

Lindsey Graham May Throw His Hat Into Republican Presidential Race

South Carolina Republican Senator Lindsey Graham on Thursday formed a political organization to explore a potential run for his party's presidential nomination, the latest high-profile politician to test the 2016 waters.

Graham would figure to use his South Carolina home base to his advantage for any potential run, since the Southern state is typically the third to hold a nominating contest in presidential election years, after Iowa and New Hampshire.

Graham is a hawk on defense and foreign policy, generally aligned with Senator John McCain, one of his best friends. In his statement announcing his intentions, he cited the battle against Islamic extremism as a top priority.

He joins a list of more than a 15 Republicans who are thinking about running for president, a group that includes 2012 nominee Mitt Romney and former Florida Governor Jeb Bush.

Graham formed a committee called "Security Through Strength," which allows him to raise money to fund travel around the country to gauge support for a candidacy.

"Ronald Reagan's policy of 'Peace Through Strength' kept America safe during the Cold War," Graham said in a statement.

"But we will never enjoy peaceful coexistence with radical Islam because its followers are committed to destroying us and our way of life. However, America can have 'Security Through Strength,' and I will continue to lead in that critical fight."

He said Security Through Strength also requires “a sound and growing economy with a nation that becomes energy independent over time.”

Graham’s organization is headed by David Wilkins, a former U.S. ambassador to Canada under President George W. Bush and a former speaker of the South Carolina House of Representatives.

Political strategist Christian Ferry and long-time Graham adviser Scott Farmer were named to guide the “testing the waters” effort.

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