

CNN's Larry King Live
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Interview with Rudy Giuliani

LARRY KING, CNN ANCHOR: Good evening, we welcome to LARRY KING LIVE, an old friend, Rudy Giuliani, the former mayor of New York, who has formed an exploratory committee for the 2008 presidential race, which usually leads to an advisory committee. Are you running or not?

RUDY GIULIANI, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Yes, I'm running, sure.

KING: When would you -- do you make an official announcement or is this it here, right now.

GIULIANI: I guess you do.

KING: You just said, "I'm running."

GIULIANI: I guess you do one of these things where you do it four times or five times in a day. So I get on your show and about five others.

KING: So you're running?

GIULIANI: Yes, I'm running.

KING: Final -- what led to this?

GIULIANI: I think I can make a difference. I believe that the country needs leadership. I think that we're going through a war on terror, or a terrorist's war against us, which maybe is a better way to describe it. We've got lots of problems that we have to tackle and resolve. We need fiscal discipline, we need better education. We need energy independence. There's so many things that we haven't sort of tackled and then one of the things I do is ...

KING: Tackle things.

GIULIANI: Tackle things. Lead, try to get things done.

KING: (INAUDIBLE) doesn't it, to say, I'm the best? That's what you're saying.

GIULIANI: Yes, it does. And very humbling. And it takes a long time to come to a conclusion that with all your imperfections and all the things that we all are, none of us do everything well and none of us are perfect. You have to say to yourself, is this something that I can do and for a kid from Brooklyn, sometimes you wake up in the morning and say, "Gee, is this really happening?" And then sometimes you wake up and say, "I can't do this."

KING: Let's get to some issues. A leading industrialist friend of mine said if the United States were a corporation, based on the Iraq war, everyone at the top would be fired. How would you comment on that?

In other words meaning, it ain't going right.

GIULIANI: Yes, but that would have been true -- he would have said the same thing about the civil war and Abraham Lincoln would have been fired. And he might have said the same thing at the Battle of the Bulge and Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Marshall, all would have been fired.

KING: So you're confident this is all going to turn around?

GIULIANI: Oh, no.

KING: Because those -- they turned around.

GIULIANI: No no, I'm not confident it's all going to turn around. Who knows that? I mean, you never know that in the middle of the war. I'm confident that we have to try to make a turnaround and we just can't walk out. And that it is critical to us that things get to the point in Iraq that we have some degree of stability and not the way they are now, because if we leave it the way it is now and we run out, then we're going to face further difficulties in the future.

Then we're going to lose more lives in the future, and I'll tell you who tells me that. A lot of people that have been there. I was just in San Diego speaking to sailors and marines that have been in Iraq.

That's what they tell me. They tell me look, this is a volunteer army.

You want to take our advice? Our advice is give us a chance to try to stabilize that place, otherwise we know what's going to happen. Two years from now, you're going to send us back because there's going to be a major war in this area.

KING: But what do you do to change it? Are 20,000 troops going to change it?

GIULIANI: I think you've got to change the whole strategy, which I hope they did. I hope -- the whole strategy has to be a strategy of not just pacifying places, but holding them and holding them for some period of time. It reminds me a little on a much bigger scale of what I had to do to reduce crime in New York City. We had to not just go into neighborhoods and make them safe, which the city had been doing for years. The city had been going in there, making them safe, and then leaving. And then going in another place, leave, another place, make it safe, leave.

We've got to go, make it safe in the areas, the districts of Baghdad, and then stay there for a period of time and stabilize it and allow people to have their kids go to school. And we have - - you know, there was a real doubt as to whether we could do this, nation building?

KING: We're not going to do it?

GIULIANI: We're not going to do it, and we weren't sure we could to it. And this is a real hard thing to learn how to do. And it's very different than what the military used to have to do in the past, or America. But right now, if we don't do a better job of stabilizing Iraq -- and not just for the benefit of the Iraqi people, for the benefit of our people, then we have -- then we have a country, where Iran has got a major, major ability to expand their activities. Two Shiite countries right next to each other, slaughtering -- you know, where one group at least is slaughtering Sunnis.

KING: Would you agree, Mr. Mayor, if they had to do this all over again, go back years, no one would vote for the Iraq war, 100 to nothing, probably, in the Senate? No WMD?

GIULIANI: Yes, I guess, but I'm not sure that explains to us about what's right about us. You know, the idea of taking out Saddam Hussein, was one that was premised on the fact that he invaded Kuwait, that he used chemical weapons, that he had billions of dollars at his disposal, which he used to support various of this Islamic terrorist movement.

KING: You're not saying you'd do it again?

GIULIANI: I would remove Saddam Hussein again, I just hope we'd do it better and we'd do it in a different way. We do the nation building part, or the hand off to the Iraqis, or the rebuilding of the Iraqis -- here are the things that I learned from it. Not -- take out Saddam

Hussein in a second again. I think the world is much better off without Saddam Hussein, than with him. And I think maybe some of the confusion doesn't lead us to really see that. Here's what I would change: Do it with more troops.

KING: Which was recommended and turned down.

GIULIANI: Maybe a 100,000 to 130,000 more. I would do it in a way in which we didn't disband the army, which we've learned. This is all -- you know, this is all Monday morning quarterbacking, but your Monday morning quarterback in order to play the next game better. Right? Monday morning quarterbacks who just want to criticize, is cheap stuff. Monday morning quarterbacking so that next Saturday or Sunday you can play better is absolutely right.

I would have us not disband the army. You wouldn't de-Baathify. See, de-Baathify sounds like the right thing to do because you're getting rid of all the old Saddam guys. But that meant getting rid of the entire civil service. The country had no infrastructure.

KING: So, who do you blame?

GIULIANI: So you learn from things.

KING: Do you blame Rumsfeld?

GIULIANI: No, I don't blame anybody.

KING: You don't blame -- somebody's got to --

GIULIANI: No, no, no. You don't do it that way.

KING: Nobody's to blame?

GIULIANI: You don't do it that way. That's why you don't make progress. Just like I don't blame people for not figuring out September 11 before it happened. What I do is, I kind of look at what happened, so you learned for the future.

KING: But there were mistakes.

GIULIANI: Of course there were mistakes. Lincoln made mistakes. Roosevelt made mistakes. Eisenhower made mistakes. The Battle of the Bulge was the biggest intelligence failure in American military history, much bigger than any in Vietnam, or now. We didn't know that the Soviets were moving 400,000 or 500,000 troops. We missed it.

KING: Shouldn't they be blamed for not explaining it well enough?

GIULIANI: Learn from it, learn from it, don't blame'em.

KING: How about the American public, that's so against it? Have they done a bad job in explaining?

GIULIANI: Maybe, maybe, you know, yeah, maybe they didn't do that.

KING: Communicate better?

GIULIANI: I don't know, I hope I would. I mean, I hope that I would learn from the mistakes that were made in this situation.

KING: Such as?

GIULIANI: Just as the mistakes I made when I was mayor, I tried to learn from them. If I get to be president of the United States, I probably won't make the same mistakes, because I will have learned from them. I'll probably make different ones.

KING: How is --

GIULIANI: And then the next one will learn from the ones that I made. I would say that about Bill Clinton, or George Bush. This job is so difficult that you have to humility about it. And you have to understand how to look at the past, not in a way in which it casts blame, but you learn from it.

KING: The House is apparently about to vote and will vote, apparently, to say that this 20,000 troops is a mistake. Now, important question, do you hold those who vote for that as helping the enemy?

GIULIANI: No, I hold them as --

KING: Some say that.

GIULIANI: OK. There's a --

KING: You don't?

GIULIANI: I mean, you can look at the practical and common sense conclusion on that anyway you want. But there's something more important than that.

We have a right of free speech in this country and we elect people to make decisions.

Here's what I would prefer to see them do, though, if you ask me what's my view on that. The nonbinding resolution thing gets me more than are you for it or against it.

I have tremendous respect for the people who feel that we either made a mistake going to war, who voted against the war, who now have come to the conclusion, changed their minds, they have every right to that, that it's wrong, you should, in a dynamic situation, keep questioning.

What I don't like is the idea of a nonbinding resolution.

KING: Because?

GIULIANI: Because there's no decision.

KING: But it's a statement.

GIULIANI: Yes, but that's what you do. That's what Tim Russert does and that's what Rush Limbaugh does. That's what you guys do, you make comments. We pay them to make decisions, not just to make comments.

We pay them to decide. The United States Congress does declarations, the war...

KING: So if you feel that way, withhold funds and that's the way you feel?

GIULIANI: The ones I think have a better understanding of what their responsibility is and are willing to take a risk are the ones who are saying we've got to hold back the funds, we've got to vote against the war or we're for the war.

And maybe it's because I ran a government and I tend to be a decisive person. I like decisions. And I think one of the things wrong with Washington is they don't want to make tough decisions anymore.

Nonbinding resolution about Iraq, no decision on immigration, no decision on Social Security reform, no decision on what to do about energy independence, no decision.

You know why that happens? Because it's unpopular.

KING: I got to take a break. I don't want to break your heart, but if you're president, you can't root for the Yankees.

GIULIANI: You got to make decisions.

KING: You have to root for everybody.

Rudy Giuliani's our guest, the Republican candidate. He's running.

We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Let's move to some things domestic. You've had some quotes lately that that seem contradictory.

I know you're pro-choice, you've always been pro-choice.

GIULIANI: I am.

KING: Yet, you say you'll appoint judges who are strict constructionists.

If that's the case, they're going to vote to overturn Roe v. Wade, which you don't want.

GIULIANI: I don't know that. You don't know that.

KING: Well, what is strict constructionist?

GIULIANI: There are a lot of ways to explain that.

KING: Do you still favor Roe V. Wade?

GIULIANI: I am pro-choice, yes. But I'm also, as you know, always have been, against abortion, hate abortion, don't like it, wouldn't personally advise anyone to have an abortion, but I believe a woman has a right to choose and you can't have criminal penalties and I think that would be wrong.

I would select judges who try to interpret the Constitution rather than invent it, from my views as a lawyer. And I don't want to sound presumptuous, I'm not a constitutional lawyer, but I have argued in the Supreme Court and I have argued in many of the circuit courts.

I've spent more time in court than I have in politics.

I think it's very, very important that a judge have a judicial philosophy that says, "I am going to try to figure out what the framers of the Constitution meant when they wrote this or what

the people who amended it meant when they put it in, not what I'd like it to mean, not what I feel it means."

I had that view about the criminal law. I thought a lot of the decisions of the Warren court were a mistake. I thought the exclusionary rule was a mistake. I thought, to some extent, Miranda was a mistake.

Now, here's what the court did with those. A lot of people thought that with the...

KING: I know prosecutors who love Miranda, made cases more solid.

GIULIANI: Miranda's OK, but if people don't give a Miranda warning quickly enough and somebody blurts out a confession, I still want to put that murderer in jail. And when a cop makes a mistake in finding a weapon and finding drugs and I never like the idea of giving it back to the criminal.

So here's what the court did. The two courts that came after -- the two conservative courts that came after Berger and Rehnquist, people thought they were going to overrule Miranda. They thought they were going to overrule Escobedo, the exclusionary rule. They didn't overrule it. They limited it. And they limited it to a point where it is now quite rational.

KING: Are you pretty sure that no matter what you appointed, Roe vs. Wade will remain?

GIULIANI: Nobody knows that.

KING: Would it hurt you if they overturned it, and you appointed judges that...

GIULIANI: I don't think it would hurt me or help me. It would be a matter of states making decisions or...

KING: You'd be indifferent to it?

GIULIANI: I wouldn't be indifferent to it. It wouldn't be the litmus test on which I would appoint somebody.

KING: All right.

GIULIANI: I'd appoint somebody because I thought they'd be a good judge who would do the best they could to interpret the Constitution. And maybe nine times out of ten, I'll be satisfied with that appointment. And one out of ten times, I'll be sitting there like I used to do when I appointed lots of people when I was the mayor and say, "how could they do that? Why they do that? I didn't understand why they did it."

KING: You're pro -- basically, the gay movement, right? That gays have equal rights to heteros, that they be treated the same way by society, insurance benefits and all of that?

GIULIANI: Gays should be protected. I find the domestic partnership law in New York. But the way I'm portrayed by my opponents -- and I guess to drive people away from me -- is that I'm in favor of gay marriage. I am not.

I did 220 weddings. They were all between a man and a woman. I believe marriage should be between a man and a woman. At least, I hope they were all between a man and a woman. It looked that way at the time.

But, yes, I believe that marriage is something that should be between a man and a woman and that the way to handle this, and they way to handle respect and everything is to have something like domestic partnership, which I support.

KING: Would you favor a constitutional amendment saying marriage is a man and a woman?

GIULIANI: Not if it remains the way it is now. Unless all of a sudden lots of states do what Massachusetts and kind of come at it from the other side and decide that the Constitution that -- that you cannot have marriage between a man and a woman. If it stays the way it is, you don't need one. If it changes, then you may very well need one.

KING: Gun control -- favor gun control? Favor banning handguns?

GIULIANI: And I did. But I also understand the second amendment. I understand the right to bear arms. I think that a lot of these things have to be resolved on a state-by-state basis. And I used say also when I was the mayor, it's one thing for New York, it's something different for Texas.

KING: Rudy, is it going to be rough for you -- oh, by the way, we've got a big presidential debate on April 4th in New Hampshire. Democrats are in that, I think Republicans are next. CNN is co-sponsoring it with WMUR, New Hampshire. Are you going to come?

GIULIANI: I didn't know. I didn't even know about it.

KING: I'm inviting you on behalf of CNN.

GIULIANI: Let me take a look.

KING: If your schedule's open, would you come?

GIULIANI: Let me take a look.

KING: OK. Isn't going to be hard for you? What they say about Rudy Giuliani is you're way ahead in the polls, by the way, you could win the election, but not the nomination because you can't win South Carolina, you can't win Alabama with the views you have via abortion and gay rights.

GIULIANI: You heard the views that I have. And there are a lot of other issues you can cover.

KING: How tough is it going to be for you in the South?

GIULIANI: I've been in South Carolina quite a bit, and other parts of the South. And it seems like they're open. It seems like people are open to maybe approaching this election a little differently from the point of -- both on the Republican side and the Democratic side. We need leadership. I think there's an understanding that you can't -- you can never a candidate you agree 100 percent of the time. I don't agree with myself 100 percent of the time. So how are you going to find a candidate you...

KING: You think they'll vote for you?

GIULIANI: I think they will. I think they will. I think they will on the basis of leadership. I think that -- I think they will on the basis of, "Ultimately we need someone who we think can handle this country at a time of war and a time at which we have real tough things that we have to face that we haven't been facing for a while."

KING: A couple of other quick things. Your long relationship with Bernie Kerik, a potential campaign problem?

GIULIANI: It -- you mean his -- recommending him? It was a mistake. I made a mistake.

KING: You think it will hurt you? You think an opponent would bring it up.

GIULIANI: Sure.

KING: Why don't I bring it up?

GIULIANI: Yes, I think the answer is I made a mistake and I took responsibility for it.

KING: Your divorce and personal life being...

GIULIANI: ... They'll bring all of that. They'll bring all of that up, and they'll probably bring up things that aren't even true. And they'll bring up things that are true and I think the way I deal with that is, hey, I'm a human being. I made mistakes, I'm not perfect. I keep trying to learn from them. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. I keep working on that, I keep trying to learn from them. I'm a human being, much like I think everybody else. There may be a perfect candidate in this race, I don't know which one that is. I wouldn't want to be the one that is the perfect candidate.

KING: Last time we had a presidential race, I remember you liked John McCain. And he was a friend of yours.

GIULIANI: We still are friends and I like John McCain very much. I have tremendous admiration for John McCain. And you know, we have -- we're going to both battle it out for the Republican nomination, but it's not going to one iota remove the kind of respect I have for John. I think John is a great American. And beyond that, he's a great person, somebody I know. I really like him very much. I like Mitt Romney. I campaigned for Mitt Romney.

KING: Would you like to run against him?

GIULIANI: The night before he got elected governor, I did the last campaign event with him and we were in the south side of Boston. We had dinner at a great Italian restaurant and told great stories and I have great respect for Mitt.

KING: Do you think Mormonism should be held against him?

GIULIANI: Oh, of course not. Absolutely not. It would be anymore than Catholicism should be ...

KING: Held against you.

GIULIANI: ... should have been held against John Kennedy or -- bring from Brooklyn should be held against the two of us. I think if I got elected, I'd be the -- maybe I'd be the first one from Brooklyn elected.

KING: I want to be ambassador of Brooklyn.

GIULIANI: You might not get confirmed.

KING: I wouldn't. Would you like to run against Hillary?

GIULIANI: I'd like to run against anybody the Democrats nominated. If it's Hillary, God bless her. If it's Obama, terrific. If it's Edwards, I hope I haven't left somebody out, but I think those are the three top ones.

KING: Thanks, Rudy.

GIULIANI: Thanks, Larry.

KING: See you along the trail. And if you can make that debate, it's April 4th in New Hampshire. Just check with the squad.

GIULIANI: Thank you.

KING: Mayor Rudy Giuliani, we'll be right back.