



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 16, 2014

## **GOP Congressional Hopefuls Look to Join Amash's Liberty Caucus**

Despite being ruthlessly attacked by Establishment Republicans, Justin Amash (R-Mich.; shown) won his recent primary and looks likely to return to his position as the U.S. House of Representatives Liberty Caucus chairman.



According to a report published August 15 in the *Washington Examiner*, Amash may soon have some help restoring constitutional restraints on the legislative branch.

"Amash is still very much in the minority of House Republicans, so even a handful of ideologically simpatico colleagues would be a big change for the libertarian caucus," writes Betsy Woodruff in the *Examiner*.

Woodruff points out that Amash is seen by many — including himself — as the heir apparent to former congressman, presidential candidate, and libertarian icon Ron Paul.

If it is possible, Ron Paul has become even more active and more influential since retiring from Congress in 2012. Amash and a handful of other like-minded constitutionalists are tasked with carrying the torch handed them by Paul.

Although there are likely scores of simpatico candidates running for state and local office across the country, Woodruff highlights six congressional candidates in her article, each of whom she believes has a shot at joining the roster of libertarian-leaning legislators and making things hard on the "moss covered" GOP establishment.

First up is **Tom Emmer**. He won the GOP primary held earlier in the week in Minnesota, and is vying to fill the seat once held by Michele Bachman.

David FitzSimmons, an Emmer campaign consultant, told the *Washington Examiner* that Emmer was "very much a states' rights guy" and that he would have no qualms about straying from the party line when necessary.

"He's his own person, so his views may align with some people sometimes and with others different times," FitzSimmons said, as reported in Woodruff's article.

That's not exactly the brand of bold language many constitutionalists would prefer, but it is the sort that gets one elected, and if Emmer will join the Amash bloc of constitutionalists, then a little soft pedaling can be forgiven.

On his campaign website, Emmer's political philosophy is summed up this way:

Tom believes government has grown too large and has strayed from its duty of service for the people. By keeping taxes low and making government a resource — not a restraint — for individuals and businesses, we can move our country toward a path of prosperity.

Next up on the list of libertarian-leaning congressional hopefuls is **Andrew Walter** of Arizona. Walter is



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taking on incumbent Democrat Congresswoman Kyrsten Sinema for the privilege of serving voters in Arizona's 9th District.

As evidence of his Amashian bona fides, Woodruff reports that "John Ramsey, a banking heir and entrepreneur who backs many libertarian-leaning candidates (including Amash and Rep. Thomas Massie, R. Ky.), is effusive about Walter."

"If we get him elected, he will be the next Justin Amash, no doubt," Ramsey said, as quoted by Woodruff.

From among the various "issues" on which Walter has published a position statement, this reporter chose the Second Amendment, as the right to keep and bear arms is under nearly constant attack from the White House and the United Nations. Similar statements by all the candidates covered in this piece will be reported.

Walter writes:

I believe in protecting the rights of responsible, law-abiding gun owners. Politicians will never be able to legislate into extinction the immorality that exists in the human heart. I reject the notion that restricting law-abiding citizen's Second Amendment rights will somehow reduce violent crimes perpetrated by law-breakers.

While some of that statement is laudable, the notion that the federal government has the authority to infringe upon the rights of those deemed irresponsible is not a very constitutionally savvy position, and someone should work with Walter to improve his understanding of the Second Amendment.

Although Americans have allowed this right to be redefined by Congress, the courts, and the president, the plain language of the Second Amendment explicitly forbids any infringement on this right that protects all others.

In his own commentary on the works of the influential jurist Blackstone, Founding-era legal scholar St. George Tucker wrote:

This may be considered as the true palladium of liberty.... The right of self defence is the first law of nature: in most governments it has been the study of rulers to confine this right within the narrowest limits possible. Wherever standing armies are kept up, and the right of the people to keep and bear arms is, under any colour or pretext whatsoever, prohibited, liberty, if not already annihilated, is on the brink of destruction.

The third person on Woodruff's list of potential Amash allies is **Stewart Mills** of Minnesota.

Mills, a 42 year-old former member of the Libertarian Party, is running to replace incumbent Representative Rick Nolan. Woodruff reports that Mills "has libertarians feeling optimistic."

Ramsey is quoted as saying of Mills, "Probably every issue, he'd be with Amash."

Under the "issues" tab on his campaign website, Mills writes the following under the subhead "Protecting Our Constitutional Rights:"

As a hunter and a competitive shooter, Stewart is staunch supporter of the Second Amendment, but he also believes that the entire Constitution must be protected and upheld in Washington.

One wonders why the reference to hunting and competitive shooting is necessary or even commendable in a comment on the sanctity of the Second Amendment, but protecting and upholding the entire



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Constitution would be a welcome change in D.C.

**Alex Mooney** takes the fourth spot on Woodruff's list. Mooney, who is running for an open seat in West Virginia, has the distinction of being endorsed by the Republican Liberty Caucus led by Amash.

Regarding the Second Amendment, Mooney writes on his campaign website:

I believe strongly in Americans' constitutional right to keep and bear arms. Misguided gun control laws only punish law-abiding gun owners instead of targeting the criminals who ignore the laws on the books.

During my time in the state Senate, I sponsored right-to-carry legislation and always supported the right of law-abiding citizens to protect their homes and their property. I will continue to do so in the U.S. Congress.

I am the only candidate in this race who has consistently received an A+ rating from the National Rifle Association and I look forward to defeating President Obama's anti-gun agenda.

Again, as with all the other candidates highlighted in this piece, Mooney's Second Amendment stance seems a bit less strident than one would like. Using qualifiers such "law-abiding" when speaking of the scope of the right to keep and bear arms seems to be playing into the hands of those who would not only control the arms, but control the definition of "law-abiding," as well. It is a very slippery slope on which to take a strong Second Amendment position.

In the penultimate position in the *Washington Examiner* piece is Californian **Carl DeMaio**, of whom Woodruff writes, "has also said he would support the Amash anti-spying amendment."

Although it doesn't enjoy a prominent place on his campaign website, DeMaio does provide a brief statement on the issue of the Second Amendment:

Carl DeMaio supports the Second Amendment. The President and the Congress must act now to forge a consensus to improve enforcement for background checks and to keep weapons out of the hands of those with serious mental health issues and criminal history.

Promoting federal background checks and supporting the idea that the federal government has the power to select those worthy of gun ownership is hardly a libertarian position and doesn't sound like a candidate in the mold of Justin Amash and Ron Paul.

Finally, Woodruff reports on former professional football player-turned-politician, **Clint Didier**. Didier is running against another Republican in the race to represent Washington State's 4th District.

Woodruff writes that Didier enjoys the endorsement of Ron Paul and Representative Thomas Massie.

Here's Didier's statement on the right to keep and bear arms:

The Second Amendment of the United States Constitution guarantees all citizens the right to keep and bear arms. Our founding founders stated in many different ways that an armed citizenry is the best defense against crime and tyranny. I will not support any legislation that seeks to undermine the right to keep and bear arms. Instead, I will propose and support legislation to repeal many of the unnecessary infringements already imposed on our law-abiding citizens.

When it comes to the statements on the Second Amendment published by these six supposedly Amash-like congressional candidates, Didier's is certainly the best of the bunch from the constitutionalist standpoint.



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*Photo of Rep. Justin Amash: AP Images*

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