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Anita Perry | *continued*

the HPV vaccine unless their parents opted out. [It was overturned by the state legislature.] What role did you play in his decision?

I didn't know anything about it.

What was your reaction when you heard about it?

I wish he'd talked to me first.

Was it the wrong decision?

No, but I thought he handled it the wrong way. I've been cochair for the March of Dimes immunization program, and I'm pro-immunization. I would have supported the vaccine. I do not see it as an opening for sexual promiscuity in any way. I see it as another immunization.

Do you think your husband's taking some unfair hits?

Yes, he's said he made a mistake. He just wants to get rid of cancer in our lifetime. I don't know how many other men would admit, "I made a mistake."

Presidential campaigns usually get very ugly. Can you handle it?

It's already ugly.

[laughs] It's so unkind and unfair, because you know what? All we want to do is serve our country, fight for freedom, and bring back America, the greatest country in the world. The other day, an older lady asked me, "What do you think about the polls?" I said, "I can't look at them. All I can do is get up every day and tell everyone what a wonderful man and leader Rick Perry is."

If he is elected president next year, what issues or causes will you take up as first lady?

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WHO IS ANITA PERRY'S FAVORITE FIRST LADY?

And what does she think of Michelle Obama? Read the full interview at Parade.com/election2012.



HIS NEAREST AND DEAREST Perry with children Sydney and Griffin in 1989.

It's hard to say. I'm a health care professional. I love our military. But we've got a lot of work to do before we make it to the White House.

You've said your husband prays every night and morning.

Yes. He always asks for wisdom for our president.

What about you?

I pray that God will send his angels to protect my children.

Is it hard for you to go out and make campaign speeches?

It's not hard. I've had lots of years to do it, and I've become comfortable in that role. I love meeting people—goodness gracious, that's the best part.

When your husband gives speeches, do you ever find yourself wanting to put words in his mouth?

No, because he always says the right thing.

Always?

Well, most of the time. Whether he says it in a way that you or I want to hear ...

Let me ask you one last question about the future. If you make it all the way to the White House, what will you bring with you?

Fun, humor, kindness, and a love for our country.

Perry in a Word

"EBULLIENT.

He takes the bull by the horns. I'd never count him out. This is a guy who surprises people." —Kinky Friedman, author-musician and Perry opponent in the 2006 governor's race