

Evan McMullin Says He's Not Just a #NeverTrump Spoiler

Evan McMullin, the former chief policy adviser to the House Republican Conference, wants you to know he's not just running for president to spoil Donald Trump's chances for victory.

But during a 15-minute interview (see above) with nationally syndicated radio host Hugh Hewitt on Tuesday morning, the former CIA operative had a difficult time selling that message. In fact, he had a difficult time demonstrating he has any plan for victory on Nov. 8 at all.

Hewitt pointed out during the interview that McMullin has missed a number of filing deadlines and cannot possibly hope to appear on the ballot in all 50 states, saying he didn't see how it would be possible for the newcomer to achieve 270 electoral votes to win the presidency. He asked if the campaign would instead focus on winning states that are available and likely more receptive to McMullin's message.

"Whatever resources you have, whatever superPAC funds you, wouldn't it make the most strategic sense to strike at those states where you can actually win a majority, and they are Mountain West states with a large Mormon population that is you know, just simply estranged from Donald Trump's approach and style?" he asked.

"Well, it's certainly true, Hugh, that we will compete in states that we find most advantageous to us, especially," McMullin responded. "We intend to compete nationally in certain ways, and be very focused in others.

"And so yeah, I mean, of course we'll make those kinds of judgments, but it's the Mountain West, but it's not just the Mountain West. There are other parts of the country that are deeply opposed to the kinds of options being offered. And we

hope to offer a better alternative.”

A little later, Hewitt asked McMullin who was serving as his campaign manager. The independent said it was being run by Joel Searby, a name that apparently didn’t ring any bells with the well-connected radio host.

For the record, Searby is a pollster and conservative strategist with Data Targeting.

Earlier, McMullin denied his campaign was being pushed by billionaire Republican megadonor Paul Singer, who has been pushing for inclusion of LGBT-friendly language in the GOP platform, but admitted he was seeking the financier’s support. He also admitted he had spoken with conservative magazine editor Bill Kristol, but denied he was a “replacement for David French.”

“I made this decision on my own,” he said. “And yes, I consulted with a variety of people, and not just Bill. There are many people who I consulted, but this is something that’s been stirring within me for months.

“It’s not—let me tell you, Hugh, I hoped for months that somebody else would step forward, and I had some names in mind, major conservative elders. I hoped that they would step forward. They didn’t.

“As we entered what is the last phase of this election cycle, the general phase, I grew concerned that the time was quickly, the window was quickly closing for any kind of possible alternative bid, credible, conservative alternative bid. And knowing that I had some unique experiences that line up directly with the challenges, the primary challenges that this country faces, security, job opportunities and government reform, I could no longer stay on the sidelines, and I felt compelled to act.”

Hewitt also noted the irony of the situation.

"[I]n 2012, there was a slice of the evangelical world that would not vote for Mitt Romney because he was a Mormon," he said. "Now, there is a large slice of the Mormon world that will not vote for Donald Trump because he is not an evangelical. That is ironic."

McMullin is a Mormon who was born in Utah and raised in Washington State.

Hewitt then turned the conversation back to strategy. He said that his "immediate" assessment of McMullin's campaign is that it could run to win in Utah, Idaho, Arizona, Colorado and other "mountain states," denying Trump his path to 270 electoral votes. Trump, in turn, would deny Clinton her pathway to 270, setting the stage for a vote in Congress.

McMullin, however, insisted that was not his strategy.

"I am deeply troubled by both of these candidates," he said. "I believe they're both horrendous options for this great nation. And we are in it to provide an alternative to both of those candidates to Americans, especially those who feel so disaffected by these options and by the divisiveness of their rhetoric."

"Our country needs better leaders, needs leaders that put the nation ahead of themselves, leaders that unify us. We are stronger, it is absolutely true, it is a real thing that we are stronger when we are united. And I believe we can be united through universal—the universal founding ideals of this nation."

"Those are neither conservative, they are embraced by true conservatives, but I believe they're neither conservative nor, you know, partisan in general. These are universal truths."