

## **Jim Webb withdraws from Democratic presidential primary race, says he is considering independent run**

*By SUSAN DOUCET / Monitor staff*

Former Virginia senator Jim Webb is dropping out of the Democratic presidential primary before voters in New Hampshire ever got to know him.

Webb announced his decision in Washington, D.C., in a rare media appearance Tuesday afternoon, exactly a week after his participation in the first Democratic presidential debate.

“I fully accept that my views on many issues are not compatible with the power structure and the nominating base of the Democratic Party,” Webb said at the press conference, which was streamed live by C-SPAN. “Its hierarchy is not comfortable with many of the policies that I have laid forth, and frankly I am not that comfortable with many of theirs.”

While this is the end of his short-lived campaign for the Democratic Party’s nomination, it may not be the end of his presidential aspirations for 2016. Webb said he is considering a run as an independent.

“I am not going away. I am thinking through all of my options,” he said.

Webb officially announced his candidacy in July, later than former secretary of state Hillary Clinton, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, former Maryland governor Martin O’Malley and former Rhode Island governor Lincoln Chafee. Only Lawrence Lessig, who started campaigning and fundraising in August, has been seeking the nomination for less time than Webb.

Since the summer, Webb has made minimal campaign appearances and has a very small staff. In response to questions from reporters at the press conference, Webb maintained that he had campaigned in Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina.

Webb, a Marine veteran, was scheduled to visit New Hampshire in August for a “Warriors for Webb” event in Hudson. The event was canceled just hours before it was to start and was never rescheduled, as staff said it would be. Webb turned down other opportunities to campaign in New Hampshire. When the New Hampshire Democratic Party held a state convention in Manchester last month, the other five Democrats running for president traveled to Manchester. Webb was in Iowa.

“We made visits,” Webb said, though he added more could have been made.

Online candidate trackers say Webb visited New Hampshire five times and made eight campaign stops. By comparison, Chafee has visited 27 times and made 35 campaign stops.

At different times in his career, Webb has aligned himself with both major parties. He was a Republican during Ronald Reagan's administration and was in the U.S. Senate as a Democrat.

A reporter at the press conference asked Webb if he still considers himself a Democrat. "We'll think about that," Webb said.

Webb has raised the least amount of money of the six Democratic candidates, falling behind even Lessig, who has raised more than \$1 million since August and was not included in last week's debate. Webb, who announced his campaign in early July (after the second quarter FEC reporting date), raised less than \$697,000 and has less than \$317,000 on hand.

Webb's campaign has said that he is opposed to super PACs. Sanders, who also does not operate with a super PAC, raised about \$41 million. Lessig, who is prioritizing campaign finance reform, is also without a super PAC.

A Public Policy Polling New Hampshire Democratic poll released Tuesday showed Webb with 2 percent support, less than all of the other declared candidates and Vice President Joe Biden, who has not announced his candidacy.

Though leaving the race for the Democratic nomination, Webb appeared confident about his chance of becoming the next president of the United States. When a reporter asked him if he could imagine himself supporting either Clinton, the current Democratic frontrunner, or Donald Trump, the current Republican frontrunner, Webb chose neither candidate.

"If we ran an independent race that worked and got traction, I honestly could see us beating both of them," Webb said.

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