

Jennings says country no longer defined by 'red' and 'blue' states

National political pundit addresses Owensboro Rotary Club

By Don Wilkins
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Political party shifts along with the speed and consumption of information were among the topics Owensboro Rotary Club members heard via Zoom Wednesday from Scott Jennings, a national political pundit.

Jennings, a 43-year-old Dawson Springs native, has become known as a Republican communications operative who appears regularly on CNN, Fox News and MSNBC to provide political analysis.

Jennings discussed the value of authenticity, the importance of speed while providing accurate information and the shift in political coalitions between the Republican and Democratic parties.



Scott Jennings

And as a partner in the Louisville PR firm RunSwitch, Jennings said he addresses those issues with clients — some political figures but the bulk being corporations and nonprofit organizations.

“We live in an information society,” Jennings said. “... We’re dealing in the exchange of information and the distribution of it. And we help organizations build and then control information flows to audiences that mean the most to them.”

It was former President Donald Trump who Jennings used as an example of authenticity, which he called “the most valuable currency” in an “information economy.”

“What I think information consumers are really asking themselves is, what this person says publicly, is that what I would expect them to say privately?” Jennings said.

According to Jennings, voters were drawn to Trump because he seemed more real than many other current and past political figures.

“People believed he was more authentic in some ways than other politicians because they came to believe that the public Trump was the same as the private Trump — warts and all,” Jennings said. “... Previous to him, we sort of all tried to hide the warts; we tried to navigate around them and tried to explain them away. With Trump, he sort of owned it and just sort of let it be; he really didn’t try to get out of much of it.”

In regard to the speed and accuracy of information, Jennings said the media industry has prioritized speed over accuracy causing skepticism among consumers.

“I think Twitter, frankly, is the worst thing that ever happened to journalism,” Jennings said. “... We always tell people be as fast as you can but never sacrifice accuracy.”

As far as the future of American politics, Jennings said this is “an era of shifting coalitions.” According to Jennings, the political geography of the country can no longer be defined as “red” and “blue” states.

During the 2020 general election, Jennings said Trump attracted traditional Democratic voters while traditional Republicans — particularly in the suburbs of Phoenix, Arizona and Atlanta, Georgia — drifted to the Democratic side.

“Educational attainment, gender, age and even sort of rural versus urban have really, I think, sort of overtaken as the key indicators of what your politics likely are, perhaps, more than your voter registration ever did,” he said.

Those factors, Jennings added, could influence “what the parties stand for” in the future.

“For most of my career, people have thought of the Republicans as the party of business — big business,” he said. “But if you see the working-class constituencies are becoming more of your people and the business people are becoming more of the Democrats, it’s natural to wonder is the Republican Party going to cease to being known as the party of business, and at the same time will the Democrats embrace that.”

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