



## Is Governor Larry Hogan a Real Trump Primary Contender?

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With Republican President Donald Trump growing more divisive and volatile every day — and facing an ever-tightening [Russia investigation](#) — it's no wonder that a number of GOP voters hope they can be saved by a primary contender to replace him on the ballot for 2020.

So far, most hopes are pinned on Ohio Governor [John Kasich](#), a self-proclaimed “moderate” who is teasing fans about a potential declaration — but he seems far more likely to hold out until 2024 instead.

Now there's buzz of a new possibility: Maryland Governor Larry Hogan. And unlike Kasich, rumor has it that his candidacy is worrying the Trump team.

Politico reports:

Republican Gov. Larry Hogan is acting a lot like a guy who wants to run against Donald Trump in 2020 — and the president's reelection team is taking notice. The second-term Maryland governor has been implicitly going after Trump in speeches, meeting with Never Trump Republicans, and planning a March trip to Iowa as vice chair of the National Governors Association.

Of course, Iowa tours are typical of anyone thinking about a future presidential run — whether that's an immediate plan or a decade down the road. Hogan, on the other hand, has some pretty prominent supporters already.

The Baltimore Sun reports:

Jerry Taylor, the founder of the Niskanen Center in Washington, said in an interview with The Baltimore Sun that he's been trying to persuade Hogan to run — and the governor hasn't turned him down. “The increasing interest on Governor Hogan's part in what's going on in Washington, D.C., is encouraging,” said Taylor, a former senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute. “It's clear to me he's been thinking about it more than in the past. But he hasn't made any decision yet.”

One of Hogan's biggest challenges if he wants to mount a primary campaign is how relatively unknown he is outside of his own state. But that's changing, as he gains support from longtime party icons like former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, who attended Hogan's recent swearing in ceremony for his next term as Maryland's governor.

And Hogan himself used his inauguration speech to aggressively oppose President Donald Trump's political record of obstruction and division – while blaming Democrats as well:

People on both sides of the aisle refuse to give up even a little to get a lot done. And neither side wants to make progress. They just want to make demands, and win arguments. That is not governing. That is just political theater. And most of us are just sick and tired of all that drama.

Running in a primary is easy, though. Winning one against an incumbent? That's a whole different story.

An incumbent already has the name recognition, party apparatus and other advantages behind them. Challenging a GOP incumbent from the left is nearly impossible, since primaries tend to bring out the more extreme members of the party to participate.

The Carroll County Times explains:

Say what you will about Trump as president, but he understands how to campaign and rally support. And he's been campaigning for re-election from the minute he was elected the first time. He's also incredibly well-funded, with a war chest of \$100 million or more, and Trump has the support of the Republican National Committee.

And while overall Trump's popularity isn't great – his latest approval rating is about 39 percent — he remains in good standing among conservative Republican voters. (Meanwhile, even with Hogan's strong popularity in Maryland, you don't have to look further than Carroll County political Facebook pages to know that among Trump fans, the right-of-center governor is regarded as a 'lib' or a 'commie.')

Then again, a primary may be less about replacing President Trump on the ballot and more about an easy way to raise Hogan's profile to a national level – putting him in that much better of a position come 2024, when he could have a legitimate chance at taking the nomination and winning the White House.

A primary challenge offers a test run for a future campaign, one that has almost no risk because no one expects him to win in the first place.

It would also serve to highlight just how very extreme the president — and the remaining GOP politicians as a whole — have really become. That's something that can only benefit Democrats in the long run. So, on behalf of all who are horrified by the path our country has taken, I can't help but hope that Hogan chooses to run.