

Miami Herald

Iconic Freedom Tower holds symbolic value for Rubio as site for likely presidential announcement

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Sen. Marco Rubio told the Miami Herald that he will reveal his 2016 campaign plans at the Freedom Tower, a deeply symbolic location for the son of Cuban immigrants, on April 13. ROBERTO KOLTUN / EL NUEVO HERALD

U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio's confirmation last Thursday to the Miami Herald that he chose the emblematic Freedom Tower in downtown Miami to launch his likely 2016 presidential run adds another chapter to the history of a building that holds significant personal value to generations of Cuban Americans.

It's precisely why the Republican, Florida's junior senator, chose the location.

"To me, it's a place that's symbolic of the promise of America," Rubio said in a telephone interview with the Herald.

"Literally, five decades ago, tens of thousands of people came here after losing their country and began their new life," he continued. "The first steps they took in this country were in the hall that we'll be standing in."

From 1962-74, the tower at 600 Biscayne Blvd. served as the first stop for Cuban exiles arriving in Miami.

Rubio recalled trying during his time as a state lawmaker to help Miami Dade College purchase the 11-story, Mediterranean-style building, which was completed in 1925 and served as the Miami News headquarters until 1957. A private developer turned the tower over to the college in 2005. It now houses the Cuban American Museum and the MDC Museum of Art and Design.

Rubio made the tower his first choice for his big reveal after attending (<http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2015/02/in-miami-marco-rubio-touches-on-themes-of-upcoming-book-tour-and-possible-presidential-campaign.html>) a Goldman Sachs small-business program graduation there in February. The senator spoke at the ceremony about the American Dream, his longtime theme in politics.

"It was a great event, honoring entrepreneurs and small businesses," he said. "They were being rewarded with this diploma in the very room where many of their parents and grandparents had first been processed. That really brought it home for me."

Rubio has set the date for his announcement on April 13, but the time has yet to be set, a Rubio spokeswoman said, though doors will probably be open at 4 p.m. The Miami Heat is scheduled to play the Orlando Magic at the AmericanAirlines Arena across the street at 7 p.m., and downtown parking is scarce.

Rubio confirmed last Monday (<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/elections-2016/marco-rubio/article16944446.html>) on Fox News that he would announce his next political step on April 13 in Miami and asked supporters to request tickets online (<https://marcorubio.com/>) – giving his team an idea of how many people might be interested in the event.

“We weren’t looking for a 20,000-seat arena or some massive place,” Rubio said. “We were looking for a place where we could invite friends and family and close-knit supporters, and people who have been with me throughout my career.”

He wouldn’t confirm that he’ll announce his candidacy for the White House.

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