



RECLAIMING CONSERVATISM | Former Republican congressman Mickey Edwards discussed his new book.

Ex-congressman: Repubs gone astray

Party has lost its conservatives ideals, needs to refocus

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Mickey Edwards has a problem with today's Republican talking heads.

"Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Ann Coulter and people like that wouldn't know conservatism if it bit them in the ankle," Edwards said last night.

The former Republican congressman was speaking to a crowd of about 35 people at the King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center. Edwards discussed his new book, "Reclaiming Conservatism," in which he argues that the Republican party has strayed from its conservative ideals, starting with the Reagan era.

While writing his book, Edwards was asked to speak to Congress about the American Bar

Association's conclusion that President Bush had disregarded laws that he himself had authorized. Edwards served as a member of the ABA's Task Force on Presidential Signing Statements.

Before speaking to Congress, Edwards thought he'd be met with full support.

"I would be a hero, everyone would agree with me," Edwards said.

He was mistaken.

"Not one Republican saw anything at all wrong with the president saying he didn't have to obey the law," Edwards said.

Edwards said the president and members of his staff have ignored laws and ethics on several occasions, including an incident last month when Chief of Staff Joshua Bolten and Bush's former legal counsel Harriet Miers refused to appear before Congress to discuss the firing of U.S. attorney generals last year.

"Today, Republicans in Congress do not see themselves as a separate branch of government [from the executive branch]," Edwards said. "They see [Bush] as the captain of the team - a quarterback they need to protect from getting sacked."

Edwards stressed the importance of checking the power of the executive branch and making sure that members of Congress uphold their duties to the people, rather than to the president.

Some students agreed with Edwards and said Bush has crossed the line. They are looking to the 2008 election for change.

"It is important that we consider these issues, especially as we move closer to the upcoming election," Stern sophomore Armand Vella said. "I'm interested to see how things would be different if a Democrat was in office instead of a Republican."

Event moderator John Brademas, a former NYU president and the namesake of the NYU Brademas Center for the Study of Congress, thought Edwards' speech was a poignant analysis of current politics.

"And remember," Brademas said, "I'm a Democrat, and he's a Republican."

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