



## Facebook movement begins to draft Justin Amash for U.S. Senate run

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By **Jeff Cranson | The Grand Rapids Press**

U.S. Rep. Justin Amash is yet to weigh in, but an effort to draft him for a Senate run has begun in earnest.

"We are a group of Michiganders and Americans who desire a state and a country where freedom reigns, once again," reads the opening statement on the open-source Wordpress blog, titled "Draft Justin Amash for U.S. Senate in 2012. The statement is repeated on a newly created **Facebook page**.

A spokesman for Amash this afternoon knocked down the speculation.

"Although Congressman Amash is flattered by the support, he is thrilled to be representing the people of the Third District and is not contemplating a Senate run," spokesman Daniel Estrada said in an e-mailed statement.



Grand Rapids Press File Photo

U.S. Rep. Justin Amash

The Wordpress blog urging an Amash Senate run was created Saturday after former Kent County juvenile judge **Randy Hekman declared** his Senate candidacy. The blog makes clear that the group is not affiliated with Amash, a Kent County Republican elected in 2010 to represent the Grand Rapids-based Congressional district.

The Senate seat is currently held by two-term Democrat Debbie Stabenow, who recent polls have suggested **could be vulnerable**.

Amash, who will turn 31 in April, is the second youngest member of Congress. (A U.S. senator must be 30 years old.)

He built support among libertarian-minded Republicans as a member of the Michigan Legislature when he posted his votes and explanations on his **Facebook** page. In the state House, he was a frequent critic of tax credits and observed recently on his Facebook page that he was labeled "a radical" for his stand even though Gov. Rick Snyder's budget takes on **many of the credits**.

Last month, Amash and some like-minded GOP colleagues joined some Democrats in voting against key provisions of

the Patriot Act, citing civil liberties concerns. The measure eventually passed but the bloc of no votes prevented the measure from being extended in an expedited manner, causing delay and embarrassment for House leaders.

Soon after that, Amash voted "**present**" on a bill to halt government funding to Planned Parenthood. Amash remains steadfastly pro-life but he said he did not vote for the legislation because he thinks it's unconstitutional to target one organization.

Since going to Congress, Amash's contrary votes and use of Facebook to update constituents has garnered national media attention and won him praise from conservative and libertarian blogs and think tanks, including the Cato Institute and Fox Business's Freedom Watch.

Hekman kicked off his campaign for the seat with a statewide tour today, and Peter Konetchy, a Roscommon Tea Party-affiliated candidate is also making the rounds.

So far, the best known Republican considering a run is former U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra of Holland. Hoekstra said today he and his family will make a decision about a run in the next few weeks.

Among other Republicans who have said they are considering considering are former Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land of Kent County and former state GOP chairman Saul Anuzis.

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