



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on July 19, 2014

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Endorses Amash Primary Opponent

A recent decision by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce suggests that the organization that claims to represent “the interests of more than 3 million businesses of all sizes” is more interested in strengthening the grip of crony capitalism on the government of the United States than it is in supporting the free market.

Earlier this week, the U.S. Chamber endorsed Brian Ellis, the Republican primary opponent of Rep. Justin Amash (R-Mich.; shown). No doubt Amash’s opposition to the crony capitalist U.S. Export-Import Bank, which the Chamber strongly endorses, was a big factor in the Chamber’s decision.



Of course, the Chamber did not frame their endorsement of Amash’s opponent this way. “Our decision primarily speaks to the strength of the challenger and our belief that he [Ellis] is a principled conservative who will be a pragmatic problem solver,” said Richard Studley, president and CEO of the Michigan Chamber, as reported in the *Battle Creek [Michigan] Enquirer*. “We believe Brian will be a more effective member of Congress than the incumbent.”

The group’s political director explained their choice in a statement made on Ellis’s campaign website. “Both candidates in the primary sought our endorsement, and the choice in support of Ellis on pro-growth issues was clear,” said Rob Engstrom.

Amash has built a reputation among the patriot activists in the growing liberty movement as a federal lawmaker who will stand up for the Constitution, regardless of partisan political pressure. [His cumulative score in *The New American’s* “Freedom Index,”](#) which rates Congress based on the U.S. Constitution, now stands at 94 percent.

But the Chamber of Commerce’s CEO wouldn’t even call Amash by name in his statement.

Amash’s campaign didn’t hesitate to respond to the Chamber’s choice, taking direct aim at the organization’s loyalties.

“Justin Amash authored the bill that ends the Ex-Im corporate welfare bank,” noted campaign spokesman Ben Vanderveen. “Reauthorizing Ex-Im is the Chamber’s top lobbying goal. We disagree on the wisdom of spending taxpayer dollars on corporate welfare, and apparently that was too fundamental of a disagreement for the Chamber to stomach.”

So much for the Chamber’s commitment to be the “voice in Washington, D.C.” of “mom-and-pop shops.” Opposition from the Republican establishment is nothing new for the libertarian-leaning firebrand, however.



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In May, the *Detroit News* reported that none of the Michigan congressional delegation is supporting Amash's bid for reelection. In fact, outgoing Representative Mike Rogers (R-Mich.) will speak at a campaign fundraiser for Brian Ellis.

A recent poll conducted by Strategic National and published by MLive reveals that all the hate from his own party is having little effect on Amash's bid to return to Congress. Results of the survey show Amash leading Ellis by a large margin, 47-24.

Betsy Woodruff, writing for the *Washington Examiner*, looked at the issue through a realpolitik lens, reporting:

"The endorsement is nothing surprising as the U.S Chamber and most state chambers consider Tea Party-backed incumbents as trouble-makers who are disloyal to their agenda," said one Michigan Republican leader familiar with the race. "I think it would be a big upset if Ellis wins, particularly considering the trend so far in this cycle is in the favor of Tea Party-backed candidates."

The Chamber's endorsement only matters if it comes with cash, according to Michigan Republican observers. And don't count Ellis out just yet.

"What this race comes down to is Amash articulating how conservative he truly is, and Ellis saying he isn't conservative enough," said Michigan Republican consultant Stu Sandler. "Amash is a very good messenger, but Ellis has a lot of resources and issues he's hitting him on."

Todd Springer of the *Detroit Free Press* portrays the Chamber's preference as a more influential event, however. Quoting a statement made by Bill Ballenger, editor of a Michigan political newsletter, Springer writes:

"It [the endorsement] represents a serious threat to Justin Amash, but he must have seen this coming," said Ballenger. "I think he's prepared himself as well as possible."

To understand just what kind of congressman Brian Ellis would be should voters in Michigan's third congressional district ever elect him, one need only watch one of the candidate's campaign commercials where he calls Amash "al-Qaeda's best friend."

The spot explains that Amash's support for the closing of the Guantanamo Bay prison and for revoking the purported authority of the National Security Agency (NSA) to conduct dragnet collection of the phone records of Americans (none of whom have ever been accused or suspected of advocating terrorism) "threatens our citizens and demonstrates he and President Obama fail to understand the dangers our nation continues to face."

In an article reporting on the controversial commercial, Samantha Lachman writes in the *Huffington Post*:

It quotes Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), who made the Al Qaeda comments about Amash in an interview with *Politico* in May.

Nunes also told *Politico* that Amash isn't a "serious member of Congress," and called him "someone here playing games, and trying to be on the opposite side of Republicans," to justify the contributions he's made to Ellis' campaign.

"I will vote to keep terrorists locked up in Guantanamo Bay, allow American intelligence to monitor foreign terrorists plotting attacks, and support our veterans who sacrifice so much," Ellis said in a statement accompanying the ad's release. "Justin Amash's votes to close Guantanamo Bay and stop



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monitoring foreign terrorists are dangerous and his votes against our veterans are shameful.”

In light of these statements, it is likely that as a congressman Ellis would also vote in favor of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and its revocation of fundamental liberties, a measure Amash has fought vehemently to strip of its unconstitutional provisions.

Of his proposals to block enforcement of the indefinite detention provisions of the NDAA, Amash wrote in 2012:

Our Constitution does not permit the federal government to detain American citizens indefinitely without charge or trial. We strongly believe in protecting the country’s security and equipping our Armed Forces with the tools they need to defeat our enemies. But we cannot support measures that, in the name of security, violate Americans’ constitutional rights.

The Michigan Republican Primary will be held on August 5, 2014. On that day, Republican voters in Michigan’s third congressional district will go to the polls and declare whether they support principle over party or whether they prefer a representative who would ignore the Constitution and toe the establishment party line, even when it violates the Constitution.

Photo of Rep. Justin Amash: AP Images

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