

# The Passion of the Trump: Taking People's Property



Donald Trump is a man of passion. He's passionate about real estate, his wealth, his prestigious brand, and of course politics. It's that passion that has been the driving force behind his infectious presidential campaign, shocking

pundits and political observers alike as he continues to maintain a strong lead in the national polls.

When Trump speaks to crowds and reporters, he speaks with conviction, and often uses adjectives like "tremendous" and "huge" to describe both his achievements and his vision for the country. The rhetoric has helped him build a loyal following of supporters whose praise and defense of him have become nothing short of reflexive. Even when the man's positions stand in direct conflict with the philosophies of those who support him, they have his back...unconditionally. Trump supporters have put a tremendous amount of faith in their guy, and faith is a very powerful instrument in a political campaign. One should never underestimate the power of passion.

In an interview last night on Fox News' *Special Report*, Mr. Trump introduced us to another passion of his: the taking of other people's property.

The topic was *eminent domain*, the government's constitutionally-allowed right to override a landowner's wishes, and confiscate their private property for "public use" in return for "just compensation."

*"I think eminent domain is wonderful,"* Trump told interviewer Bret Baier. "

Trump explained that if developers want to build a public highway or even a private business, using eminent domain to acquire the property from unwilling owners (who he referred to as "hold-outs") is a good thing. He pointed out that many jobs are created through big construction projects, and if property rights are standing in the way of a big development, eminent domain is warranted:

*"I think eminent domain for massive projects, for instance, you're going to create thousands of jobs, and you have somebody that's in the way, and you pay that person far more – don't forget, eminent domain, they get a lot of money, and you need a house in a certain location, because you're going to build this massive development that's going to employ thousands of people, or you're going to build a factory, that without this little house, you can't build the factory. I think eminent domain is fine."*

As a small government conservative, I found the remarks quite troubling. What struck me, perhaps even more than the words themselves, was the predatory zest with which Trump spoke.

It was clear through Trump's tone that he truly appreciates the government's ability to engage in such a practice. He even seems to personally resent private property owners who stand in the way of what he views as progress, or as he calls it "economic development." He views their objections as selfish and illegitimate because they're offered, in some cases, much more than the estimated worth of their property. One might suggest that this means Trump only values dollars and cents, and not so much property rights or individual liberty. And by "one" I mean Trump himself, later in the interview:

*"Sometimes you have people that want to hold out just for the – most of the time, I will say, I've done a lot of outparcels,*

*I call them outparcels. Most of the time, they just want money, okay? It's very rarely that they say 'I love my house. I love my house. It's the greatest thing there.' Because these people can go buy a house now that's five times bigger, in a better location, so eminent domain, when it comes to jobs, roads, the public good, I think it's a wonderful thing."*

The condescending rhetoric wasn't empty or theoretical, of course. As Trump repeatedly pointed out during the interview, he's dealt with government entities on eminent domain cases a number of times throughout his prestigious career, and he clearly takes a lot of pride in having come out on the winning end of some (if not most) of those disputes.

In a 2011 piece for the *National Review*, Robert VerBruggen documented a couple of Trump's more high-profile trysts with eminent domain. One involved a proposed amusement park in Bridgeport, Connecticut that resulted in five businesses' land being obtained by the city and sold to Trump. The other involved an elderly widow from Atlantic City who owned property near the Trump Plaza Hotel for three decades.

In short, Trump wanted the widow's land to use for a park, a parking lot, and a limousine waiting area. He tried to negotiate with her, even offering her \$1 million at one point. When she refused to sell, New Jersey's Casino Reinvestment Development Authority filed a lawsuit against her. She was offered \$251,000 and instructed to vacate the premises within 90 days. Luckily, she eventually won her battle in court.

Now, I understand that eminent domain is supported by the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution. I also understand that the Supreme Court decided in 2005 that the "public use" of property could extend to "private use" as long as more tax revenue was generated by the new property owner. Though it's most certainly abused (and in my opinion, fundamentally unfair), I'm not questioning the *legality* of eminent domain.



Breaking: Presidential candidate Donald Trump endorses John A. Daly's new novel.

What I *am* questioning is how self-described *small-government* conservatives can continue to make the case for a candidate who *passionately* defends such blatant *big-government* intrusions into people's lives. At some point, does supporting universal healthcare, opposing free trade, calling for the expansion of Social Security and Medicare, and now advocating for property confiscation set off some warning signals with Republican voters?

You'd think it would, but so far it hasn't. Neither has mocking American POWs, for that matter. Perhaps passion truly does *trump* principle and liberty these days, even among those who frequently tout those tenets as our nation sifts through the rubble of a failed era of *Hope and Change*.

I sure hope that's not the case.