

And Then There Were 17: Now This Candidate is Running for President, Too

Just when it seemed that the Republican presidential primaries couldn't get any more crowded, yet another candidate stepped forward to say he will throw his hat in the ring – or throw it on top of the stack of hats already filling it. Former Virginia Governor Jim Gilmore told the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* that he will announce his intentions to seek the GOP presidential nomination on August 1, saying, "I bring to the table experience that others don't have." This would be his second run, after briefly seeking the presidential nomination in 2008. Gilmore regularly touts his triumvirate of experience: executive service, economic proposals, and foreign policy/anti-terrorism expertise. "As the former governor of Virginia, I actually ran one of the major states in this country" he told John Catsimatidis of *The Cats Roundtable*, a prominent New York City political talk show. Although Gilmore says he is pro-choice during the first trimester of pregnancy, pro-life leaders have largely defended and supported him. "Gilmore, as governor, surrounded himself with pro-life, economic and social conservatives. And implemented pro-life, pro-family recommendations," wrote Jack Yoest, the husband of Americans United for Life President Charmaine Yoest. Jack Yoest was one of those appointees, serving as Assistant Secretary in Health and Human Resources. "The best indication of future performance is past performance," he wrote. "Gilmore hired pro-lifers before, it is likely he will hire them again." Last time, he opposed both gay "marriage" and civil unions, but he has said he will abide by the Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. He's served on the board of directors of the National Rifle Association. His mother was secretary at a Methodist Church, and Gilmore continues in that

faith. He recently called for a national conversation to end violence in churches. The future governor served in military intelligence before chairing an anti-terrorism commission. After a term as state attorney general, Gilmore ran for governor on a pledge to oppose a new car tax – a pledge he kept. He was governor of Virginia when the state was targeted on 9/11. He chaired the Republican National Committee early in George W. Bush's first term. After losing a crushing election for U.S. Senate in 2008 – by 31 percentage points – Gilmore became CEO of the late Paul Weyrich's Free Congress Foundation, changing its direction from a social issues think tank to one oriented around economic policy. Gilmore drew upon his background in military intelligence and burnished his foreign policy experience – nearly joining the CIA and becoming part of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). “None of the other potential candidates knows anything about foreign policy, whereas I do,” he told Catsimatidis. Gilmore raised eyebrows when he opposed the Bush surge in Iraq in 2007 and called for “a limited deliberate drawdown of our military men and women and a redeployment of the forces remaining in the region to areas where they can more efficiently and effectively carry out a clearly defined mission.” Ultimately, Bush's surge policy was credited with pacifying the region and achieving its military, if not its political, goals – so much so that even Barack Obama flip-flopped on it. Today, he criticizes Barack Obama – and Rand Paul – for an insufficiently activist foreign policy. “The danger we see with Obama-Paul” is “that you're not going to shape events. You're just going to sit quietly and let the world do what it wants to do.” “The Russians, the Iranians, are a challenge,” Gilmore said, echoing Mitt Romney in 2008. “The Russians are maybe the greatest challenge.”  With limited name recognition, poll numbers hovering around one percent, and 16 other major Republican challengers, Gilmore will have his work cut out for him grabbing the brass ring. Governor Gilmore is an appealing, conservative candidate on many fronts – but in

such a crowded field, it's hard to see him becoming anyone's first choice... or possibly anyone's second choice. Yet his competence and broad economic expertise should qualify him for a role in a future Republican administration.