

# [***Was Toby Keith a Donald Trump Supporter? What We Know***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B8J-3H61-JBR6-900J-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** Toby Keith, who has died aged 62, performed at Donald Trump's presidential inauguration in 2017.

**Body**

The death of 62-year-old country music star [*Toby Keith*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/toby-keith?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), following a stomach cancer diagnosis, has led to a flood of tributes across the worlds of music and ***politics***.

Tributes and messages about Keith spread across social media on Tuesday, including from [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) Jr. who posted a photo on [*X, formerly Twitter, that he took with Keith in 2018.*](https://twitter.com/DonaldJTrumpJr/status/1754848550821724387)

Trump Jr. wrote alongside: "Ugh. We lost a legend this week. R.I.P Toby Keith."

The country star not only performed at Trump's inauguration in 2017 but was awarded a National Medal of Arts by the former president in 2021. His pro-American, pro-military lyricism and macho personality arguably echoed some of Trump's policies and posturing too.

Despite this, Keith's political allegiances were less clear-cut than you may think.

**Was Toby Keith a Trump Supporter?**

Keith's performance at Trump's 2017 presidential inauguration did not happen in a vacuum. Keith accepted the gig amid reports that other major stars had refused the invitation to play at the Lincoln Memorial. According to [*Vulture*](https://www.vulture.com/2021/01/trump-gives-medal-to-toby-keith-ricky-skaggs-impeachment.html), these included Elton John, Celine Dion, Kiss, and fellow country music star Garth Brooks.

Reports of the struggles to secure big names for the inauguration made Keith's name stand out. However, in a 2017 interview with [*The Atlantic*](https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/11/toby-keith-the-bus-songs/540654/)*,* he said the decision to play was a matter of duty rather than tacit support toward Trump, saying if "the president of the frickin' United States asks you to do something and you can go, you should go instead of being a jack-off."

Asked about the controversy surrounding artists agreeing to perform at Trump's inauguration, Keith reinforced his support for America, not Trump or the Republican Party. "I don't apologize for performing for our country or military," he said in [*a statement to*](https://people.com/country/toby-keith-donald-trumo-inaguration-response/)*Entertainment Weekly*. "I performed at events for previous presidents [George W.] Bush and Obama and over 200 shows in Iraq and Afghanistan for the USO."

Keith was a registered Democrat until 2008, when he re-registered as an independent, telling the [*Chicago Tribune*](https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/music/ct-toby-keith-ott-0812-20160808-story.html) in 2016, "I was a Democrat my whole life. They kind of disowned me when I started supporting the troops, then I went and registered independent,"

"I've never been a registered Republican. It just keeps people off balance. They don't know what to think."

In 2008, he [*told The Washington Post*](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/postrock/2008/10/toby_keith_unplugged.html) that he voted for Clinton twice and twice for [*George W. Bush*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/george-w.-bush?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) as well. "I didn't care for Gore or Kerry," he said.

Keith would not say whether he voted for [*Barack Obama*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/barack-obama?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) or [*John McCain*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/john-mccain?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), but when asked in 2009 if he approved of Obama, he didn't seem to have any problem with the president. "I think he's doing fine," [*he told CNN*](http://www.cnn.com/2009/SHOWBIZ/Music/10/30/toby.keith/index.html?eref=ew).

Keith also made biting criticisms of Trump and [*Hillary Clinton*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/hillary-clinton?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) in the run-up to the 2016 election.

"This is by far the best country you could ever live in, and we picked these two candidates to be media whores and go out there and take care of the world, huh?" [*he said*](https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-country-lists/route-91-harvest-festival-8-best-things-we-saw-190211/toby-keith-lambasts-both-trump-and-clinton-104159/) in September 2016 at the Route 91 Harvest Festival in Las Vegas. He also called the election a "dumpster fire," according to *Rolling Stone*.

These comments echoed what he [*told the Chicago Tribune*](https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/music/ct-toby-keith-ott-0812-20160808-story.html) in 2016, saying "This election, I don't think it makes a difference," when asked if he knew which candidate he would vote for.

"I can't believe there's 300 million Americans in this country and we've got these two as our final two. It's absolutely crazy."

Speaking to *The Atlantic* in 2017, Keith praised parts of Trump's early performance as president, particularly his use of military generals as advisers.

He also dismissed one of Trump's most controversial moments, the infamous "grab 'em by the p\*\*\*\*" comment, recorded while speaking to then *Access Hollywood* host Billy Bush in 2005, saying "Guys talk like that everywhere."

"Bill Clinton, everyone was on him about getting a BJ," Keith said.

"I was like, 'It doesn't affect the way he's running the country.'

Keith would later go on to be awarded a National Medal of Arts by Trump, reported only a week after the January 6 riots at the U.S. Capitol, as Trump was being impeached for the second time. It was reported at the time that he had not posted about his award on social media.

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2345272/toby-keith-trump.jpg)

**Graphic**

Toby Keith Trump

BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP via Getty Images

Country singer Toby Keith performs for then US President-elect Donald Trump and his family during a welcome celebration at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, on January 19, 2017.

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