



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on March 19, 2012

## “Ten Commandments Judge” Poised to Reclaim Seat as Ala. Chief Justice

Former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore (left), who was unseated nine years ago after refusing to remove a Ten Commandments monument from the state courthouse, has secured the Republican nomination for the office and is considered the favorite to win back his seat in November. Moore defeated incumbent Chief Justice Chuck Malone and a state circuit judge in the primary March 13, winning in 62 of the 67 Alabama counties to take the GOP nomination.



As reported by [The New American](#), Moore drew the ire of the ACLU and other atheist groups back in the early 1990s when, as a county judge, he displayed a homemade Ten Commandments plaque in his courtroom, and insisted upon opening court with prayer. After being elected Alabama Chief Justice in 2000, he had a 5,280-pound granite monument of the Ten Commandments placed in the lobby of the state judicial building in Montgomery, “to invoke the favor and guidance of Almighty God in establishing justice as provided in the Constitution of the State of Alabama,” notes [Moore’s campaign bio](#). The ACLU led a law suit to have the monument removed, citing the First Amendment’s supposed separation of church and state. In 2003, after he refused a federal judge’s order to dismantle the display, arguing that the order itself was unlawful, Moore was removed from office. He has spent the past several years as director of the [Foundation for Moral Law](#), an Alabama-based legal advocacy group.

The [Birmingham News](#) reported that Moore’s victory in the Republican primary amounted to the “political resurrection of a career that just two years ago was thought by many to be dead after Moore — for the second time in four years — ran a lack luster campaign for the GOP nomination for governor. In both races, in 2006 against incumbent Gov. Bob Riley and in 2010 in a crowded field of five, Moore was thoroughly drubbed.” The paper noted that in the most recent primary, Moore harnessed “name recognition, a grass roots campaign and a conservative primary tide to turn back two much better-



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funded candidates....”

Moore said his resurgence was a confirmation by the people of Alabama that they appreciated his stand against the intrusion of the federal government upon the authority of their state government. “I’m going to stand up for the rights and liberties of the people of Alabama under the Constitution of Alabama and the Constitution of the United States,” Moore said at a press conference after the victory. “Is it a vindication? Yes. Is it a restoration? Definitely. The people put me there the first time. The people did not remove me. And the people [will] have restored my position, if I’m successful in November against the Democratic challenger.” While political observers said his chances for victory are high, Moore said he understood that “we’ve still got a race to run and it’s very important that we run a good race.”

Asked about the display that caused such controversy during his first tenure on the state’s high court, Moore said that he would not try to re-install the monument in the state courthouse, saying that there are more crucial issues to address. “I would not return the Ten Commandments because it would be more about me or a monument about me,” he said. “That’s what I’m identified with and I think it would be detrimental to the true issue. The true issue is whether we can acknowledge the sovereignty of almighty God over the affairs of our state and our law. That I will not back down from. I will always acknowledge the sovereignty of God and I think we must.”

Moore explained that his campaign to display the Ten Commandments was not primarily about the presence of the monument at the state courthouse. “It was never about the Ten Commandments,” he said. “It was about the one who gave the Ten Commandments.” He emphasized that his judicial philosophy has remained unchanged in the ensuing years. “As a Judge I will always recognize the moral foundation of our law.”

In announcing his candidacy last November, Moore said that “I have always upheld my oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States and to uphold and support the Constitution of the State of Alabama. I look forward to once again serving the good people of the great State of Alabama, So Help Me God.”

Richard Cohen of the Southern Poverty Law Center, one of the groups that worked with the ACLU to sue for removal of the Ten Commandments display, said he was glad that Moore had moved beyond the monument. “We are agnostic when it comes to his electoral prospects, completely agnostic,” Cohen said in a statement. “What we hope though is that he has used the time to read the Constitution so he doesn’t waste hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers’ money again.”

Hundreds of miles removed from Alabama, the [New York Times](#) called Moore’s victory and likely re-election a “serious setback for justice in Alabama,” and used the news as an opportunity to stump for scrapping “partisan elections” in favor of so-called “merit selection” for judges. The *Times* editorialist also decried the tendency for such judicial races to turn into cash sweepstakes requiring “would-be judges to cozy up to party leaders and raise large sums from special interests eager to influence their decisions....”

Ironically, while the *Times* complained that the “taint from all the special interest money” was particularly strong in Alabama’s chief justice race, Moore’s campaign offered a stark demonstration of a candidate running on principle alone, with little money at his disposal. Moore, who took almost 51 percent of the vote in the primary, had a budget of around \$230,000, compared to the \$1.5 million raised by the other GOP candidates.

In short, observers noted, Moore will be carried back into office on the desire of a majority of



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conservative Christian voters to see their state returned to the sanity of constitutional principles and traditional American values. "I think people are interested in our day and time about the moral issues that affect this country," Moore said following his primary victory. "I think they are interested in family values. I think they are interested in their rights and liberties and freedoms."



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