

Trump, Chuck Schumer and the ultra-rich yuk it up at New York “charity dinner”

Jacob Crosse
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Last Thursday, would be dictator Donald Trump, Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (New York) and a bevy of billionaires and politicians converged on the New York Hilton Midtown Hotel, located in Manhattan, for an evening of bipartisanship and tax-deductible donations.

The occasion was the annual Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation Dinner, the 79th such event and 20th held during a presidential election year. The foundation is named after Alfred Emanuel Smith, the first Catholic governor of New York and first Roman Catholic to run for president (in 1928). Sponsors of the Catholic Charities event include the largest banks and accounting firms in the world, including Bank of America, The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc., Deloitte and Ernst & Young.

Expressing the bipartisan character of the event, the theme of this year’s event was “A Party for All Parties.” Thursday night’s festivities were hosted by New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan and emceed by comedian Jim Gaffigan.

The dinner provides an occasion for the two candidates of big business to “take a break” from the campaign trail and “share a laugh” with their ultra-wealthy benefactors. In 2020, both Trump and President Joe Biden attended the event virtually, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while in 2016, Trump and the Democratic nominee for president, Hillary Clinton, both attended in person.

Breaking from that tradition, Vice President Kamala Harris did not attend Thursday’s event. Instead, her campaign sent a video that featured an inane comedy skit by former SNL (“Saturday Night Live”) actor Molly Shannon. In the skit, Shannon’s character praises “Momala” and encourages viewers to back Harris because she is a woman.

“Don’t you see, man? We need a woman to represent us,” Shannon declares. “A woman brings more heart, more compassion and think how smart she must be to become a top contender in a field dominated by men! It’s time for a woman, bro! And with this woman, we can fly!”

On the same day that the Archdiocese of Los Angeles agreed to pay \$880 million to victims of sexual abuse by clerics, Harris said the Alfred Smith Dinner “presents a rare opportunity to set aside partisanship and come together to do some good by

supporting the tremendous charitable work of the Catholic Church.”

Individual tickets for this year’s event started at \$5,000. A sponsor table ticket cost 10 times more (\$50,000), while tickets for a “Leadership Table” went for a quarter of a million dollars.

Dolan sat at the head table between Trump and Schumer, yukking it up with both politicians throughout the evening. In front of Trump and Schumer sat several billionaires, including former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Robert Kraft, owner of the National Football League’s New England Patriots. Other billionaires in attendance included Woody Johnson, owner of the New York Jets, and BlackStone CEO Stephen Schwarzman.

Several other politicians were to be seen at the bow tie and tuxedo affair, sharing champagne and laughs. Speaker of the House Mike Johnson accompanied Trump as he and Melania greeted campaign surrogate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and his wife, actress Cheryl Hines.

Virtually every major New York Democratic politician was in attendance, including Governor Kathy Hochul, recently indicted Mayor Eric Adams, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Attorney General Letitia James.

After comedian Gaffigan joked about an upcoming “civil war” in America and Trump sending him to a “labor camp,” Trump took the podium. In his remarks, he noted that he had been coming to the dinner for decades with his father, and that his “first check” to a politician was to “Senator Schumer.”

“I supported him. ... I gave him his first check,” Trump said. He added, “I was very proud of it, I don’t know about lately.” He then gave the Democratic Senate Majority leader a friendly pat on the back.

Socialist Equality Party candidate for US president Joseph Kishore wrote on X:

The gathering of billionaires at the Alfred E. Smith Foundation Dinner last night exemplified what Obama referred to as the “intramural scrimmage” between the parties of the ruling class.

Kishore observed that in addition to Trump, there were “billionaires of various political persuasions, including Trump backer [Ken] Langone, NFL Commissioner [Roger] Goodell, Robert Kraft (a Democrat who had previously supported Trump), among others. Harris supporter Michael Bloomberg [was] just off camera.”

In addition to Schumer, Trump had praise for Governor Hochul, saying, “Good job. It’s not an easy one, is it? But you are doing all right.” As for Mayor Adams, indicted for bribe-taking, Trump said, “Good luck with everything, they went after you. They went after you, mayor.”

While Trump had nice things to say about several Democrats, he attacked Harris, calling her someone with the “mental faculties of a child,” having “no intelligence whatsoever.”

Trump called Harris’s decision to skip the event a sign of disrespect for the Catholic Church and for Catholics, and urged Catholic voters to punish her at the polls. If the money raised were going to “bail out rioters and looters in Minnesota,” he said, Harris would have attended the event, Trump quipped, “guaranteed.”

Attacking both transgender people and Democrats, Trump joked to Schumer: “Look on the bright side, Chuck. Considering how woke your party has become, if Kamala loses, you still have a chance of becoming the first woman president.”

Trump ended his remarks with a bipartisan appeal to work across the aisle to institute more tax cuts for the rich. “I will work with the governor, I will work with the mayor, with Democrats. I will work with them, whoever I have to, and we will even work very hard to bring back the S.A.L.T. tax deduction. We are going to bring it back.” This brought applause from many in attendance, including Schumer.

The day before the dinner was held, Harris did a sit-down interview with Bret Baier of Fox News, in which she spent the first 11 minutes of the less than 27-minute interview pledging to hire more border police and boasting of her record as California’s attorney general.

Baier started the interview, broadcast on Thursday, by essentially accusing Harris of purposely letting in immigrants to commit crimes. Harris never once defended immigrants or raised the neo-Nazi character of the attacks by Trump and the Republican Party on migrants. Instead she praised Baier for raising “the issue of immigration because I agree with you, it is a topic of discussion that people will want to rightly have.”

Harris again reiterated her support for the \$20 billion border bill that was torpedoed by Trump and repudiated her previous pro-immigrant statements, telling Baier, “I do not believe in decriminalizing border crossings, and I have not done that as vice president, and I will not do that as president.”

Turning to the economy, Harris touted that fact that her “plans for the economy” were supported by “Goldman Sachs, Moody’s and also the *Wall Street Journal*.”

After previously claiming on two television programs that she would not have done anything differently than Biden, Harris clarified that her administration would be more right-wing. She said:

Let me be very clear. My presidency will not be a continuation of Joe Biden’s presidency. And like every new president that comes into office, I will bring my life experiences, my professional experiences and fresh and new ideas.

“I invite ideas,” Harris continued, “whether it be from the Republicans who are supporting me, who were just on stage with me minutes ago. And the business sector.”

She once again touted her support from Republicans and reiterated her support for the Gaza genocide and broadening the war against Lebanon and Iran:

... whether it was in April or October, several hours on each occasion, that Iran posed a threat to Israel, I was there, most recently in the Situation Room, in the most recent attack, working with the heads of our military and doing what America must always do to defend and support Israel in its requirement to defend itself.

And to give American support to allow Israel to have the resources to defend itself against attack, including from Iran and Iran’s terrorist proxies in the region and my commitment to that is unyielding and unwavering.

Harris concluded the interview by pledging to “strengthen the economy, to support America’s military to ensure we have the most lethal and best fighting force in the world.”



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