

SPECIAL COVERAGE | TRANSITION OF POWER

# Trump Inauguration

## REACTION TO THE NEW PRESIDENT

"I feel like it's a step backwards and I feel like we, as concerned American citizens, regardless of our political affiliations, need to take a strong look inward at the country we want to be and the country we want to project to the world. On the night of the election when Donald Trump won, my 8-year-old daughter looked at me and said, 'What are you going to do?' I said, 'Daddy is going to do what he always does — protect your rights and protect the rights of American citizens just like you.'

— **Gerald A. Griggs, attorney and one of the organizers of the March for Social Justice and Women in Atlanta**

"I think he's going to do great things. I think Mr. Trump certainly has his drawbacks as far as being a candidate and most of it revolves around his mannerisms, but I think policy-wise he is going to be just fine. I think he is going to do wonders for the economy. The tax code is being reworked and that is going to help corporate American get and keep better-paying jobs ... I have high hopes for him and I have high hopes for America because they do go hand in hand. He can't be successful without help, and he needs to try to get to the other side of the aisle so they can be as helpful as they can."

— **Bob Best, manages an air conditioning company in Kennesaw. He lives in Powder Springs.**

"I'm not looking forward to the incoming administration, because I think it was all a game for Donald Trump. It was not really about caring for our country and caring for the world. It was more about him proving a point and being famous. ... As much as I don't want to work with the administration, there must be someone there to represent our community, be the voice for our community and take action. If there isn't, we won't be heard and our voices will be lost in the wind. Our democracy is bigger than one person. My hope is that he will allow love and humility to be his compass as he guides our country."

— **Cree Davis, Atlanta community activist and advocate for mothers of color**

"My expectations are economic prosperity, a movement to greater peace throughout the world, safer and more vibrant inner cities, and increased national unity."

— **Michael Abramson is an attorney, writer and adviser with the National Diversity Coalition for Trump.**



John Hightower (right) and Wanda Craven Reese cheer with fellow Republicans after Donald Trump is sworn in. Cobb County Republicans watched the Inauguration of Donald Trump at a party at GOP headquarters in Marietta. BOB ANDRES PHOTOS / BANDRES@AJC.COM

# Trump supporter knew he was 'the man'

By Helena Oliviero / holiviero@ajc.com

Waving an American flag, Theresa Sykes nodded and wept as Donald Trump was sworn in as the 45th president of the United States. "I am so happy, so excited and so relieved," said Sykes, standing and full of emotion at an Inauguration Day Watch Party late Friday morning at the Cobb County GOP Headquarters in Marietta. Sykes, a 53-year-old mother of two sons, ages 6 and 13, took a break from work Friday morning to watch history and savor the moment. She grabbed a plate of chicken, potatoes and green beans but, so overwhelmed by the moment, she barely touched her food.

Wearing a long-sleeved red shirt with a blue T-shirt over it, a red-white-and-blue scarf and several Trump/Pence stickers and pins, the stalwart conservative said she immediately liked Trump's candidacy.

"When I looked at him, from day one, it was like — he was the man," she said. "I don't know if it was God telling me or what. But I felt it very strongly."

She liked that Trump was straightforward, not afraid to speak his mind. She liked that he's a billionaire businessman and believes that his business background will translate into job creation. And she likes his strong personality.

"He will not put up with nonsense or complacency from members of Congress," she said. "He will not allow for status quo."

For Sykes, Trump's presidency will usher in a new era, and she believes he will support many issues and concerns important to her that include the following: stricter immigration policies, the defunding of Planned Parenthood, the appointing of conservative justices to the Supreme Court, reducing the national debt, repealing Obamacare and overhauling public education.

"I was deeply concerned in the destructive direction of my nation, my home," said Sykes.



Donna Rowe was among the many Cobb County Republicans who gathered locally to cheer on the new president as he took office.

"I love my home, my country America and I will do what I can to make it better for its citizens."

Sykes lives in Powder Springs with her family. She and her husband, Dr. Robert Sykes, have a dental practice in Marietta. Her husband is the dentist. She is a dental hygienist and helps run the office.

Throughout the campaign, Sykes was on a mission to help Trump get elected. She joined about 200 strong Trump supporters in Cobb County who call themselves "Team Trump Cobb County." She actively campaigned for Trump during the election, standing near a polling place

near Marietta High School for several hours at a time, waving an American flag and also holding a Trump/Pence Make America Great sign.

Beyond that, every time she went to a Kroger, a CVS, Wal-Mart, anywhere around town, she seized on what she considered an opportunity to woo more votes for Trump. She approached strangers, men and women, and gravitated to younger people who are less likely to vote.

"Hey honey, what do you think of Mr. Trump," she'd say to just about anyone. From there, she'd encourage people to research the issues, stay engaged, and — par-

ticularly to those expressing support for Trump — vote.

During Trump's inauguration speech, Sykes and others stood up to cheer several times — when Trump talked about jobs, patriotism, and when he talked about transferring power from Washington, D.C., and "giving it back to you, the American people."

And everyone in the room was standing by the time Trump said: "We Will Make America Wealthy Again... We Will Make America Safe Again."

They knew what was coming, and they said the motto of Trump's campaign with President Trump, loudly and triumphantly:

"We Will Make America Great Again."

Before she left, she and others in the room embraced and gave high-fives and fist pumps. Later in the evening, she would celebrate some more at an Inaugural Day ball at a golf course in Johns Creek. She planned to wear a black evening gown — with her red-white-and-blue scarf.

And as she left the GOP headquarters, tears filled Sykes' light green eyes once again.

"I believe Trump is going to define America based on our founding principles that built a great America," she said. "My hope is he will do all he said he will do."

# Bikers brigade all in for Trump

By Jennifer Brett / jbrett@ajc.com

WASHINGTON — "People are pouring into Washington in record numbers. Bikers for Trump are on their way," President Donald Trump tweeted earlier this week, taking a break from posts blasting John Lewis and his horrible Atlanta district, the biased and dishonest media and former President Barack Obama's signature legislation, the Affordable Care Act, which Trump calls the "Unaffordable Care Act."

At the helm of the bikers brigade but poles apart from Trump's bombastic style is Chris Cox. The charismatic and exceedingly polite leader of Bikers for Trump is a chainsaw artist who lives in Mount Pleasant, S.C., right outside of Charleston. He sold sculptures of dolphins and pelicans in gas station parking lots to finance his travel to the cross-country series of biker rallies that eventually led to this week's strong showing of supporters roaring into Washington on two wheels.

"Chris has always been a really great guy, and I'm not blowing smoke," said his lifelong friend Randy McCray of Atlanta, who



Chris Cox is the founder of Bikers for Trump. The truth be told, however, is that he isn't much of a biker. Cox began in politics working with George H.W. Bush's vice president, Dan Quayle. JENNIFER BRETT / AJC

grew up with Cox in Alexandria, Va. "He's like that commercial — the most interesting guy in the world."

Cox was born in Raleigh, N.C., and grew up in the Washington

suburbs. His father, Earl Cox, was a journeyman political operative, working for the departments of Agriculture and Labor and on George H.W. Bush's campaign in North Carolina. Chris Cox caught

the political bug early and worked with Bush's vice president, Dan Quayle, during campaign events.

"That's where I learned how to

**Bikers continued on A9**