Boyles Over, Tom Tancredo, February 2, 2016

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HOST PETER BOYLES: You look pretty good, but you brought that duck hunting hat with you.

FORMER CONGRESSMAN & GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE, TOM TANCREDO: This is my -- this is my favorite hat because it was given to me by my buddy, Steve King. I was out in Iowa, hunting with him and Ted Cruz.

BOYLES: Yeah, yeah. There you go. What is Cruz like?

TANCREDO: Nice guy, very – smartest guy you ever want to meet or talk to, and far more affable in that kind of a setting, where we were, you know, a bunch of guys hunting.

BOYLES: --Out in the field.

TANCREDO: Yeah. And also, that night, every time Steve does this-- which is every year -- we have this big hunt in Iowa and shoot a lot of pheasants, and then you have a dinner and all the politicians in the room have to do their five minute thing, right? And so, but when it’s in a presidential election year, he gets a lot of -- much more high profile people than just me there. And so, Cruz was there and spoke. And in that environment he’s just so much more affable and so much more -- I don’t know. He comes off too stilted, I think, on TV.

BOYLES: I find that to be true. I mean, we talked about – I had a great experience with John McCain, a couple experiences with John McCain.

TANCREDO: Oh, yeah! Me, too. [laughter] Holy mackerel!

BOYLES: [laughs] I know. Your’s was tough. Mine was good. And then when he started his campaign, I thought, “That’s not the guy I hung out with.” And the same thing with Bob Dole. After it was over, I met Bob Dole. Bob Dole was funny, hilarious –

TANCREDO: Yeah!

BOYLES: --self-deprecating, made fun of himself. I thought, “Where is this guy?”

TANCREDO: Yeah! Well, and Ted is that way. And I know he’s trying hard to sort of overcome -- because everybody tells him that, you know, “Too stiff, you don’t come off well.” So I think he’s trying to be more – but it’s all – you can see that, too, in a way. You see him sort of forcing it, you know?

BOYLES: Yeah. Yeah.

TANCREDO: And I love the guy! Believe me! I think he’s great! I supported him 100% and – well, oh! Gosh! So, we’re there at this hunt. He says to me – and I had just written—I had written—I write a column for Beitbart every week. And I just wrote the column that week that I had left the Republican Party, and --but that I was going to start a Colorado Independents for Cruz thing. And he got it -- somebody had sent it to him. And so, anyway, we’re in Iowa and about to go down to this dinner thing, and he says to me, “Hey! I saw that article! I really appreciate it! Boy, I – we’re going to get back to you. I told my people,” you know, “follow up on that!” Of course, he never did.

BOYLES: Sure.

TANCREDO: But then he says – so he goes, he says “You probably don’t remember this.” And he said, which -- and I’m glad when people say that because I probably don’t.

BOYLES: It gives you an ‘out’ card.

TANCREDO: That’s exactly it. Right. But, he says, “Uh, you know, in 1998,” he says, “you were running for Congress.” He said, “I was in Denver for some event.” And he said, “I, uh -- I went ahead I – you came in to speak top whatever this group was. And you were running for --.” And he said, “I wrote you a check for a hundred dollars.”

BOYLES: All right!

TANCREDO: And I said, “You’re right. I don’t remember!” Well, I didn’t know who Ted Cruz was in 1998! Who did?

BOYLES: I didn’t, either!

TANCREDO: And so – and so, bottom line: what was really embarrassing, I have not given him a penny!

BOYLES: [laughter]. Well, that’s --.

TANCREDO: You know? Yeah! Then I – but, you know, that’s one way to get – give money to a candidate! I thought that, you know. You can always say, “Hey, I gave you a check ten years ago. About time!”

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TANCREDO: But, that’s what I meant when I said to the Speaker, “I thought we *had* an agenda. I thought we had talked about it to the people of the nation. I thought it had to do with less government, less regulated --fewer regulations. But of course, none of that has worked out.” “Well,” he said, “you can’t do everything --.”

BOYLES: Yeah. They never even tried.

TANCREDO: And, well – and, God, Peter – you know, the worst days of--. Oh! This *was* the worst day of my life: sitting through the—a debate and then a vote on the Medicare prescription drug bill, Part D. That was the worst day because, here we were, the Republican Party, a president--Republican president, and Republican Congress putting through the greatest increase in government since the creation of Medicare! We were doing it, and we were all doing it because Bush wanted the electoral votes of the state of Florida.

BOYLES: Yeah.

TANCREDO: And we were spending $1 trillion bill. This is a trillion dollars over ten years, --.

BOYLES: Was that for brother [Jeb Bush], principally?

TANCREDO: No, no! He was – it was coming up! He knew he was going to --. No. He was running again. He wanted the electoral votes!

BOYLES: No, but was that to help his brother, Jeb?

TANCREDO: No. It was for the presidency.

BOYLES: For him to get over. Okay.

TANCREDO: Yes! Absolutely. This was – and you know, there was a hanging chad, there, situation, right? But it was all Florida. He needed Florida. This was, you know, a very thin band of need, out there –the very few, I mean, there was a – but, like, that many people that actually were too poor for Medicaid, too much for – but the expenses were high for the --. So, we were going to do this for them, right? All for Florida! [inaudible] We had to stay there from 12 o’clock, the vote started – it’s supposed to be a 15 minute. This is midnight! Not 12 o’clock in the afternoon. We had been there since 9:00 debating it. They didn’t have the votes! Didn’t have them, man! The Democrats had promised them they were going give them the votes to pass this thing, because you never bring a vote—a bill up that you don’t think you’re going to pass. It’s a big no-no. So, the Democrats had promised them, because he couldn’t get Republican votes. But the Democrats took one look at the thing—at the counter, and said, “Hey! I think we can embarrass them pretty well!” And all of a sudden, we didn’t have the votes. Well, there we were – midnight. You’re supposed to have a 15 minute vote, Peter. Fifteen minutes. Sometimes, they push it to about 20 to get everybody in. Six and one half hours – we’re still sitting there. Six-thirty in the morning, people – I mean, I’m sleeping on --. They’re putting buddies with you. Anybody from your delegation who was for it had to come and bug you all six hours, until. And my buddy was Bob Beauprez [laughing]. I kept telling Bob, “Hey, listen, buddy! Go to sleep! I am going to go to sleep. You’re never—I’m never going to vote for this. Save your time! Never, ever!” But, polling people – all you could hear was arms being twisted and broken on the floor, right? -- promising things. I mean--.

BOYLES: “Give me this, I’ll give you that.”

TANCREDO: Oh, yeah! And it was never like, -- it was, “We know you’ve got a lot of stuff in the pipeline. You’ve got that bridge. And you know, we want to help you out.”

BOYLES: “We’ll work with you!”

TANCREDO: “We want to work with you.” Right. It was the most *horrible* thing. And I saw one of my best friends in Congress, a guy from Colorado – Joel Hefley. He was like a 98--.

BOYLES: [inaudible] I thought he was a good guy.

TANCREDO: Oh, Joel was the best! He was like a 98-percenter. And we’re sitting there – 6:30 [a.m.] – nothing. I mean, it’s 217. You need 218, one more vote. And they can’t get it! Here comes the Speaker. [gesturing with his hands, indicating a man walking down to the floor]. Doo, doo-doo, doo-doo,-- down, comes, sits next to Joel. I’m in back of them, going [gestures that he was eavesdropping]. You know, because everyone is – there’s quiet. Every body is, you know – you’re all on the floor. They won’t let you leave. So, but everyone can see what’s happening. And then, the Speaker walks down, and he says, “Joel, we came in as Freshmen together, 22 years ago.”

BOYLES: Wow.

TANCREDO: Freshman class. And Joel said, “Yes, sir, we did.” And he said, “I’ve always enjoyed it, you’re such a great guy,” he said. “And you’re the Chairman of the, uh—what was it? It was the sub-committee on – oh! Armed Services.

BOYLES: [inaudible] Yeah!

TANCREDO: And he said, -- because he was [from] Colorado Springs, you know --.

BOYLES: Of course. Of course.

TANCREDO: And he said, uh, and he said, “You’re the head of the” – I think it was called – “the NATO Parliamentary Assembly” – it was kind of a hot-shot thing. We got to travel all over. He always asked us. It was great fun! Anyway, great guy, great guy. “But I need you,” [the Speaker said to Joel Hefley]. “I never asked you before for anything, right?” And Joel says, “No, sir.” And he says, “Well, I need you. This is it, buddy. I want it.” And Joel says, “I can’t, Mr. Speaker. I just can’t do it.” And he goes, “You enjoy being that Chairman, right?” –and all that. And he says, “You want to be [Chairman] tomorrow?”

BOYLES: Yeah.

TANCREDO: This – this—this—this is his buddy! This is his pal! And he goes back and sits down. And I leaned over and I said, “Did I just hear him threaten you with your Chairmanship?”

BOYLES: Yeah. Yeah.

TANCREDO: Joel just looks ahead, right? Doesn’t say a word. We wait. We wait, it’s quiet. There’s nothing. All of a sudden, he gets up, votes,-- walks down. Oh, my God! I literally – and I’m not kidding you, I almost threw up! I mean, I got – we had been there all night. It was very emotional. There was a lot of crap going on. And now, here’s my best – oh, my God! And he walks down, and he would have to pick up the green thing and go, and hand it to the girl. And she goes, “REPRESENTATIVE HEFLEY: OFF “NO”! ON “AYE!” And they – and the hammer goes down. Boom! Two-hundred and eighteen. It passed. You know, he never was the same after that. He stayed another term but, you know, he got shingles.

BOYLES: Oh, no, he went through all kinds of stuff.

TANCREDO: Oh, my God! And it’s an emotional – shingles is an emotional – I think there’s some component there, right? Up here, and down into his throat – it damn near killed him.

BOYLES: Yeah. Yeah.

TANCREDO: And then he quit, and it was the most horrible --. That was the worst day of my political life.