failed attempt to set a Guinness World Record for the longest continuous political speech. After seeing that record now standing at over 90 hours, he dismissed any thought of trying to break it.

"First of all, I'm 66. Physically, honestly, I just don't think I can do it," he said. "I couldn't do 33 hours, let alone 92."

A friend and fellow high school classmate David Redlawsk, who was with Wentz for the 1978 speech, was on hand to support his friend on Wednesday.

Redlawsk, the political science and international relations department chair at University of Delaware, admires Wentz's passion and long-term goal of creating an environment for people looking for a way to combat extremism and promote moderation in U.S. politics.

"That's not something that happens over night. Hard to know how effective it will be. It's hard to do," Redlawsk said. "But the fact he's doing it is incredibly impressive."

Wentz launched a website [MakeModeratesMatter.com](https://www.makemoderatesmatter.com) to explain what being a moderate is and to promote structural changes in the electoral system that could advance moderation in politics.

Among them, he said are [ranked choice voting](#) that allows run-off elections if no candidate secures at least half the votes, open primaries and limiting gerrymandering. But on Wednesday, Wentz said his focus was on his concerns about the future of America's democracy and candidates who he believes are trying to undermine it.

"My wife tells me you know in life, it's giving it a try and trying your best. If it gets you some attention and sways some people's thinking, great. But you'll never know whether you had the chance to do it unless you try," he said. "And it's such a close election that I mean it's not going to take a whole lot maybe to tip the scale so every little bit helps."

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