

*Faith • Justice • Fortitude*

## **The Honorable Richard J. Santorum**



*I pattern myself after Wilberforce in many respects, because I see the struggle for the recognition of the rights of the unborn as a similar civil rights struggle.*

—Rick Santorum

**R**ick Santorum, former senator from Pennsylvania, is a lawyer, a public intellectual, and the father of eight children.

Born in Virginia but raised in Pennsylvania, Rick started his political career working in the State Senate in Harrisburg in 1981. Rick ran a surprisingly successful campaign for the U.S. House of Representatives in a suburban Pittsburgh district in 1990, the same year he married Karen Garver. After four years in the House, Santorum was elected to the first of two consecutive terms representing Pennsylvania in the U.S. Senate. Rick was an active leader in his party, eventually rising to the third-ranking member of the Republican leadership. His signature legislative achievements in-

cluded spearheading both the passage of the landmark 1996 welfare reform as well as legislation outlawing partial birth abortion.

Today, Rick continues to pursue his passion to strengthen families and improve American culture. As the president of a Virginia-based DVR set-top-box manufacturer, he leads a company whose software gives parents the power to edit scenes out of television content that they find objectionable. This technology will shift the power to shape our children's character back from Hollywood to the parents, where it belongs. He also heads Program to Protect America's Future, an institute that educates citizens about the threat of terrorism to America at the Ethics and Public Policy Center. He remains engaged in the public square as a public speaker, writer of a semi-weekly column for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Fox News commentator, and recently radio host on the Friday edition of Bill Bennett's *Morning in America* program.

Rick describes his brand of conservative political philosophy as a "stewardship of patrimony." Born on the May 10, 1958, in Winchester, Virginia, Rick inherited from an early age his parents' tenacious work ethic and strong core values. "Rooster" was his childhood nickname, on account of a tuft of hair on the crown of his head, but it stuck because it fit his outspoken personality. Rick grew up attending Catholic schools in Butler, a steel town north of Pittsburgh, made up of well-defined ethnic neighborhoods. As a son of an Italian immigrant, the old-world Catholic traditions of both his family and his community formed an integral part of his identity from an early age:

"I went to Catholic school; most of my neighbors turned out to be Catholic, and just my whole being, whether it was a fish fry on Friday, the things you just sort of did as a young person when you lived in that era, you did along with the Church, which you didn't necessarily see as religious, but as part of the community, as part of that era, of what Catholics did."

In 1980, Rick graduated with a bachelor's degree in political science from Penn State University. During his undergraduate years, Rick got his first taste of politics. As an indicator of things to come, in his freshman year, Rick took charge, becoming president of Students for Senate Candidate John Heinz. Shortly after the election, he started the College Republican Club and became its chair. He continued his education, receiving an MBA from the University of Pittsburgh in 1981 and his JD from the Dickinson School of Law in 1986. Concurrently, Rick became more involved in Penn-



sylvania politics, working as an assistant to State Senator Doyle Corman and as Director of the Pennsylvania State Senate Transportation Committee and the Pennsylvania State Local Government Committee. In 1986, Rick also began practicing law in Pittsburgh at Kirkpatrick and Lockhart, where, among his other clients, he represented the World Wrestling Federation.

1990 was the pivotal year in Santorum's life. First, he married Karen Garver, a law student, former nurse, and the tenth of twelve children of an Irish Catholic family:

“Meeting my wife was as important a moment as any. It wasn't necessarily her, but it was we. We happened to be the right people for each other to begin this new journey. Neither of us on our own was on this journey, and we would not have gone on this journey but for each other. We both came in respects broken as we started our relationship and understood that as we grew in our relationship, the seeds planted would grow. She grew up in a Catholic ghetto, one of twelve kids; she went through the same thing I went through: a little rebellion, a little living the '70s in college and afterward. Once we got off the secular treadmill that the world likes to have us all on and realized that we loved each other, wanted to marry, and

wanted to have a family, well, family all of the sudden snapped us back to our families, and what we would want for us and for our family now that we've gotten off the pop culture siren song. That's where we were both of one mind, and integral to that was faith. We had to find the faith that we really weren't practicing. It was a wonderful journey that still continues."

Together he and Karen are raising eight children and are approaching their twentieth year of marriage. Karen is the author of two books: *Everyday Graces: A Child's Book of Manners* and *Letters to Gabriel*. The latter book details the Santorum's experience with their son Gabriel, who lived only a few hours, due to a congenital birth defect. Rick and Karen discovered their son's condition literally a week after Rick began shepherding the bill to ban partial-birth abortion through the Senate. The discovery of Gabriel's condition was very hard on Rick, but he pressed on during a dire situation:

"A week later, we had that sonogram. The doctor kept looking at this one dark area and finally said, "Your baby has a fatal birth defect and is going to die." (He had obviously flunked beside manners in medical school.) That wasn't the news we wanted or expected, but I must tell you that our reaction, after the shock and grief, was not to avoid the pain, the cost of the struggle; it was not to get rid of the "problem," and it was not to put the baby out of his misery like something that was less than human. Karen and I couldn't rationalize how we could treat this little human life at twenty weeks' gestation in the womb any different than one twenty weeks old after birth. At either age, he is helpless, unaware, and thoroughly dependent on us, his parents, to protect him, care for him, and love him unconditionally. So instead of giving our child a death sentence, we gave him a name: Gabriel Michael, after the two great angels."

To understand Rick is ultimately to understand how central family life is to his life. Around his wrist, Rick wears a wristband with the acronym FAMILY, which stands for, "Forget about me, I love you." It is a reminder of the centrality of family in his life, which defines Rick and provides him with strength:

"For my wife Karen and me, marriage is a sacred vocation. We give ourselves to each other, mind, body, and soul. Nothing in this world is more important to me than the happiness and well being of my wife and chil-

dren. It is my most important job. All of my strength comes from my love for them and God's love for me.”

In 1990, at age thirty-two, Rick ran for the U.S. House of Representatives in the heavily Democratic 18th District. Few thought Rick stood any chance against a popular seven-time incumbent; indeed, the Republican National Committee refused to donate one cent to his campaign. Nevertheless, Rick surprised everyone, even himself, with his victory in 1990. It was a near-impossible win:

“I ran against a seven-term incumbent who had always been easily re-elected. I did a poll six months before the election, and 6 percent of the people in my district had heard of me. I spent less than \$250,000 and was outspent three-to-one in a Democratic district. But with the help of a great campaign manager, Mark Rodgers, and many devoted and hard-working volunteers—including my chief volunteer, my bride, Karen—we did the impossible. The year was 1990. It was a bad year for Republicans, both in Pennsylvania and nationally, and a rather unremarkable year in American history, but it was a big one for me. I was married to Karen in June; in August we found out we were to be parents; and in November I was elected a Congressman.”

This impressive upset was soon followed by his equally unexpected re-election in 1992, when his district lines had been redrawn to produce a two-to-one Democrat-to-Republican ratio. Why did he have these surprising victories? Rick came to Congress with a clear vision of America. Rick prizes the freedom of Americans above all else, and he believes that our freedom can be secured by the promotion of virtue. In his book *It Takes a Family*, Rick explains:

“As Americans, we enjoy historically unparalleled personal freedoms guaranteed in our Constitution, and we take great pride in understanding our country, correctly, as “the land of the free.” In our judgments of other nations, we make respect for liberty and human rights our priority. But too often, the freedom we boast of in America is not the freedom envisioned by the likes of Washington, Adams, Madison, and Jefferson. It is different today, in tone and substance.

The freedom enshrined constitutionally by our founding fathers was

a freedom that both gained its vitality from and was limited by the social bonds between fellow citizens. America's founders understood [that] the securing of freedom was the ultimate aim of politics; but they also saw the promotion of virtue as the ultimate aim and the indispensable support of freedom. As Samuel Adams wrote, "we may look up to Armies for our Defense, but Virtue is our best Security. It is not possible that any State should long remain free, where Virtue is not supremely honored."

The safeguard of freedom is virtue. Rick looks to John Adams' view on virtue. In 1776, Adams wrote:

"Statesmen, my dear Sir, may speculate for liberty, but it is Religion and Morality alone, which can establish the Principles upon which Freedom can securely stand. The only foundation of a free Constitution is pure Virtue, and if this cannot be inspired into our People in a greater Measure than they have it now, they may change their Rulers and the forms of Government, but they will not obtain a lasting liberty."

Later, in 1798, Adams said this, as president:

"We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

The man called Rooster by his high school friends soon garnered another reputation in Congress: reformer. He joined a group of Representatives known as the "Gang of Seven." Together, they uncovered longstanding corruption in the House, including embezzlement investigations involving the House's bank and its post office. These schemes lead to the several members' conviction for stealing taxpayer money and gave impetus the "Republican Revolution" and takeover of Congress in 1994.

In 1994, Rick again bucked conventional wisdom and unseated Pennsylvania's incumbent senator, Harris Wofford. Just thirty-six years old, Rick continued quickly advancing as a leader on the Senate side of Capitol Hill. He spearheaded the landmark bipartisan reform of welfare. This reform was successfully recognized as having "ended welfare as we know it" according

to President Clinton, who signed the bill in 1996. In his typical less-talk-more-action fashion, Rick then hired nine people off welfare to work in his Senate offices in D.C. and Pennsylvania.

Santorum also worked tirelessly to ban partial-birth abortion. He led the legislative fight to pass laws in 1996 and 1998, only to face a presidential veto. Following a subsequent Supreme Court decision striking down a similar state law, Rick passed a new version of the ban in 2003, which was signed into law by President Bush. In 2007, the Supreme Court constitutionally upheld the law. But perhaps the most moving impact was the effect of Rick's persuasive arguing from the floor of the Senate, even amid his several defeats. After his defeat in overriding the President's veto, Rick received this email from a young college student:

Recently while my girlfriend and I were flipping through the channels, we came across C-SPAN, and were fortunate enough to hear your speech regarding the evils of partial-birth abortion. We saw the picture of the little boy with the headphones on, who was lucky enough to have parents who loved him and brought him into this world, instead of ending his life. Both of us were moved to tears by your speech. And my girlfriend confessed to me that she had scheduled an appointment for an abortion the following week. She never told me about her pregnancy because she knew that I would object to any decision to kill our child. But after watching your emotional speech, she looked at me as tears rolled down her cheeks, and told me that she couldn't go through with it.

We're not ready to be parents ... but I am grateful that our child will live. It is a true tragedy that the partial-birth abortion ban failed to override Clinton's veto. But please take some comfort in knowing that at least one life was saved because of your speech. You have saved the life of our child.

Rick's leadership skills were apparent throughout his Senate career. He became the youngest member of the Republican leadership in over thirty years. He assumed leadership of the Senate Republican Conference in 2006. In addition to chairing the GOP Task Force on Welfare Reform, Rick served on various senate committees: Agriculture, Banking, Rules, and Aging, as well as stints on both the Armed Services and Finance Committees. Additionally, Santorum founded and lead the Congressional Working Group on Religious Freedom.

Despite serving only two terms in the Senate, Rick succeeded in pass-

ing a broad range of key legislation: the Welfare Reform Bill, the American Community Renewal Act, the ban on partial-birth abortion, the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act, the Combating Autism Act, the Farmland Preservation Act, the Abandoned Mine Lands Reform Act, the Multi-Employer Pension the Reform Act, the Global Aids Authorization Act, Health Savings Accounts, the Syria Accountability Act, and the Iran Freedom Support Act. Santorum additionally focused his efforts on religious freedom, promoting democracy and religious liberty worldwide, lowering the tax burdens on working families, combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and strengthening and enhancing national security. In 2005, while still in office, Rick published *It Takes a Family: Conservatism and the Common Good*.

Toward the end of his second term, the Senator was an outspoken defendant of the War on Terrorism, in particular supporting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Running primarily on this platform in 2006, he was defeated in his bid for a third term by his challenger, Bob Casey. Rick describes his defeat as engendering “nothing but gratitude” in him toward the people of Pennsylvania for the opportunity to serve them. “God’s got something else planned for me.” Indeed, taking things from God’s perspective is the cornerstone of Rick’s approach to life:

“I try to look at success as Thomas More would: through the eyes of God, as opposed to through the eyes of man. If you look at success through the eyes of God, then it is very easy to figure out the virtues that lead you to success. If you look at success through the eyes of man, you are caught with the reality, particularly today, of how fallen man really is.”

Phrased another way, Rick’s comfort is that of a duty done well. He comes to serve, not to be served. Rick feels that these words paraphrase those of the great American thinker, Orestes Brownson, who in 1843 said,

“Ask not what your age wants, but what it needs; not what it will reward, but what, without which, it cannot be saved; and then go and do; and find your reward in consciousness of having done your duty, and above all in the reflection that you have been accounted to suffer somewhat for mankind.”

One of those plans was to have the opportunity to spend more time with his wife and growing family. Another gift from God was the blessing of the birth of a special baby in 2008 who needs special attention that

Rick now has time to give. Santorum remains dedicated, whether through his family or his work advancing the common good through his conservative political philosophy. At present, he is contemplating a run at the 2012 Republican presidential nomination. But if not as president, Rick hopes to find new ways to leave a better country for his children and for all Americans, echoing the words of John Adams in 1780:

“I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, navigation, commerce and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and porcelain.”

Rick Santorum lives by one mantra: *Non nobis Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam*. “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name, be glory.”