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Liberty University

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US Congressman Ron Paul speaks to crowd at Liberty University

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U.S. Congressman Ron Paul, Republican candidate for president, had the chance to speak before his largest crowd on the campaign trail at Liberty University Friday.

With about 8,500 students, faculty and staff in attendance, he used the convocation service to point out key issues of his platform: a Sanctity of Life Resolution for stopping abortion, paying down the national debt, sound money, repealing the income tax, withdrawal of troops from Iraq, free markets and limited government.

Several students waved signs and banners and cheered during his talk. Paul's speech was clearly tailored for a younger audience.

"The campaign this past year has been energized by the young people who have a great deal of concern for the future of the country," he said at the start of his speech. Paul is the fourth candidate in this election cycle to speak at Liberty. (All candidates have received an invitation to speak).

"I heard there were a bunch of kids who were very interested in what I've been talking about and it turns out that there have been a lot and the energy is here, so I think I made a wise choice," Paul said.

LU chancellor and president Jerry Falwell Jr. said he was pleased at how students reacted, even those who did not align themselves with Paul's beliefs.

"Liberty's a university, we're here for educational purposes; it's more important here than anywhere else to hear all sides so we've invited every candidate and we hope more will come," he said.

After convocation, students swarmed around a barrier asking Paul to sign autographs and pose for pictures.

Sam Bernhardt, a junior, said he was there to support Paul "because I like his stance of going back to a limited government, I like his policy on sound money and I like his idea of going back to the Constitution."

Corey Umberger, a freshman, was also there to show his support.

"Since I've seen him, he's just a great speaker ... his beliefs on the war in Iraq, I really like them."

Paul, whose campaign has relied heavily on the Internet and volunteers, said he feels the younger generation is backing him because “they are getting a bum rap. They’re inheriting a situation that is wearing out and I am offering a solution to what they see is coming.”

And in the wake of Mitt Romney’s suspension of his campaign on Thursday, Paul said he intends to stay on, “as long as there’s enthusiasm and the number of volunteers grows and the money comes in.”

He said he was encouraged by the turnout of supporters at Liberty.

“I’m very thankful that I’ve been invited to come here and I hope I’ve planted a seed or two.”

Paul, a member of the House of Representatives for the 14th District of Texas, ran as a Libertarian for president in 1988.