



home > city hall > press releases

Hillary Clinton Meets With Local Leaders

The City of Perris took front and center stage in the 2016 presidential election Thursday when Hillary Clinton dropped in for an informal and intimate question-and-answer session with about 75 residents.

Clinton is the first presidential candidate to visit Perris in its 105 year history.

The meet and greet took place in Casa Jimenez restaurant, which provided the crowd with an up-close look at the presumptive Democratic nominee.



Perris City Councilwoman Tonya Burke, Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers and Hillary Clinton share a laugh at Casa Jimenez in Perris.

During her one-hour appearance, Clinton spoke on a wide variety of topics posed by audience of community leaders, including farm-working conditions, small-business development, education, immigration reform and making more funds available to economically challenged communities like Perris.

Dressed in a blue blazer and orange top, Clinton was greeted with rousing applause as she worked the crowd before taking her seat in the center of the audience.

Appearing at ease with a friendly audience, Clinton smiled frequently and showed the depth of her decades of political experience, sometimes going into significant detail to answer questions from the crowd.

She avoided verbal sparring with Republican nominee Donald Trump, mentioning him only once or twice during her stopover in the City.

"I'm here to listen," she said.

Perris City Councilwoman Tonya Burke sat on one side of Clinton, while U.S. Rep. Mark Takano, D-Riverside, flanked her other the other side. Those dignitaries later were joined by U.S Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Los Angeles. Also representing the City were Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers and City Manager Richard Belmudez.

Takano said he urged Clinton to visit Perris because as part of his Congressional district, the City "has a lot of supporters who want to see her."

"We have a presidential candidate who cares deeply for communities who are struggling, which are filled with diverse and immigrant populations with hopes and desires," he said. "Mrs. Clinton will bring expertise, experience and accomplishments when she addresses the issues of concern to communities like Perris."



Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez with Hillary Clinton following a question-and-answer session June 2.

As he introduced Clinton to the crowd, Takano said to boisterous applause: "Without a doubt, I am with her, Perris is with her because without a doubt, she is with us!"

Burke said she was ecstatic to welcome Clinton to Perris.

She asked Clinton how a City like Perris, which often is viewed a small community that lacks the political clout to land major federal funding to address issues of poverty, inadequate transportation and lack of education and employment opportunities.

"How does a City like Perris get on the map?" Burke asked.

Clinton replied that as president, she will work to revise funding formulas so communities like Perris get a bigger share of the federal pie. She hailed the scheduled opening Monday (June 6) of Metrolink service through the Perris Valley. And she urged local elected officials to work with nearby businesses to create an assortment of jobs for all skill and education levels.

Burke said Clinton's remarks verify her belief that "Perris is a City on the move."

"We are not only in the fast lane, today we are in the diamond lane! She said. "We are leading the motorcade. When people hear the word Perris, they will think about Perris California, not Paris, France.

Burke said she hopes a Clinton administration focuses on what she called the four e's; economics, employment, education and the environment.

Rogers said that in her 44 years in Perris, Clinton is the highest-profile politician to pay the City a visit.

"It's wonderful to have the chance to hear from a former First Lady, former Secretary of State and quite likely the next president of the United States," Rogers said. "These are exciting times for Perris. We are getting the recognition we deserve."

Rogers said she hopes as president, Clinton will push an agenda that includes a robust commitment to improving public health.



Perris City Councilwoman Tonya Burke, presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and Congressman Mark Takano at a meet-and-greet June 2 at Casa Jimenez in Perris.

City Manager Belmudez said he was impressed by Clinton's knowledge on a host of issues, including that Perris is a distinct and vibrant community with unique challenges and desires.

"Perris is not just a stopover town between San Diego and Los Angeles," Belmudez said. "We have our own history, accomplishments and challenges. It's nice the community of Perris got the spotlight shined on it during this important presidential campaign."

Pastor Wade Forde said he hopes Clinton will protect the rights of faith-based organizations to continue their charitable work while maintain their religious values. He said her visit to Perris "brings a sense of value to who we are and what we are doing and why it matters."

Clinton urged churches and non-profit groups to partner with schools and create programs that include reading, singing and talking with children from 0 to 4 years old to stimulate their minds and imaginations and create a firm foundation as they enter elementary school. She said she would work to improve the pay, working and health and safety condition for farm laborers, noting "they really work hard for us." She favored comprehensive immigration reform so America can retain its place in the world as a beacon of freedom and hope for immigrants.

And she called for all Americans to know the history of all the cultures and peoples who created the fabric of USA.

"We need to do a better job of teaching the diverse stories and history of this great country," she said. "No group of people should be diminished or left out."

Finally, Clinton said she would strive to make college more affordable, but also would push for more emphasis on technical and trade schools, so they can produce qualified graduates for high-paying jobs that don't necessarily require a college degree.

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