

## Donald Trump Says He Will Not Run for President in 2000

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Real estate magnate Donald Trump reveals his political plans and his decision not to run for President.

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## CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

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## Transcript

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MATT LAUER, co-host:

On CLOSE UP this morning, Donald Trump. After months of toying with the idea of running for president on the Reform Party ticket, the billionaire real estate developer has finally made a decision. I sat down with Donald Trump and asked him what he's going to do.

Mr. DONALD TRUMP: I've made my decision. I'm not going to be running. The Party is, as you know, self-destructing. Jesse has left, and that's a problem. And so I will not be running.

LAUER: Not running for the nomination of the Reform Party, or not considering any run for the presidency this time around?

Mr. TRUMP: Not considering the run.

LAUER: Nothing could change your mind with that?

Mr. TRUMP: No, no. Totally not.

LAUER: When you say the Party is self-destructing, what do you see as the biggest problem with the Reform Party right now?

Mr. TRUMP: Well, you've got David Duke just joined--a bigot, a racist, a problem. I mean, this is not exactly the people you want in your party. Buchanan's a disaster as we've, you know, covered. Jesse's a terrific guy who just left the Party. And he, you know, it's unfortunate, but he just left the Party. He's going to be doing his Independence Party from Minnesota. And he's a terrific guy and a terrific governor, and he's got a great future. And I've always said, Matt, that I would run if I thought I could win, and in order to win...

LAUER: Not only the nomination, but the presidency.

Mr. TRUMP: ...the whole thing. I don't want to get 20 percent of the vote, I think I could, and I know I could get the nomination. New York wants me. Texas wants me. Many of the states want me. And they're, you know, they're rather devastated because they don't like the alternatives. I always said, and I said to you if you can win the whole thing, you can only win the whole thing with a totally unified party.

LAUER: You're sure this is--and some critics of yours are going to say this is a great excuse for Donald Trump to back out now, because they're going to say, first of all, you're thrown off the ballot here in New York.

Mr. TRUMP: Excuse me, New York backed me 100 percent. The head of New York, Jack Essenberg, is 100 percent in my camp. You have a communist...

LAUER: You aren't on the ballot.

Mr. TRUMP: ...you have a communist--no, no, but New York is backing me. The New York party totally backs Donald Trump. The polls came out great. The polls...

LAUER: Well, let's stop. Let me talk about the polls. Latest Zogby poll that I saw, February 6th, 2000, if the election were held today, over 40 percent of the people would vote for Gore. Over 40 percent of the people would vote for Bush--by the way you've called them "Gush" and "Bore," and 3.2 percent of the people would vote for Donald Trump. Given the margin of error...

Mr. TRUMP: If the polls--excuse me, Matt. If the polls are staged in a certain way where people believed I was running--I mean, the biggest problem I had, is people never believed I'd want to do it or I'd run. In those polls I do amazingly well. I get 24-25 percent of the vote, in those polls.

LAUER: It's undeniable that you've received an enormous amount of attention and publicity from this. Again your critics are going to say, that's what this was all about. You just wanted the attention and the publicity.

Mr. TRUMP: That's wrong. I mean, it's wrong. It's totally wrong. Most people that are into this thing and really into it and know me know that I'm totally serious about it. I have enjoyed it. I have had a lot of fun. It's been a lot of fun.

LAUER: Let me give you a hypothetical situation, Jesse Ventura thinks about things for a few more days and says, 'You know what, as part of this new Independence Party, I can make a valid run for the presidency,' and--and that party says maybe they can get him on all 50 ballots. And he comes to you and says, 'Donald, why don't you be my vice presidential candidate?'

Mr. TRUMP: Yeah. I'd have no interest. I don't think that's going to happen. Jesse's not going to run. I know Jesse very well. He called me a long time ago and told me exactly what he was going to be doing on Friday. And as, you know, on Friday he announced he's leaving the Reform Party. And frankly, he--he almost called asking for permission, because he didn't want to leave me out there and I thought it was very, very nice. He said...

LAUER: He said, 'In other words, if you don't want me to leave this party...'

Mr. TRUMP: He indicated that, or at least that he'd stay--he'd stay for awhile. I think eventually he was going, and I think he should have gone out, because the Party is a mess. I mean, the Reform Party is a mess. You have a right winger and you have Fulani, a communist, and they've merged. And I don't know what you have--I don't know what you--you get out of this merger, but this Party is a mess.

LAUER: So you are now going to sever all ties with the Reform Party?

Mr. TRUMP: I am very, very intrigued by what's happened in New York with the Independence Party. Jesse is calling his, as you know, the Independence Party. And there is some interesting things taking place. But I am looking at my options. The Republicans want me back. The Democrats want me, which is

sort of more surprising.

LAUER: You're scaring me, though. You're saying, I'm looking at my options.

Mr. TRUMP: Yes.

LAUER: OK, but let me just make sure we're on the same page here. Those options in your opinion do not include a run for the presidency or the vice presidency?

Mr. TRUMP: Right, this year. It may include something in the future. But at this point the answer is no.

LAUER: Here we go with this flirtation again. No?

Mr. TRUMP: No. Well, I'm just--I'm just saying that in--in a number of years I might consider it.

LAUER: So it's a definite maybe in the future.

Mr. TRUMP: I think this, and I've looked at it very seriously, the Reform Party is a mess, but I think the Reform Party can only really gel if times are bad. I've never done so well, most people have never done so well. You've never done so well. Times are good. In good times you don't get Reform parties to do very well.

LAUER: Do you have any desire to have an impact on this year's election?

Mr. TRUMP: Well, I think the biggest impact I'll have is that in particular one of the candidates really wants my endorsement. And...

LAUER: Which candidate?

Mr. TRUMP: I--I'd rather not say right now. But one of the candidates, one of the three, because I don't consider Bradley to be much of a candidate anymore, one of the three remaining candidates.

LAUER: Republican or a Democrat?

Mr. TRUMP: I can't tell you. But very much wants my endorsement. And I'm thinking about it, to be honest with you. And if I did do that endorsement I would go back into the mainstream party.

LAUER: Scale of one to 10, 10 being very possible, one being almost impossible, 2004, a ticket of Jesse Ventura for president, Donald Trump for vice president?

Mr. TRUMP: Well, I think--I think that's highly unlikely. But I'd like to see him do it. And it's possible that maybe separately I'd do it again. And, you know, I've had a lot of fun doing it. I've learned a lot. It's been an amazing experience.

LAUER: What have you learned? What's the big lesson?

Mr. TRUMP: I've learned the life of a politician. You know the other night, I was sitting at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida, watching television, and I was watching Gore on a freezing evening knocking on a door, saying, 'Hi, I'm the vice president, I'd love your vote.' He's freezing. And I'm watching McCain, and I'm watching Bush, and they were all working so hard. And I said, 'You know, it's not such an easy life they have,' as I'm sitting, you know, in 75-degree weather.

LAUER: Can you ever see yourself working that hard?

Mr. TRUMP: It's a different kind of work. I work up here. It's a different kind of work. But it's--it's a real possibility.

LAUER: We're back to the flirtation here.

Mr. TRUMP: Well, I always flirt.

LAUER: Are you or aren't you?

Mr. TRUMP: But I know one thing, if I do, I'll be back on your program.

LAUER: Thanks very much.

Mr. TRUMP: Have a good time.

LAUER: Good luck.