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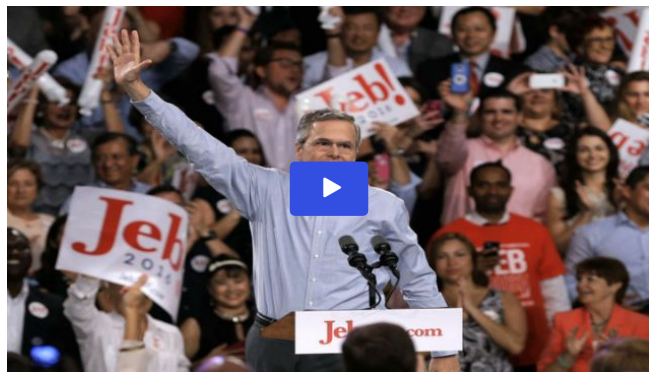
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Jeb Bush has optimistic message, faces challenges in '16 bid

AP By STEVE PEOPLES and BRENDAN FARRINGTON
11 hours ago



MIAMI (AP) — Vowing to win the Republican presidential nomination on his own merits, Jeb Bush launched a White House bid months in the making Monday with a promise to stay true to his beliefs — easier said than done in a bristling primary contest where his conservative credentials will be sharply challenged.

"Not a one of us deserves the job by right of resume, party, seniority, family, or family narrative. It's nobody's turn," Bush said, confronting critics who suggest he simply seeks to inherit the office already held by his father and brother. "It's everybody's test, and it's wide open — exactly as a contest for president should be."

Bush sought to turn the prime argument against his candidacy on its head, casting himself as the true Washington outsider while lashing out at competitors in both parties as being part of the problem. He opened his campaign at a rally near his south Florida

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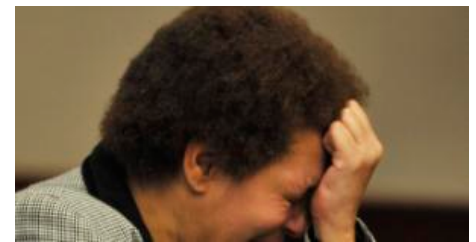
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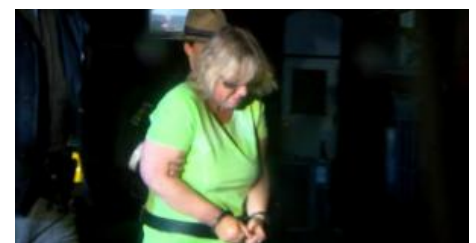
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home at Miami Dade College, an institution with a large and diverse student body that symbolizes the nation he seeks to lead.

"The presidency should not be passed on from one liberal to the next," he declared in a jab at Democratic favorite Hillary Rodham Clinton.

And he said: "We are not going to clean up the mess in Washington by electing the people who either helped create it or have proven incapable of fixing it."

That was an indirect but unmistakable swipe at Republican presidential rivals in the Senate. Among them is his political protege, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, who welcomed Bush into the 2016 contest earlier in the day.

Bush enters a 2016 Republican contest that will test both his vision of conservatism and his ability to distance himself from family.



Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush waves to the crowd as he formally joins the race for president with a s ...

Neither his father, former President George H.W. Bush, nor his brother, former President George W. Bush, attended Monday's announcement. The family was represented instead by Jeb Bush's mother and former first lady, Barbara Bush, who once said that the country didn't need yet another Bush as president, and by his son George P. Bush, recently elected Texas land commissioner.

Before the event, the Bush campaign came out with a logo — Jeb! — that conspicuously leaves out the Bush surname.

Bush, whose wife is Mexican-born, addressed the packed college arena in English and Spanish, an unusual twist for a political speech aimed at a national audience.

"In any language, my message will be an optimistic one because I am certain that we can make the decades just ahead the greatest time ever to be alive in this world," he said. "I will campaign as I would serve, going everywhere, speaking to everyone, keeping my word, facing the issues without flinching,"

In the past six months, Bush has made clear he will remain committed to his core beliefs in the campaign to come — even if his positions on



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immigration and education

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, left, kisses his mother Barbara as his son George, right, watches as h ...

standards are deeply unpopular among the conservative base of the party that plays an outsized role in the GOP primaries.

Tea party leader Mark Meckler on Monday said Bush's positions on education and immigration are "a nonstarter with many conservatives."

"There are two political dynasties eyeing 2016," said Meckler, a co-founder of the Tea Party Patriots, one of the movement's largest organizations, and now leader of Citizens for Self-Governance. "And before conservatives try to beat Hillary, they first need to beat Bush."

Yet a defiant Bush has showed little willingness to placate his party's right wing.

Instead, he aimed his message on Monday at the broader swath of the electorate that will ultimately decide the November 2016 general election. Minority voters, in particular, have fueled Democratic victories in the last two presidential elections.

Of the five people on the speaking program before Bush, just one was a white male.

He was not planning to address immigration on Monday, but

protesters left him little choice. Just as he introduced his mother, a group of several people removed their outer shirts, revealing yellow T-shirts that spelled out: "Legal status is not enough."

Bush responded by departing from his prepared remarks: "Just so that our friends know, the next president of the United States will pass meaningful immigration reform, so that that will be solved — not by executive order."

He prefers creating a path to legal status for the millions of immigrants now living in the country illegally as part of an overhaul, rather than a path to U.S. citizenship.

Bush is one of 11 major Republicans in the hunt for the nomination. Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and Ohio Gov. John Kasich are among those still deciding whether to join a field that could end up just shy of 20.

Bush's critics in both parties have criticized him as aggressively as they would if he were the clear Republican favorite.

Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul said Monday there's "Bush-Clinton fatigue" in America. "I think some people have had enough Bushes



Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush waves as he takes the stage to formally join the race for president, Mo ...



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and enough Clintons," Paul said in an interview with The Associated Press.



From left, Wilhelmina Austin, T. Willard Fair, both of Miami and Cynthia Handley, of Cocoa Beach, FL...

Peoples reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Meg Kinnard in Lexington, S.C. contributed to this report.

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