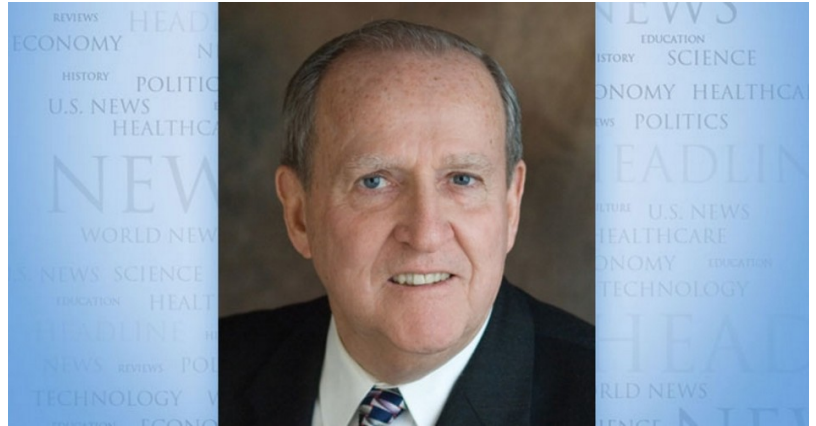




Written by [John F. McManus](#) on May 3, 2020

Rep. Justin Amash Eyes Libertarian Presidential Nomination

About a year ago, Justin Amash went from being a hard-right and welcome conservative Republican congressman from Michigan to a stand-alone Libertarian, the only member of the House to have chosen such an affiliation. He is now being considered to be the Libertarian Party candidate for President in 2020. He hasn't yet fully committed to the Libertarians whose party is recognized as a legitimate choice but an extremely unlikely victor against Democrats and Republicans. Nevertheless, last Tuesday he announced the creation of an exploratory committee for a presidential bid as a Libertarian, a significant step in the direction of formally throwing his hat into the ring.



Libertarians have ballot position in only 35 states. Obtaining a place on the ballots in the remaining 15 states would require gathering signatures during the stay-at-home and maintain-your-distance requirements associated with fighting the coronavirus problem. Those considerations make the tough job of qualifying to be on the ballot in the remaining 15 states even tougher. Currently, the Libertarian Party is not listed as a choice on Election Day in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. These three states, as Hillary Clinton found out in 2016, are critically important for both Joe Biden and Donald Trump.

Unsurprisingly, the question being asked by political pundits is not “Can Amash win?” There aren't many prognosticators who think such a victory even remotely possible. The question that is more often being asked is, “Who will be hurt more if he does accept the Libertarian nomination — Trump or Biden?” And the answer to that question will be debated long and hard by political junkies should Amash follow through and become the Libertarian candidate. So let's offer a few thoughts.

Currently, there aren't many voters who will choose any Libertarian in 2020. The best a Libertarian did in recent times was former New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson's 3.3 percent in the 2016 presidential race. But, GOP leaders should realize that there are some current Republicans who won't support Donald Trump's reelection. Faced with a choice of either Trump or Biden, and feeling a need to perform a patriotic duty by casting a vote, some of these voters might choose Joe Biden while holding their nose. If they had a chance to vote for a hard-right former Republican who has compiled a commendable record as a GOP congressman, something Amash has done in his five terms in the House, they might do so even knowing they would be making merely “a protest vote.” They would likely recall that Amash even voted affirmatively to impeach Donald Trump — whom they dislike. Given a choice of Biden, Trump, or Amash, the percentage of GOP “never Trumpers” boycotting Trump might be enough to win some states for the Democratic candidate. How many is anyone's guess.



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Even more, the GOP's "never Trumpers" might simply sit out the 2020 election and not vote at all. This should be a real concern for GOP leaders. The overwhelmingly negative image accorded the president by the mass media will surely dissuade some customary GOP partisans from voting at all. These are the people who don't want Biden and can't stand Trump. Staying home on election day will be their choice even if the ballot they receive offers the choice of a Libertarian.

Does Justin Amash hold the key to victory for Biden or Trump? The answer has to be a qualified yes, but only in some swing states won by Trump in 2016. Here we are in 2020 and what the Michigan congressman decides shouldn't be considered unimportant. Surely Joe Biden and Donald Trump realize that Amash could become a key player in the 2020 race for the White House.

John F. McManus is president emeritus of [The John Birch Society](#).



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