

= Thaddeus McCotter presidential campaign , 2012 =

The Thaddeus McCotter presidential campaign of 2012 began when Congressman Thaddeus McCotter of Michigan filed papers with the Federal Election Commission on July 1 , 2011 , announcing his intention to run for the Republican Party 's 2012 nomination for President of the United States . He officially announced his candidacy the next day at a rock festival near Detroit .

McCotter , who had served in Congress since 2003 , was first mentioned as a potential presidential candidate on an April 2011 episode of Fox News ' Red Eye w / Greg Gutfeld . After entering the race two months later , McCotter based his campaign on " five core principles " listed on his campaign website , and used the slogan Seize Freedom ! , derived from the title of his 2011 book . During the campaign , he focused on reform of government and Wall Street .

Commentators noted McCotter 's lack of name recognition hindered his chances for nomination . When included in Republican presidential preference polls , he regularly received less than one percent support . Following a last place finish in the Ames Straw Poll and the lack of any invitation to presidential debates , he dropped his candidacy on September 22 , 2011 , and endorsed Mitt Romney . Thereafter , McCotter reportedly wrote a television pilot , which was released to the media prior to his resignation from Congress in July 2012 amid a fraud investigation surrounding his congressional re @-@ election campaign .

= = Background = =

Thaddeus McCotter began his political career upon election to the Wayne County (Michigan) Commission in 1993 . Five years later , he left that position after winning a seat in the Michigan State Senate . He remained there until 2002 when elected to serve Michigan 's 11th congressional district in the United States House of Representatives .

In Congress , leadership assigned McCotter to the House Financial Services Committee . In addition , he joined the moderate Republican Main Street Partnership . In 2006 , he attained the chairmanship of the House Republican Policy Committee , and two years later was named head of his party 's Fiscal Integrity Task Force . On the task force , he gained a reputation as a leading opponent of pork barrel spending . He voted against the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 and the Affordable Health Care for America Act of 2010 , but supported the bailout of the automobile industry in 2009 . He also supported an increase in the minimum wage and advocated fair trade with China . Nevertheless , the Detroit Free Press described him as a " conservative 's conservative " and GovTrack labeled him a " far @-@ right Republican " .

McCotter was also known as an " oddball " in Congress , displaying a wry sense of humor . Betsy Woodruff of National Review identified him as " the strangest Congressman . " Showing a fondness for rock music , he played lead guitar in the Second Amendments , and quoted Led Zeppelin lyrics on the floor of the House . President George W. Bush referred to him as " that rock and roll dude . " Moreover , McCotter frequently appeared on Fox News ' late night / early morning show Red Eye w / Greg Gutfeld . According to Matt Lewis of The Daily Caller , McCotter was " The Red Eye candidate " , who represented a subculture of " creative think [ing] " libertarian @-@ leaning Republicans , who enjoy rock music . Bloomberg Businessweek described his celebrity as a " tiny cult following of insomniac conservatives . "

= = Campaign speculation = =

Speculation about a presidential run began several months after the release of his February 2011 book Seize Freedom ! American Truths and Renewal in a Chaotic Age . The first instance occurred during the April 22 episode of Red Eye , where host Greg Gutfeld asked McCotter to enter the presidential race . Five days later , political commentator and fellow Red Eye frequenter S.E. Cupp listed McCotter as a potential candidate in her Daily News column . McCotter confirmed in May that he was seriously considering a run for the presidency . He told the newspaper Politico he felt most Republicans lacked enthusiasm for the current crop of candidates . Commentator Andrew Breitbart

expressed excitement at the prospect of a McCotter run . Describing him as " blunt , sarcastic , pop culture savvy , constitutionally sound and an authentic voice , " Breitbart remarked " [t] here 's no one I 'd like to see more at a debate than McCotter . "

In May 2011 , speculation increased as McCotter attacked Republican frontrunner Mitt Romney as Romney visited Detroit . He connected Romney to President Barack Obama , arguing that people see Romney and Obama as running mates rather than as rivals . Later that month , he addressed the Republican Leadership Conference in New Orleans and entered the event 's straw poll . Out of the 1 @, @ 542 votes cast , he received two , last place among those considered . At this time , McCotter remained undecided about a run , according to his aides , though he paid \$ 18 @, @ 000 for a prime spot at the August 13 Ames Straw Poll . During a visit to Iowa , the first caucus state , McCotter announced he would reveal his campaign plans prior to the straw poll . On June 30 , Politico reported McCotter was ready to begin a campaign .

= = Campaign developments = =

= = = Announcement = = =

McCotter filed a presidential campaign committee with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) and opened a campaign website on July 1 , 2011 . The website , which warned " your American Dream is endangered " was based on his book Seize Freedom ! and listed " five core principles " . These were :

- " Our liberty is from God not the government "
- " Our sovereignty is in our souls not the soil "
- " Our security is from strength not surrender "
- " Our prosperity is from the private sector not the public sector "
- " Our truths are self @-@ evident not relative "

McCotter officially announced his candidacy at the WAAM @-@ sponsored " Freedom Festival " in Whitmore Lake , Michigan on July 2 . He declared , " what we need in Washington is someone who understands that the wave of the future is not big government , but self @-@ government " . He played with his rock band at the event . Upon his entrance , Charlie Cook of The Cook Political Report rated McCotter 's chances of nomination as " virtually impossible " . CBS News and other outlets commented on McCotter 's lack of name recognition and described him as a " little @-@ known " candidate . Nevertheless , the Free Press noted he had about \$ 480 @, @ 000 available in his congressional account to transfer to his presidential campaign account . Political communications operative Mark Corallo was hired along with a core group of advisers that included former Senator Bill Frist 's chief of staff Eric Uelind , and former Iowa representative Christopher Rants .

= = = Campaign events = = =

As McCotter embarked on his first official campaign trip to the first @-@ in @-@ the @-@ nation primary state of New Hampshire , he received media attention for his hometown newspaper 's reaction to his run . An editorial in The Oakland Press , based out of Oakland County , Michigan , wrote that the idea of a McCotter presidency " isn 't a pleasant thought and is , in fact , a bit scary " . It added , " the representative comes off as cold , arrogant and egotistical " . McCotter largely ignored the criticism , and continued his campaign in New Hampshire , focusing on the " fundamental restructuring of government " , and signing the Susan B. Anthony List 's Pro @-@ Life Leadership Pledge . Radio host Chris Buck was hired as leader of operations in New Hampshire .

McCotter returned to Iowa in mid @-@ July for further campaign events . Around this time , Chris Cillizza of the Washington Post placed McCotter 's odds of winning the Ames Straw Poll at one hundred to one , last place among the candidates listed . A Harris poll conducted July 11 ? 18 found that 92 percent of voters were not familiar with McCotter , and less than one percent supported him

when matched against his fellow presidential contenders . In a hypothetical head to head matchup with President Obama , McCotter received 43 percent , compared to 57 percent for the President . To build support , McCotter used Twitter , with which he attempted to bypass the news media and connect directly with supporters . Campaign spokesman Randall Thompson stated that McCotter was " relying on social media ... [and] ... developed a very loyal following " .

McCotter participated in the first @-@ ever Twitter presidential debate , on July 20 , against fellow candidates former New Mexico governor Gary Johnson , businessman Herman Cain , representative Michele Bachmann , former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich , and former Senator Rick Santorum . At one point , moderator S.E. Cupp asked whether President Obama was anti @-@ Israel , McCotter answered , " Obama 's motivations are not the issue , the impact of his policies , both proposed and pursued , have strained our relationship " with Israel . When asked to comment on the U.S. role in the 2011 military intervention in Libya , McCotter referred to the Obama administration 's mission as " ill @-@ defined , " and argued for " no US boots on ground . " However , he added the caveat , " once committed [to the mission] , we can 't abruptly withdraw . "

In late July , during the height of the debt ceiling crisis , McCotter canceled several appearances in Iowa and returned to Washington . He supported the plan of House Speaker John Boehner , and voted in favor of the compromise bill . He was the only presidential candidate in the House of Representatives to approve the bill in Congress since both fellow members Bachmann and Ron Paul voted against it .

Ahead of the Ames Straw Poll , McCotter had not reached the one percent polling threshold necessary to participate in the event 's August 11 debate on Fox News . At the time , McCotter had little support , even at home . Public Policy Polling showed him with only five percent from Michigan Republicans , a figure pollsters described as rare coming from a candidate 's homestate . With news of his standing , McCotter cancelled a scheduled stop in New Hampshire , and returned to his headquarters in Michigan to coordinate a debate inclusion effort . As part of the effort , the campaign filmed a YouTube video in a kitchen , featuring McCotter making puns about food , and concluding with " Thanks , dude . " The Los Angeles Times described the video as " unfortunate " . Despite the effort , McCotter did not meet the polling threshold and was excluded . He was the only candidate missing from the debate that had secured a spot on the ballot .

Just before the vote the Ames , McCotter addressed voters in what Politico described as " a slow , abstract , exceptionally sober speech " . It drew little crowd reaction other than applause at the denunciation of the " regime in Beijing " and the proclamation , " I will not cede the 21st Century to a Communist , nuclear @-@ armed dictatorship . " At his tent , McCotter spent a large amount of time playing guitar . In the straw poll , he finished last among ten candidates , receiving 35 votes or 0 @. @ 21 percent . Based on the \$ 18 @, @ 000 he paid for campaign space , the result corresponded to \$ 514 per vote . Senior adviser Christopher Rants explained that the purpose of the straw poll " was not about votes , it was about introducing our candidate to the public in our first large forum ... By any measure , we did that " .

Three days after the straw poll , McCotter wrote an article in National Review outlining some of his economic plans . He advocated spending reductions , a twenty percent reserve requirement for banks to keep available as capital , and incentives to reduce home foreclosures . He campaigned in New Hampshire on August 19 , and filmed " Conversation with the Candidate " for WMUR @-@ TV . The next day , he attended a party with S.E. Cupp for the Young Republicans of Seacoast . He returned to Iowa for his last campaign stop in the state from August 24 to August 27 . At the end of the month , McCotter appeared on the Dennis Miller Show and talked about his exclusion from debates . He failed to meet the requirements for both the September 7 MSNBC and the September 12 CNN debates . For the MSNBC debate , a candidate had to show one poll with four percent support . McCotter argued that while he did not meet this , in a Quinnipiac poll , he tied with Rick Santorum and Jon Huntsman , Jr . , both of whom qualified . Other candidates who did not qualify included Gary Johnson and former Louisiana governor Buddy Roemer , who like McCotter , did not qualify for any televised debates .

McCotter continued his efforts to be included in the debates in September . In an interview with The Daily Caller he said the other candidates " don 't understand what 's wrong with the economy , let

alone how to fix it " , and that foreign policy was not being discussed enough . He observed that since former United Nations ambassador John R. Bolton announced he would not run for president , foreign policy discussion had ceased . McCotter hoped the next president would select Bolton as Secretary of State .

On September 9 , McCotter made his last campaign trip to New Hampshire , attending events for two days . He was supposed to appear in Iowa again five days later , but had to cancel due to a vote in Congress . While in Washington , he introduced a Grover Norquist @-@ backed Social Security reform plan , which would have created private accounts for those under 50 years of age with limited guaranteed government benefits . He called on the other GOP presidential candidates to release their plans on Social Security . Shortly thereafter , McCotter participated in the California Republican Convention . In a speech there , he criticized President Obama , arguing , " No matter how many times his campaign clown car crisscrosses America , we know that the most prosperous and equitable economy in human history was created by you , the American people , not by bureaucrats in Washington . " At the event 's straw poll , he received less than one percent of the vote . McCotter tried to gain entry into the September 22 Fox News debate , but reported via Twitter , " @ Foxnews has kindly advised me I will be excluded from the Orlando GOP POTUS debate . "

= = = Withdrawal = = =

On September 22 , 2011 , McCotter notified The Detroit News he would withdraw from the presidential race . He explained it " was sort of death by media " because of the exclusion from the presidential debates , and argued " if they keep you out of the debates , you are out of the conversation and you can 't run . " He then released a statement in which he endorsed Mitt Romney for president , and called on the Republican Party to unite behind Romney as the most electable candidate . In the press release , McCotter also announced that he would run for re @-@ election in his congressional district .

In reporting on the withdrawal , the Los Angeles Times wrote , " What 's that ? You 've never heard of Thaddeus McCotter ? Well , that 's the main reason he 's now a former candidate . " Pundit Bill Ballenger of Inside Michigan Politics said that McCotter " really had no business running for president . If he wants to have any political future , endorsing Mitt Romney now is the smart thing to do . " McCotter 's neighbor , former Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox , remarked , " He tried it out , obviously it wasn 't working . And he 's doing the rational thing and dropping out . " Steve Kornacki of Salon summarized the overall campaign as " a cautionary tale about what can go wrong when your average backbench member of Congress becomes a minor cable news celebrity and mistakes it for having a genuine national following . "

= = Aftermath = =

A few days after the campaign ended , The Detroit News asked McCotter whether he enjoyed his presidential campaign , he replied , " No . It was the worst 15 minutes of my life . " Fundraising totals for the three months of McCotter 's run were released to the FEC in October 2011 . Overall , he raised \$ 548 @,@ 606 (\$ 468 @,@ 561 of which was transferred from authorized committees) , paid \$ 541 @,@ 532 on expenses , and had a debt of \$ 105 @,@ 367 . As of June 2013 , a debt of \$ 105 @,@ 636 remains .

In an interview with GQ ahead of the Michigan primary in February 2012 , McCotter expressed concern that Republicans were underestimating the strength of Democrats , and that winning in the Midwest would be difficult because of the Republicans ' position on manufacturing and the Wall Street bailout . He maintained that though he disagreed with Romney on the auto industry bailout , Romney had the best chance to overcome the obstacles .

Though McCotter had decided to run for reelection in his congressional district , he failed to qualify for his district 's Republican primary after the majority of his petitions were declared fraudulent . An investigation of the campaign by the office of the Michigan Attorney General ensued . McCotter argued that " somebody either panicked or it was sabotage ... My gut tells me that we got lied to by

someone we trusted . " Steve Kornacki suggested the fraud may have been related to the presidential campaign , if it " caused him to take his eye off the ball on his House reelection , " but McCotter rejected this as an " idiotic line of thinking . " He initially hoped to wage a write @-@ in campaign , but decided against it , finding he could not run the campaign while cooperating with the investigation and serving the remainder of his term in Congress . A month later , he resigned from Congress , claiming this was needed to fully assist with the petition fraud investigation . The investigation found that in addition to the 2012 petitions , McCotter 's Congressional reelection petitions from 2006 , 2008 , and 2010 , also showed evidence of fraud . McCotter sued two aides accusing them of intentional sabotage . Eventually , four aides , including one who was sued , were charged and convicted of violations related to the fraud .

A day prior to his resignation from Congress , The Detroit News reported that after ending his presidential campaign , McCotter took to writing a television pilot he titled , " Bumper Sticker : Made On Motown " . It centered on McCotter as the host of a variety show with characters based on his congressional staffers , who made fun of his presidential campaign and discussed such risqué topics as sex , race , and bodily functions . In one scene in the script , S.E. Cupp guest stars ; McCotter tries to conduct a serious interview with her , but the other characters make sexually explicit comments , leading Cupp to describe the show as a " train wreck . " A former staffer released the work to the media to show what McCotter did while in office . In response , McCotter denied any wrongdoing , saying it had been largely composed in his garage as a way to get over his failed presidential campaign . He said the script was unfinished and had not authorized it for release , but decided to discuss it with The News . He cited comedian Martin Mull 's short @-@ lived 1977 show Fernwood 2 Night as an inspiration , and revealed that he had planned to leave Congress in 2014 and was preparing for a future career .