

Finding her footing in Granite State, Fiorina continues push for supporters

By SUSAN DOUCET / Monitor staff



Carly Fiorina. Photo by Susan Doucet

Saturday morning, Jim McCoole's favorite female public officials were Pam Bondi, Florida's attorney general, and Sarah Palin, former governor of Alaska and candidate for vice president of the United States. But by Saturday afternoon, Carly Fiorina had assumed the top spot on McCoole's list.

"I'm with her all the way," said Linda McCoole, Jim's wife, after Fiorina finished her speech at the Stretch Kennedy Patriots Picnic in Chichester. Fiorina, the only Republican woman running for president, was the keynote speaker at the Concord City Republican Committee and the Merrimack County Republican Committee's event Saturday.

"I think she is just like Donald Trump in the fact that she says what's on everybody else's mind. It's just that a lot of other people are reluctant or don't have the courage, really, to go on record to say things that perhaps other people might feel are unpopular," Jim McCoole said.

McCoole's favorable comparison between Fiorina and Trump comes during the same week that Trump, the Republican front-runner, made critical remarks about Fiorina. In an interview with Rolling Stone, Trump is quoted as saying "Look at that face! . . . Would anyone vote for that?" He later said that he was talking about Fiorina's persona, not her face.

Fiorina, who has been gaining momentum in the large field of candidates since the first Republican debate in August, is not dwelling on Trump.

"So many people have come up to me, and it's so chivalrous and gallant, or women will come up to me and say, 'Don't worry about what he said about your face, I love your face,' " Fiorina said Saturday. "Honestly, does anyone think I care what Donald Trump thinks about my face?"

Before Fiorina's comment that she disregards Trump's jab, multiple people defended Fiorina. Howie Gaskill used his opportunity at the microphone to tell Fiorina that she is a beautiful person, and Gordon Humphrey, one of the hosts of the event, critiqued Trump in his opening remarks.

"I think we all as Republicans owe her an especially warm welcome this week after she's been treated pretty badly by a certain unnamed candidate who is more like Jack the Ripper than a modern 21st century man," Humphrey said.

The event was held at the residence of Humphrey and his wife, Patty, at the request of the Merrimack Republican committee.

"We often lend our special property to good causes," he said.

But if the keynote speaker were Donald Trump, Gordon Humphrey would have been less enthused.

"I wouldn't be here. I don't know if we could have cancelled it . . . it's not our event. But I certainly wouldn't be here, I can tell you that," he said.

Fiorina was warmly welcomed by the crowd Saturday, receiving a standing ovation after she finished speaking, but all at the event were not planning to endorse her.

State Rep. JR Hoell spoke favorably of Fiorina, but he is leaning toward U.S. Sen. Rand Paul. State Sen. John Reagan, wearing a "Pataki for President" T-shirt, said that if former New York governor George Pataki dropped out of the running for president, he would be inclined to support Fiorina instead.

All of the campaigns were invited to the event, said Kathleen Lauer-Rago, chairwoman of the Merrimack County Republican Committee. Representatives from the campaigns

for Ben Carson, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and Ohio Gov. John Kasich were at the Chichester picnic.

“Whenever I come to New Hampshire, I’m reminded of what America’s all about,” Fiorina said, commenting on how seriously New Hampshire voters take citizen government and their participation in the primary election.

“Now sometimes, I must tell you, it can be a little frustrating . . . (people say) ‘Oh you’re on my top five or top three.’ That’s good,” Fiorina said. “And I know a lot of you are supporters, and some of you may not have yet made up your mind, but in your heart of hearts, wherever you are, you all know you want to see me debate Hillary Clinton.”

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