

Sean McNamara to Newsmax: Reagan's Lessons Still Apply Today

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An extended cut of "Reagan" returning to theaters Friday will restore more than 10 minutes of footage, including scenes highlighting the former president's sense of humor, director Sean McNamara told Newsmax on Sunday.

"Well, yeah, the original cut was over three hours long, and there was so much great footage we had in it, and some of my favorite scenes had to go onto the cutting room floor," McNamara told Newsmax's "Sunday Report." "And luckily today, we put over ten minutes back into the movie."

The 2024 biopic stars Dennis Quaid as Ronald Reagan and follows his life from his early years through his careers in Hollywood and politics to the White House. The director's cut is scheduled to return to theaters Sept. 25 as part of the nation's 250th anniversary celebrations.

McNamara said some of the restored material focuses on a side of Reagan he particularly wanted audiences to see.

"Well, a lot more of the humor. One of the things I was really fighting for was, you know, President Reagan was a very funny man, and he knew how to be self-deprecating in his humor. And he always had a joke when he opened up a meeting. And so there were a couple of great scenes that we shot that showed that humor. And most of those made it back into this cut."

McNamara said making the film also had a personal connection for him. Reagan was the first president he voted for, and McNamara's first entertainment industry job involved working at Reagan's inauguration.

"Well, I mean, first of all, he was amazing. He was the first president I voted for. I was 18 years old. My first job in the entertainment industry was plugging in microphones for his inauguration."

McNamara said Reagan's handling of the Soviet Union and the Cold War remains central to his view of the former president's legacy.

"And he was the first president, you know, to just bring a peace. It was the end of the Cold War. I don't know if you remember before that we lived in fear all the time that there could be a nuclear fight between us and the Soviet Union.

"So it was a very intense time. And I think he's mainly remembered for that."

McNamara said he also believes Reagan's relationships with political opponents offer lessons for today's polarized political climate, pointing specifically to his dealings with Democrat House Speaker Tip O'Neill.

"Well, I mean, on the personal level, he and Tip O'Neill would say, hey, you know what? We're going to fight like hell all day long, but at 6:00, we're going to have a beer together," he said.

"And right now, politics is now that everyone fights all the time. Nobody's getting closer on all the policies. And he was somebody who could fight, but they would get together, and they would be friends so that they could get more bills passed."

McNamara also pointed to Reagan's patriotism and approach to the Soviet Union as elements of his presidency he believes remain relevant.

"Well, I really think he was. And the scary part that I find is what's happening in the world today. It was going on back in the 80s, and he recognized it, and he fought against it. And he was an extreme patriot back then. And I think he'll be remembered for that now. And now we just got to look at the lessons that we learned from them and start to try to apply it now."

McNamara, who said he is a registered Democrat, said the original film drew interest beyond Republican and conservative audiences.

"Well, I think a lot of people liked it. Obviously conservatives and Republicans like him," he said. "I'm a registered Democrat, and there were many Democrats who liked him. My parents were Democrats. Irish Catholic family in Los Angeles. Reagan was a Democrat when he was. I mean, so I think a lot of people did enjoy it for that."

McNamara said he remains interested in telling stories about presidents but declined to identify another potential subject.

"I mean, I have many films in the hopper right now, and I got some special ones. I love telling president stories, so I'd say keep an eye out for what could be in the future."

Asked whether a President Donald Trump biopic might eventually be among them, McNamara replied, "I don't know if it will be soon, but you never know."