

Who Will Be Bill Kristol's Third-Party Candidate?

Bill Kristol hasn't given up. Over the holiday weekend, *the Weekly Standard* editor announced to his Twitter followers—and by extension, the rest of the world—that there will be an independent conservative candidate for president in November.

“Just a heads up over this holiday weekend: There will be an independent candidate—an impressive one, with a strong team and a real chance,” he wrote.

An independent presidential campaign requires a candidate with instant name recognition who has the ability to not only raise enormous amounts of money, but also an army of volunteers to assist with ballot access and get-out-the-vote efforts. That's a very short list, particularly in Republican establishment circles.

The first obvious choice is fellow #NeverTrump leader Mitt Romney, but he has repeatedly said he will not run. Kristol met with the 2012 GOP nominee earlier this month with the goal of convincing him to run. Last week, he suggested the former Massachusetts governor was still “seriously” considering the offer.

“The real last chance here is with Mitt Romney, who has said ‘no’ but who I think is thinking seriously about it,” Kristol said. “He is a very serious person, he really knows that Trump should not be president of the United States. He strongly believes that Hillary Clinton should not be president of the United States.”

If it's not Romney, the remaining possible candidates include:

- Marine Corps Gen. James “Mad Dog” Mattis—he's the only person publicly saying he's at least interested in the

possibility, but as a political newcomer, he would face many of the same issues with the electorate that Trump has already had to overcome during the primary.

- Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice—she’s been absolutely silent on the issue, which has actually fueled speculation in some circles. But she’s also well connected with the party establishment, she’s widely respected in conservative circles, and there are donors who *want* her to run.
- U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas)—many states’ “sore loser” rules would hinder a 50-state effort, making him a spoiler candidate, at best, he’s made it clear he wants to run again in 2020, and he’s already fundraising for his 2018 Senate run.
- U.S. Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.)—although he’s another key figure in the #NeverTrump campaign, he’s already ruled out a run due to “family commitments.”