



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on March 27, 2014

Will South Carolina Retire “Liberal Lindsey” Graham?

South Carolina’s Lindsey Graham (shown) has become the neoconservative Republican targeted by Tea Party and liberty movement organizations nationally, and the South Carolina U.S. Senate primary on June 10 may be the most important race of the 2014 campaign.



Labeled a “RINO” (Republican In Name Only) by his detractors, Graham gave his five primary opponents some unintentional assistance March 13 by telling Obama’s Secretary of State John Kerry that he would help stop the Republican agenda in the U.S. House of Representatives under Speaker John Boehner. “Hey John, good job,” Graham [said](#) over a live microphone he almost certainly thought was turned off. “Let me know what I can do to help you with Boehner.” Already polling dangerously low (a February Winthrop University [poll](#) put him at 45 percent in the GOP primary), the faux-pas may mean Graham will be unable to muster the 50 percent in the Republican primary needed in order to avoid a June 24 runoff election.

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Despite Graham’s on-mic foibles, it’s the two-term senator’s voting record that earns him true “RINO” status. Graham — who has been in Congress since first being elected to the House in 1992 — has earned a [63-percent cumulative score](#) with *The New American’s* “Freedom Index.” Graham is one of the worst crony capitalists in the Congress, voting for the the airline bailout in 2001 and the TARP bailout in 2008. He voted in 2012 to keep federal subsidies flowing from the taxpayer to huge corporations through the Export-Import Bank.

In recent years Graham has been a reliable vote for debt limit increases and for bipartisan all-inclusive spending bills that have increased federal spending. He has championed foreign aid giveaways, even voting against Rand Paul’s amendment that would have stopped sending foreign (including military) aid to Egypt and other countries that claim to hate America.

Most importantly, Graham is perhaps the greatest enemy of the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Senate. He has become a national figure largely because of his very public opposition to honoring the First, Second, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Eighth, Ninth, and 10th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Graham has opposed the freedom of both speech and the press in the First Amendment as senator. On the issue of burning the Koran in 2011, Graham [told](#) CBS’s *Face the Nation* host Bob Schieffer on April



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3, 2011 that “I wish we could find some way to hold people accountable. Free speech is a great idea, but we’re in a war. During World War II, you had limits on what you could do if it inspired the enemy.” Graham’s hostility to the First Amendment’s freedom of speech is not limited to words, as he voted in favor of the 2002 McCain-Feingold law. The law imposed major infringements on the freedom of both speech and press by banning most corporations from publicizing congressmen’s voting records in advance of an election and was struck down as infringing on the First Amendment by the Supreme Court in 2009 with its *Citizens United v. FEC* decision.

Regarding the Second Amendment, while Graham correctly voted against most restrictions on the right to keep and bear arms, including “assault weapons” bans and bans on high capacity magazines, he has also revealed a fundamental problem understanding the Second Amendment’s explicit rule that the federal government is not allowed to engage in any restrictions in ownership of firearms. Graham drafted (and is currently [pushing](#)) a bill to ban people who have been judged by courts to be mentally incompetent, and a danger to others or themselves, from owning firearms. While few people would say that person who is a danger to himself or others should be allowed to possess firearms, the Second Amendment gives no power to the federal government to enact any kind of ban on firearms otherwise allowed by states (which are the proper authorities in making such determinations). As a result, Second Amendment groups have endorsed several of Graham’s primary opponents. “I’m flat-out fed up with Lindsey Graham’s betrayals,” National Association for Gun Rights Executive Director Dudley Brown [told](#) *The State* on February 26. “That’s a major reason why the National Association for Gun Rights PAC just sent [Graham challenger] Lee Bright a fat check. We’ve also sent checks in smaller amounts to two other challengers.... But there’s no denying Senator Lee Bright has gone a step further and deserves special recognition.”

Graham is perhaps the one U.S. senator who has most publicly championed the destruction of the Fourth Amendment’s requirements for warrants and probable cause in the course of federal searches. Regarding warrantless surveillance of Americans’ phones (an activity explicitly prohibited by the Fourth Amendment), Graham [told](#) Fox News he was “glad” it was happening: “I’m a Verizon customer. I don’t mind Verizon turning over records to the government if the government is going to make sure that they try to match up a known terrorist’s phone with somebody in the United States. I don’t think you’re talking to terrorists. I know you’re not. I know I’m not, so we don’t have anything to worry about. I’m glad the activity is going on.”

And Graham opposes Fifth Amendment guarantees of due process. He sponsored an amendment in November of 2005 banning detainees in the war on terror from applying for a writ of habeas corpus in U.S. courts to challenge their detention.

Senator Graham said of detainees in the war on terror, including American citizens, that they should not get the trial by jury or the attorney to represent them guaranteed by the Sixth Amendment. “And when they say, ‘I want my lawyer,’” Graham [said](#) on the Senate floor in 2011, “you tell them: ‘Shut up. You don’t get a lawyer. You are an enemy combatant, and we are going to talk to you about why you joined Al Qaeda.’” Graham voted for the Military Commissions Act of 2006 (struck down as unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 2008 case of *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*) and [wrote](#) the Military Commissions Act of 2009, which denied jury trials to detainees charged with crimes related to terrorism.

Graham has also advocated destruction of the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition of torture, or “enhanced interrogation techniques” as it was called during the Bush administration. Graham [boasted](#) at the May



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8, 2011 South Carolina GOP state convention: “Let’s keep Guantanamo Bay open, let’s put the CIA interrogating terrorists [sic], using enhanced interrogation techniques that they don’t know about.”

Graham has even opposed unenumerated rights protected by the Ninth and Tenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution such as the right not to be killed in a drone strike without evidence or a trial. Graham [told Fox News Sunday](#) after Senator Rand Paul’s filibuster against droning that it was acceptable for a president to use a drone to kill an American citizen without trial, public evidence, or any kind of a judicial review: “Well, I think the worst thing in the world is to have the courts decide who to target in the war on terrorism. Courts are not military commanders. The commander-in-chief has the right, under our law, and the authorization to use necessary force to designate the enemy.”

Despite the fact that Obama has killed three American citizens in drone strikes without revealing any evidence of alleged crimes to the public, [Graham has had Obama’s back](#) on drone strikes. “I’m totally supportive of the administration’s role on drone strikes.... I think the president is on solid legal ground. I think he is doing the right thing,” Graham said in a February 6, 2013 press conference. “The process of being targeted I think is legal, quite frankly laborious and should reside in the commander-in-chief to determine who an enemy combatant is and what kind of force to use.” Graham’s remarks were made about the assassination of Anwar al-Awlaki, a New Mexico-born American citizen who had openly embraced al-Qaeda and had made some propaganda videos on YouTube for the terrorist organization. But a few weeks after Anwar al-Awlaki’s September 30, 2011 assassination by targeted drone strike, a separate Obama drone strike also killed the man’s 16-year-old Colorado-born son, [Abdulrahman al-Awlaki](#).

There’s clearly plenty of fodder for opponents of Graham to tackle in the race to unseat the two-term incumbent, especially if they take on Graham with regard to his voting record and crazy public statements against almost the entire Bill of Rights. But Graham won’t be easy to topple. He is sitting on a pile of campaign cash, \$7.6 million at the end of 2013, according to [FEC filings](#). And he will have the support of establishment Republicans across the country. There are five major candidates seeking to retire Graham, all of whom hope to survive by denying Graham the 50 percent of the primary vote needed to avoid a June 24 runoff. These candidates are:

Richard Cash: Self-funded businessman Richard Cash has focused upon social issues as the theme of his race, putting the right to life, traditional marriage, and immigration as his top issues, and his campaign has hosted a March 31 “One nation under God” in Greenville. Despite focusing upon social issues, Cash also [says](#), “We must guard against a police state and infringements upon personal liberty, including the use of new technology such as drones that could spy on private citizens. And we must reduce the size and scope of the Federal government according to the tenth amendment.”

Cash had run unsuccessfully in 2010 for Congress for South Carolina’s 3rd Congressional District, narrowly losing in a primary runoff against current incumbent Republican Jeff Duncan. So he has experience running a serious campaign. By the end of 2013 Cash has received some \$366,000 in donations for his campaign, according to FEC filings, some \$200,000 of which the wealthy Cash gave to his own campaign.

Nancy Mace: 36-year-old Nancy Mace was the first female graduate of South Carolina’s state military academy, The Citadel, and says that if elected she wants to model her tenure in the Senate after Ted Cruz, Rand Paul, and Mike Lee. But much of her campaign platform and public interviews to this point have been limited to vaguely worded Republican talking points. For example, her [campaign website](#) explains the role of government this way: “With the IRS targeting conservative organizations, the NSA



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collecting our data, and journalists being investigated by the Justice Department, can we honestly tell ourselves that everything is all right? The question facing voters this election is simple. Do you trust this government? With your health care, with your taxes or your cell phone records ... Because I don't." Her campaign got off to a weak start with an [interview](#) on Glenn Beck's *The Blaze* on August 6 of last year, a coming-out for the political newcomer that brought ridicule from veteran political observer [Jay Severin](#) and others.

Mace's campaign has yet to gain any traction as a result of her failure to articulate a clear vision of what her legislative agenda would be as a senator. But as of this writing, she still has time to pull together a serious campaign. She has already received support from Second Amendment groups in the race against Graham, as the National Association for Gun Rights has endorsed her (and several of Graham's other opponents) in the race. Mace was a co-owner of the Mace Group, a political consulting firm that advised clients including conservative Rep. Mick Mulvaney and Sen. Tim Scott. She had some \$240,000 in her campaign fund as of January 1.

Lee Bright: South Carolina State Senator Lee Bright appears to have the best chance to unseat Graham, according to polls. And as a state legislator since 2009, Bright has a solid track record of defending constitutional liberties and individual rights. As state senator, he offered [legislation](#) in 2011 to create a South Carolina gold or silver currency to compete with the dollar (which didn't pass). He offered legislation that would nullify federal gun laws for weapons manufactured in the state (2010) and a bill that would ban implementation of Common Core in South Carolina.

Bright has picked up substantial grassroots [support from local Tea Party organizations](#). His campaign website boasts that "As a state senator, Lee Bright has introduced legislation that enhances civil liberties in numerous ways. For instance, he was the primary sponsor of the NDAA Act, which protects South Carolina citizens from unlawful detention. He was the sole sponsor of the Religious Freedom Act, which prohibits restrictions on the freedom of religious expression. He also helped protect property rights by cosponsoring the Agenda 21 Protection Act, which prohibits South Carolina from adopting and developing environmental and developmental policies that would infringe or restrict the private property rights of property owners." Bright's website [summarizes](#) his views on civil liberties this way: "Lee Bright believes that the Constitution is not something we should throw away anytime there is a threat. We should not be quick to abandon liberty for the chains of perceived security. Rather, we should proudly uphold our constitutional rights while under attack in order to preserve the soul of this nation."

Bright got into the race after Cash and Mace, so his meager 2013 fundraising numbers (\$155,000 raised, \$50,000 on hand at the end of the year) seem less impressive. But Bright has placed second to Graham in most [polls among likely voters](#), and the state senator has picked up some important endorsements, such as the Republican Liberty Caucus and Republican Congressman Steve Stockman of Texas.

Bill Connor: Also running in the primary is Orangeburg attorney Bill Connor, a graduate of the Citadel and former Army officer. Still in the Army reserves with the rank of lieutenant colonel, Connor is a partner in a law firm and a former candidate for lieutenant governor of South Carolina. His [platform](#) asserts that "The federal government should be out of education, period. It has no Constitutional claim." He supports dumping Common Core educational standards and on foreign policy suggests "the regimes we have supported in the last few years has been detrimental to America and other nations. We have had a recent history of supporting rebel groups and revolutions worse than the current regimes in Syria



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and Egypt.” Connor ended 2013 with some \$224,000 in his campaign account.

Det Bowers: Columbia pastor Det Bowers is the most recent entry into the GOP primary. Bowers is a retired lawyer who used to be a Democratic Party activist, and served as chairman of Michael Dukakis’ 1988 presidential bid in South Carolina. “Back in those days, almost everyone in the state was a Democrat,” Bowers [explained](#) to the March 1 Columbia newspaper, *The State*, shortly after announcing his candidacy. Bowers switched to the Republican Party in 1990, according to *The State*.

Bowers’s [platform](#) does not diverge strongly from what one might expect from an average Republican running in South Carolina. Like all the other candidates in the primary, he claims to believe life begins at conception and believes states should define marriage as a union of one man and one woman, ObamaCare should be repealed, and vague and unspecified cuts should be made to federal spending. Bowers claims to support a “strict constructionist” view of the U.S. Constitution, but in his campaign announcement and on his campaign website he has failed to outline any specifics about what programs should be cut, or where the Constitution is, in his words, “being abused and misapplied.”

Despite his late entry into the GOP primary, the pastor and retired lawyer is an accomplished orator and may become a formidable candidate.

Most national observers will look at the South Carolina U.S. Senate primary as an example of how the Republican Party will deal with the insurgent Tea Party and liberty movements inside the party that won tremendous gains in 2010 and 2012, but still remain a tiny minority among the Republicans represented in Congress. Certainly the media will portray this struggle as a “Republican civil war,” but the result will reveal whether there will be any genuine difference between the two major political parties.

Photo of Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.): AP Images



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