

FEATURED

## Calvert GOP central committee celebrates growth in county

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STAFF PHOTO BY TAMARA WARD

Former county commissioner Gerald W. “Jerry” Clark, left, and Mark Arness, right, speak with Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa, 4th) at the Calvert County Republican Central Committee Lincoln Reagan Dinner on June 23 in Huntingtown. Clark seeks to fill outgoing Del. Tony O’Donnell’s (R-Calvert, St. Mary’s) vacancy this summer, while Arness is running against Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md., 5th) in the November election.

Constitution, culture and confidence were the themes of the keynote address at the annual Lincoln Reagan Dinner in Huntingtown on Thursday. U.S. Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa, 4th) spoke to a crowd of 150 Calvert County and state GOP elected officials, public servants and supporters.

“We have to restore in our culture a knowledge of our history and our Constitution. We have to believe what made America great and replenish those values going forward in the next generation,” said King in an interview.

The annual fundraising and awards event is the pinnacle of the Calvert County Republican Central Committee. Del. Mark Fisher (R-Calvert) introduced outgoing Del. Tony O’Donnell (R-St. Mary’s, Calvert) as the gala’s master of ceremonies.

“When I first got involved in politics in Calvert County, we were vastly outnumbered. This was Democrat territory. Now, we built a two-part system and we actually have a majority — most of the elected officials at the local level. Certainly, we’re vibrant, we’re growing and we’re the exciting party in Calvert County,” O’Donnell, who will be stepping down July 1 to join the Maryland Public Service Commission, said in an interview.

King discussed myriad topics in line with core GOP values that drew frequent applause from the crowd.

King, a member of the House Judiciary’s subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security, delighted in the recent U.S. Supreme Court deadlock that handed President Barack Obama’s immigration plan a major blow in a 4-4 vote, leaving intact a federal district court decision that shot down the policy measure to shield 4 million immigrants living in the U.S. illegally from deportation.

“Democrats — they’re seeing people coming across our borders illegally, and for them, they’re seeing a whole bunch of undocumented Democrats,” said King. “It’s a big political opportunity for them. ... They are shifting the demographics of America, not just racially, not just ethnically, but politically for their own political party. They don’t care what happens to America, as long as they have more political power.”

King said he was appalled in June 2015 by the high court’s order that same-sex marriage be honored nationwide wherever civil marriages exist in *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

“One day, the Supreme Court said they are going to rewrite the law. They are the last people on the planet that should be doing that,” stressed King. “The next day ... they created a new command in the Constitution. They commanded the states to get in line, do what we say, whether you think it is a good idea or not.”

King, who proudly keeps a copy of the Constitution in his front inside coat pocket, said he thinks Obama knows the Constitution, but is willing to violate it at will.

“He has eroded our Constitution. And seven and half years of Barack Obama has done great damage to the psyche of this nation,” he said.

While he was clear on his feelings on the outgoing president’s performance, he was somewhat vague on his support for GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump.

“Whatever my my level of being thrilled is, if the election is today, I vote for Trump,” said King, who proudly acknowledged earlier that he supported Sen. Ted Cruz in the GOP presidential primary. King did applaud Trump’s stance on building a wall to secure America’s southern border, but joked that he has no idea how to get Mexico to pay for it.

King also referred to a daylong sit-in staged by Democrats on the House floor immediately following a moment of silence for the victims of the Orlando nightclub shooting. He expressed sadness for the shootings, but said he was flabbergasted by the partisan protest that was an attempt to force the introduction of “gun control” legislation onto the House floor for a vote.

“I’m still completely convinced that this was a rogue, lone wolf ... ISIS-inspired terrorist. ... For that culture, they believe their path to salvation is to kill anybody that is not like them,” King said, referring to American Omar Mateen, who killed 49 people inside the Pulse nightclub. “[Democrats] think it is about guns and they’re going to demand that they’re going to take guns, and I said, ‘I’ll get out there and chant with you. I’ll even demonstrate on the floor, but the chant needs to be ‘Guns for Gays.’”

“I love that Congressman King is such a strong fighter. I think we need more spirited debate in America and I think he does a very good job of making his points in what he believes,” said Nicolee Ambrose, the Maryland national committeewoman for the Republican National Committee.

Calvert Central Committee Chairman Greg Ostrander said King was selected to be the keynote speaker because he is a national figure and the committee likes his stance on the Constitution. Ostrander, a staunch GOP supporter, was named Republican Man of the Year for the state of Maryland in May.

“Greg is doing a good job and we really have a nice party right now. The state is recognizing the activism of this party,” said O’Donnell.

The event included numerous awards for central committee members and supporters. Frank Grasso and David Gatton received the Unsung Hero Award.

Judy MacWilliams presented Jo Ann Martin with the “Woman of the Year Award” for Calvert County. Bob Arscott presented Anita Brown “Man of the Year Award” for her husband, the late Mike Brown, for his numerous contributions and commitment to the committee. Brown died this past February.

Sen. Steve Waugh (R-Calvert, St. Mary’s) swore in Eric Hiltbold as an associate committee member. Ostrander swore in Gatton as a new committee member.

Carl Sadoti was awarded the Lifetime Achievement in honor of Frank McCabe of Solomons. McCabe, who died last June, was actively involved in local Republican politics. Sadoti, who often worked side by side with McCabe, said it was a pleasure to work with McCabe and called him an inspiration.

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