



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on September 2, 2013

Sen. Graham Will Face Constitutional Challengers in Primary

As he calls for an “aggressive U.S. strike in Syria,” war drum major Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.; pictured) is facing a battle for reelection at home in the Palmetto State.



It’s not the threat of a challenger from the Democratic Party that puts Graham’s political career in jeopardy; instead, it’s a cadre of constitutional conservatives who are aiming for Graham’s seat. In an article published August 25, the [New York Times](#) [provided a summary](#) of three people who “have stepped forward to challenge Mr. Graham in the June primary: State Senator Lee Bright; Richard Cash, a former Congressional candidate; and Nancy Mace, the first woman to graduate from the Citadel and, at the moment, the challenger whose political star is rising the fastest.” Bright, the *Times* notes, “tends to support extremely conservative legislation.”

An [article in American Conservative](#) describes the gauntlets being thrown down by Bright and Mace — the two GOP primary opponents with the most inertia — and lays out the evidence that could convince conservatives and libertarians to support their campaigns.

Bright, *American Conservative* reports, “endorsed Ron Paul for president in the Palmetto State’s pivotal primary, adding that his “campaign website blasts the slogan, ‘For Senate, for liberty.’”

Mace keeps pace, according to the magazine’s portrayal.

When Graham suggested that Rand Paul was soft on national defense, Mace decided to [stand with Rand](#). She argued that instead of endorsing “President Obama’s intrusive arm of big brother regarding the collection of data and phone records,” we might instead revisit Graham’s policies of foreign aid and intervention.

“Most would agree with Senator Graham that radical Islam is the foremost threat to our nation’s security,” Mace continued. “However, if we are truly protecting Americans from this grave threat, then how does it make sense to supply arms and aid to countries who support radical Islam, bring harm to our allies, burn our flag, hate our culture and allow terrorists to plot against the United States and her friends?”

Bright went a step further. “I think the federal government is a lot more dangerous to our liberties and our freedoms than some radical Islamist coming in,” he [told](#) a conservative website, saying that vigilance was required but Graham has “got more faith and trust in the federal government than I do” regarding national surveillance.



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Both Mace and Bright have called out Graham for habitually violating not only the Constitution, but also his oath to uphold it. Bright has a voting record of his own in the South Carolina state Senate. His constitutional bona fides are beyond question. In 2011, he sponsored a bill to create an alternative state currency in the event that the Federal Reserve collapses.

Some members of the GOP who are less libertarian than Mace or Bright are no less anxious to get rid of Graham. Mace, for example, has earned the endorsement of the Tea Party Leadership Fund, according to [a story first published by Breitbart News](#).

“Big government politician Lindsey Graham has provided aid and comfort to to the Obama majority in the Senate,” the group’s founder Todd Cefaratti said in a statement provided to Breitbart News. “Whether it’s a disastrous open borders amnesty plan or opposing permanent tax cuts for the middle class, Graham has sought fawning coverage from the liberal mainstream media.”

Another famous political son of South Carolina — former Senator Jim DeMint — is the driving force behind another GOP group gunning for Graham. [As reported by Sunlight Foundation](#):

A group founded by former Sen. Jim DeMint is targeting fellow South Carolina Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, charging the two-term Republican with being insufficiently hostile to President Barack Obama’s health care law.

The 61-second radio ad by the [Senate Conservatives Fund](#) popped up on Sunlight’s Political Ad Hawk days after [a tea party challenger announced](#) she is entering the primary against Graham. The ad cites Graham’s refusal to join Senate Republicans, such as Ted Cruz of Texas and Mike Lee of Utah, in an effort to cut off funding for the law. Graham, along with a number of other more mainstream Republicans, have urged a less confrontational approach that would not threaten a government shutdown.

“Obamacare is a job killer yet Lindsey Graham refuses to do what it takes to stop this liberal train wreck,” the announcer on the ad intones.

Apart from potential internecine battles, there are thousands of rank-and-file Republicans in South Carolina who “like” to hate Lindsey Graham.

The [“Conservatives Against Lindsey Graham” Facebook page](#) has over 5,000 likes with more angry activists signing up every day.

The right flank of the battle to boot Graham also includes Carolina Conservatives United (CCU). The *New York Times* reports that CCU was “one of dozens organized loosely under the flag of limited government, low taxes and strict adherence to the Constitution, sent out images last week of [a milk carton bearing Mr. Graham’s face](#) and asked Gov. Nikki R. Haley to issue the state’s version of an Amber Alert to find its missing senator.”

“Lindsey Graham has not been seen in the state of South Carolina for most of the last two years,” said Bruce Carroll, the chairman of the group, according to the *Times* article.

What, it might be asked, has Lindsey Graham done to elicit such a zealous corps of political enemies? Here’s just a few of the senator’s sins against the Constitution:

He called for Edward Snowden to be “followed to the ends of the earth” to be punished for exposing so much of the surveillance activities of the National Security Agency (NSA).

He is an outspoken advocate for the expansion of the drone war, including approving their use on



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Americans suspected of posing a threat to the homeland.

Regarding those “suspects” indefinitely detained under the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), Graham declared that the United States was a theatre in the War on Terror and that Americans “can be detained indefinitely ... and when you say to the interrogator, ‘I want my lawyer,’ the interrogator will say, ‘You don’t have a right to a lawyer because you’re a military threat.’”

Perhaps most galling to Graham’s foes is his reliable support for every armed conflict dreamed up by the military-industrial complex and its congressional water carriers.

Zeal and constitutional fidelity, however, will not be enough to topple Graham. The incumbent’s campaign bank accounts are bulging — boasting a balance of about \$6.3 million.

Neither Bright nor Mace has that kind of cash. But businessman Richard Cash, a self-made success and former congressional candidate who is now considered a “sleeper” in the Senate race against Graham, might have the money to make a difference. As reported by the *New York Times*:

Mr. Cash, a businessman and a social conservative from Piedmont in the vote-rich upstate region, is considered a sleeper in the race, said David Woodard, a longtime South Carolina political consultant who ran Mr. Graham’s Congressional campaign in 1994 and wrote the 2006 book “The New Southern Politics.”

“You got to look at their money, and the guy with the most money is Richard Cash,” Mr. Woodard said.

Cash wants to be seen as the “the most anti-abortion, Christian constitutionalist in the race,” according to the *Times*.

Financially, Cash seems true to his name. He has about \$250,000 in campaign funds, with about \$200,000 of that coming out of his own pocket. But, money matters.

There’s still plenty of time for one of these potential primary opponents to attract the monied backers necessary to get some constitutional signal through the neo-con noise with which Graham will flood the airwaves.

Photo of Sen. Lindsey Graham: AP Images

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