

= Duncan Hunter presidential campaign , 2008 =

The Duncan Hunter presidential campaign , 2008 began when fourteen @-@ term Congressman and Vietnam War veteran Duncan Hunter of California announced his intentions to run for the 2008 Republican nomination for President of the United States in January 2007 .

In the campaign , Hunter emphasized his conservative credentials , focusing on the issues of border security , the War on Terrorism , and trade . Throughout 2007 , he was in the second tier of Republican candidates , consistently receiving three percent or less support among Republicans in national polls . However , the campaign reached a high point after Hunter won the Texas Straw Poll .

Though he qualified for one National Convention delegate at the Wyoming caucuses , Hunter dropped out of the race in January 2008 , following a poor turnout in the Nevada caucuses .

= = Background = =

Hunter served as a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War . He was awarded a Bronze Star , an Air Medal , and the Vietnam Service Medal for his efforts on the battlefield . Upon his return home , Hunter pursued a career in law and was admitted to the bar in 1976 . Four years later , he won election to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Republican in the Reagan Revolution .

At the onset of the 2008 campaign , Hunter had served in Congress since 1981 ; representing California 's 42nd (1981 ? 83) , 45th (1983 @-@ 93) , and 52nd (since 1993) congressional districts . During his tenure , he boasted a 92 % lifetime rating from the American Conservative Union (ACU) . Some of his successes included the passage of legislation leading to the construction of the 14 @-@ mile double @-@ fence from the Pacific Ocean to Otay Mesa along the U.S.-Mexico border . He also helped pass the Secure Fence Act of 2006 , which provided for the construction of an additional 670 miles of fence . As a member of the House Armed Services Committee , Hunter pushed for increased military spending and advancements in military technology . He became chairman of the committee in 2003 and remained in the position until the Democratic Party won the majority of the House in the 2006 mid @-@ term election .

= = Announcement = =

On October 30 , 2006 , before a crowd of about 100 people on the Naval Base San Diego waterfront , Hunter announced the formation of an exploratory committee to begin raising campaign funds and organizing supporters for the Republican Party 's 2008 presidential nomination . He reasoned , " [t] his is going to be a long road , it 's a challenging road , there 's going to be some rough and tumble , but I think it 's the right thing to do for our country . " He did not seek advice from party leaders before making the decision . The New York Times described the move as a " surprise . " Mesa College Political Science professor Carl Luna speculated that Hunter 's run was an attempt to find " something to do " in preparation for his loss of the Armed Services Committee chairmanship with Democrats heavily favored to reclaim the House . Political analysts saw little chance for the campaign 's success . Claremont McKenna College government professor Jack Pitney argued that due to low name recognition and " no following within the party " , Hunter " faces extremely long odds " .

After the announcement , Hunter received the endorsement of retired Air Force Brigadier General Chuck Yeager . He won the January 13 , 2007 Maricopa County , Arizona straw poll , edging all three projected top tier candidates including Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney , Senator John McCain of Arizona , and former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani . Ten days later , Hunter filed papers with the Federal Elections Commission to officially begin his presidential campaign .

= = Campaign developments = =

= = = First half of 2007 = = =

In order to build support early in the campaign , Hunter participated in local straw polls . On March 1 , at the Spartanburg , South Carolina poll , Hunter finished a close third in a statistical tie with McCain and Giuliani . The showing impressed Spartanburg Republican Gerald Emory who referred to Hunter as , " a true Ronald Reagan conservative that we can support . " The following month he won the Anderson County , South Carolina straw poll and tied for second place in both the Greenwood County and Pickens County straw polls . Hunter thanked the counties for their support , which he claimed provided " a huge boost . " He added , " [i] t is clear our message of maintaining a strong national defense , securing our border without amnesty , holding China accountable on trade , and protecting life are resonating with the voters . Our campaign is one of issues , not flash and expense . We don 't have a jet or an army of consultants and paid staff . We do have the conservative message that is true . In the end , that will be what Americans want . "

Hunter participated in all televised Republican Party (GOP) debates until January 5 , 2008 ; noted for his role in the May 15 South Carolina debate where he discussed his experience with border security . " I built the border fence in San Diego " , he claimed , arguing it contributed to reductions in the smuggling of narcotics by 90 % and a 50 % drop in crime . Speaking of the bill Congress passed to build 854 miles (1 @, @ 374 km) of border fence across the Southwest , he noted that as of that moment (May 15 , 2007) , only two miles of the fence had been built . He quipped " this [Bush] administration has a case of the slows on border enforcement . "

The next month , Hunter participated in the third GOP debate , featured on CNN . During the forum , he discussed his experience as chairman of the Armed Services Committee and voiced his support for the War in Iraq and the training of Iraqi battalions for security there . Hunter speculated that Iran was helping to arm the insurgency in Iraq . When asked what he would do as president if he discovered Iran was developing a nuclear weapon , Hunter stated that he " would authorize the use of tactical nuclear weapons [to end development] if there was no other way to preempt ... " After discussing foreign policy , Hunter turned his attention to the issue of immigration . He again mentioned the importance of a border wall and evoked the audience 's memory about the fence he helped build in his congressional district , joking " if they (illegal immigrants) get across my fence [in San Diego] , we sign them up for the Olympics immediately . " At the end of the debate , Hunter took the opportunity to criticize the three frontrunners : John McCain , Rudy Giuliani , and Mitt Romney . He complained that Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts exerted too much influence on the three men , describing them as the " Kennedy Wing of the Republican Party . "

= = = Second half of 2007 = = =

A Gallup poll from early July 2007 showed Hunter with three percent support , placing the campaign behind only Rudy Giuliani , Fred Thompson , Mitt Romney , and John McCain . In addition , Hunter won the backing of political commentator Ann Coulter . Hunter described Coulter as " a particularly articulate spokeswoman for the conservative view . "

In late August 2007 , Duncan Hunter 's campaign communication 's director , Roy Tyler commented that the chances of Hunter winning the nomination were the same as " pushing a string through a maze . " This came as Hunter spoke to students at the Brown @-@ Lupton Student Center about two foci of his campaign : border security and fair trade with China . He continued campaigning after hearing of the statement and won the Texas Straw Poll a few days later with Tyler at his side .

After his victory in the Straw poll , Hunter received media attention for his response to Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad 's invitation to speak to students at Columbia University . He criticized the school for its decision , stating that " if the left @-@ wing leaders of academia will not support our troops , they , in the very least , should not support our adversaries ... " He then called for a revocation of federal funding to the University . These statements resulted in criticism from liberals such as Glenn Greenwald , who described Hunter 's proposal as " dangerous " , " improper "

and " unconstitutional " .

Later in the month , Hunter 's campaign website was hacked by anti @-@ war activists . For a few hours , the words , " hacked by Adnali f0r TurkStorm [dot] org No War ! " above images of children in a warzone were posted to Hunter 's site . Turkstorm.org , cited in the hacking , appeared to have no connection as IP analysis identified the hackers location in Germany . Roy Tyler revealed that hackers had attempted to change the website at least six times , but this was the first successful alteration .

At the October 21 Florida GOP Debate , after expressing that questioner Carl Cameron was trying to divide the Republican Party , Hunter raised an issue he thought might bring the participants together . He reminisced of the time , he felt the " Democrat Party [sic] lost its identity " . He compared the Kennedy administration 's failed Bay of Pigs Invasion with President Ronald Reagan 's actions in El Salvador . He described Reagan 's El Salvador policy as successful in advancing freedom , and noted that as he spoke , the military of El Salvador was " fighting side by side with our guys (The United States military) in Iraq . " He then referred to the Republican Party as " the Party of Freedom . "

Following the debate , Hunter learned that parts of his congressional district were burning as a result of the California wildfires of October 2007 . He immediately stalled campaigning for a short period to help his constituents with the recovery effort . Hunter criticized those who connected the wildfires to the lack of resources because of the War in Iraq . He argued those conclusions were invalid because of San Diego 's direct access to troops , helicopters and equipment . During an update with Neil Cavuto , Hunter remarked that those critics " have got to have some creative writers to somehow link these ... "

In November 8 , Hunter received the endorsement of the Missouri Republican Assembly (MRA) . The assembly cited Hunter as a " true Republican " who shared their views . Two days later , on Veterans Day , Hunter and his campaign released a statement reflecting on Veterans :

We cannot thank them [Veterans] all sufficiently ... [they] have represented the finest of human qualities ... Our veterans have made [a] sacrifice unflinchingly , with a character that General Douglas MacArthur described as ' stainless ' . They make the sacrifice for their comrades in arms , their ' buddies ' and the immediate mission at hand . But in a greater sense they have made the sacrifice for millions of Americans whom they do not know and who do not know them .

San Diego selected Hunter as grand marshal for the city 's Veterans Day parade . He considered this selection as an honor .

Hunter participated in the November 28 , 2007 CNN / YouTube GOP Debate , and notably , received a question about the military 's " Don 't ask , don 't tell " policy . The questioner , former Brig. Gen. Keith Kerr introduced himself as a homosexual and asked " ... why you [Republican candidates] think that American men and women in uniform are not professional enough to serve with gays and lesbians ? " Hunter thanked the general for his service and then argued that the sole issue was " unit cohesion , " mirroring a statement from former Secretary of State Colin Powell . After the debate , Kerr was found to be a member of Hillary Clinton 's Lesbian , Gay , Bisexual and Transsexual Americans For Hillary Steering Committee . Because of this , CNN removed footage of the question from future telecasts . The next day , Hunter sent a letter to Hillary Clinton that read : " Dear Hillary Clinton , Regarding the " plant " , retired Brig. Gen. Keith H. Kerr , that you sent to ask me the question at the CNN @-@ YouTube debate last night in Florida . Send more ! ! ! Merry Christmas , Duncan Hunter . " The Hillary Clinton campaign did not respond to the letter .

In the December 8 American Research Group survey , excluding undecided voters , Hunter was statistically tied with Fred Thompson for fourth place in Nevada . In Michigan , Hunter was tied with Thompson and Ron Paul for fifth place at four percent , according to a WXYZ @-@ TV poll . Los Angeles Times columnist Don Frederick pointed out that Hunter 's support in the polls came almost entirely from Republican men , where he garnered 6 % among that demographic in the publication 's poll from December 2007 . Among women , his support was nearly zero .

Hunter received the endorsement of former U.S. Senator Bob Smith of New Hampshire on December 21 . In a letter to New Hampshire Republicans ahead of the first @-@ in @-@ nation New Hampshire Primary , Smith cited Hunter as the best candidate to carry the " Reagan Torch "

and the most qualified candidate to protect conservative values .

= = = Primary and caucus results 2008 = = =

Hunter finished seventh in the January 3 , 2008 Iowa Republican caucuses receiving only 0 @. @ 5 percent (515 of the 100 @, @ 593 votes cast) and no delegates . ABC News subsequently denied him an invitation to the January 5 Debate , because Hunter did not meet the five percent polling threshold necessary for participation . However , Hunter focused only minimally on Iowa , putting more resources into the first primary state of New Hampshire . Unlike the other GOP candidates , Hunter traveled to Wyoming for the January 5 , 2008 Wyoming Republican County Conventions . The mainstream media largely ignored the event , and Hunter had campaigned in the state more than any other candidate . Hunter won one national delegate and one alternate delegate after finishing in third place in the caucus behind winner Mitt Romney and second place Fred Thompson . That same day , Hunter addressed the Nevada Republican Assembly at their Presidential Endorsing Convention . He won their endorsement after receiving a two @-@ thirds majority of all votes cast the next day . Members of the assembly cited Hunter as their choice for president " for his stand on the ... the sanctity of life , support of [the] constitution , 2nd Amendment rights , security of [the] borders , limited government ... " among other aspects of his campaign platform . At the first in the nation New Hampshire primary on January 8 , Hunter finished in seventh place with only one percent of the vote .

= = = Withdrawal = = =

After finishing in last place in the Michigan Republican primary (receiving one percent) , the Nevada Republican caucuses (two percent) , and the South Carolina Republican primary (zero) , Hunter dropped out of the race on January 19 , 2008 . In his withdrawal speech , delivered from the same Naval Base San Diego pier , where he announced his campaign in October 2006 , Hunter thanked his supporters , expressed the amusement he and his family had had on the campaign trail and the influence he had on the debate within the party :

The failure of our campaign to gain traction is mine and mine alone , but we have driven the issues of national security , the border fence , the emergence of China and the need to reverse bad trade policy . Because of that , this campaign has been very worthwhile , and for the Hunter family , a lot of fun .

Four days later , Hunter endorsed former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee for the Republican nomination . Late Show with David Letterman poked fun at Hunter 's relative obscurity by making a mock statement regarding his withdrawal , saying " we don 't know what he actually looks like " and substituting Hunter 's picture with that of character actor Ben Gazzara .

= = Endorsements = =

= = Aftermath = =

Following the withdrawal , Hunter remained in Congress until his term expired in 2009 . In 2008 , his son Duncan D. Hunter won the Republican primary for his seat . The younger Hunter went on to win the election and succeeded his father .