

Libertarians' viable candidate

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In Georgia we will have the opportunity to pick one of three candidates to be our next president. Sen. John McCain has the Republican nomination wrapped up. Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama continue to fight for the Democratic nomination. The third candidate that will appear on the ballot will be the nominee of the Libertarian Party.

An interesting rumor has made its way around that former Congressman Bob Barr, who represented Georgia's 7th District in Congress from 1995 to 2003, is considering a run for the nomination of the Libertarian Party. Barr joined the party in December 2006 after becoming greatly concerned at the constant attacks on basic civil liberties protected by the Constitution by a Republican president and Congress.

Barr had previously played down the speculation; however, during a recent radio interview, Barr confirmed the rumor.

"There's been a tremendous amount of interest expressed to me both directly and indirectly on the internet," Barr said. "I take that support very seriously, and I think it also reflects a great deal of dissatisfaction with the current candidates and the current two-party system. So it is something, to be honest with you, that I'm looking very seriously at."

Barr is a fiscal conservative, a believer in limited government and individual liberty. He consistently received high ratings from the American Conservative Union while a member of Congress. Barr has worked with the ACLU on privacy issues and served on the board of the National Rifle Association in recent years

Barr has never been afraid to challenge the president. While a member of Congress, Barr often spoke out against President Bill Clinton. He also served as a House manager during Clinton's impeachment trial in the Senate. Barr has made his issues with the Bush administration known since his departure from Congress. He has criticized Congress and President Bush over runaway spending and fiscal irresponsibility and has become a fierce critic of the so-called USA Patriot Act, despite voting for the legislation while in Congress. He believes that the legislation is being used too broadly, including many cases that do not involve terrorism in any way, such as the use of the Patriot Act in the recent investigation of New York Governor Elliot Spitzer.

Barr has also spoken out against the Bush administration for its stance on torture. In a recent essay to "Washington Monthly," Barr wrote, "This is not something of which we as Americans should be proud, and the use of torture will come back to haunt us in ways this administration apparently either doesn't realize or simply doesn't care about."

He has also criticized the broad interpretation of executive power asserted by the administration, such as the warrantless surveillance conducted by the NSA. He went as far to suggest that George W. Bush be impeached because of his failure to protect and defend the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

A serious third-party candidacy could present challenges for Republicans. Sen. McCain may have a tough time wooing fiscal conservatives who are skeptical of him due to his vote against the Bush tax cuts and support of reactionary measures caused by the misguided hysteria over "man-made" global warming.

Republicans who are weary of the war in Iraq could also seek an alternative to McCain, who seems to hold a similar interventionist outlook on foreign affairs as the current occupant of the White House.

The Libertarian Party would benefit greatly if Barr decides to seek the party's nomination at its national convention next month in Denver. The party has had some success electing candidates at the local level and has played the role of spoiler in some congressional elections. The most success Libertarians have achieved in a presidential election was in 1980 when the ticket of Ed Clark and David Koch received 921,299 votes, 1.1 percent of the national popular vote.

Given the interest in the media that the rumor has generated, Barr's candidacy could put the party in the national spotlight and give it some much needed credibility.

If Barr decides to run, it could make an already interesting election that much more exciting.