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## **Waukesha County GOPers hear from Romney, Santorum**

Aside from Scott Walker, others speaking at the Waukesha County Lincoln Reagan Dinner were presidential hopefuls Mitt Romney and Rick Santorum, along with U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan, Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, and Republican National Chairman Reince Priebus.

Romney steered clear of Wisconsin references in his remarks, except to chuckle at the fact that speedskater Derek Parra of California, whom Romney chose to help carry the American flag during the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City, was able to "beat a bunch of guys from Michigan and Wisconsin and Minnesota."

Romney called Walker a hero, but did not talk about the Wisconsin recall or collective bargaining.

He did say he believed in the right for Americans to join labor unions, but said they should not be forced to join unions or pay dues "that unions just give to politicians."

Romney focused his remarks on President Barack Obama, saying Obama is trying to transform America into a government-centered society. Romney said if elected, he would stop Obama's health care plan "in its tracks" because he believes it could lead to government deciding what treatment patients can get.

Romney got the public support of Sensenbrenner, who announced that he'd already voted by absentee ballot for Romney. Sensenbrenner told the audience, "Unless we get together and unite behind the nominee, whether it's for president or Senate, we are going to end up being a party to the re-election of Barack Obama and the election of Tammy Baldwin, who's already a member of the United States Congress, as our United States senator."

In contrast to Romney, Santorum peppered his remarks with Wisconsin references, telling the audience, "I've been bowling almost every day I've been here" and adding that he has enjoyed eating brats and visiting Lambeau Field in Green Bay.

"Even a Steelers fan appreciates a great tradition," Santorum said of the Green Bay Packers. "I was going to do the Lambeau Leap, but it's a lot higher than it looks. And you know that padded wall? It's still really hard."

Santorum brought up the Wisconsin recall, saying it was strange as a presidential candidate "to come into a state where you're not the most important thing going on right now -- that was a little bit of a surprise."

Santorum said, "This state has now gotten the attention of the entire country because you had strong, principled conservatives who stood up and did the tough things even though it was a move back."

Santorum echoed Romney in saying that Obama stands for more government and less individual freedom.

"We are no longer 'we the people' with the government serving us. We are now subjects because we have given up that freedom to the government to provide for us," he said.

Of all the speakers, Ryan voiced the deepest concern over the upcoming recall elections in Wisconsin as well as national elections.

"I think it's dawned on some of us, if you want to be good at these jobs, you have to be willing to lose these jobs," said Ryan. "It's not about always being right and being popular, it's about doing what is right. This whole thing is coming to a crescendo. It's coming to a crescendo on June 5 here in Wisconsin, for Washington, for our country."

*-- By Kay Nolan*

Labels: 2012 presidential primary