

chatterbox

## Forget Nader. Draft Moore.

How Democrats can win back the White House.

By Timothy Noah

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Ralph Nader is [running for president again](#). The [media blitz](#) is underway. So is the [backlash](#). Many news outlets have been quoting a Jan. 29 [editorial](#) in *The Nation* urging Nader not to run. Chatterbox's own view is that if Nader wants to run, that's Nader's business; and if a teeny-tiny number of potential Kerry or Edwards voters pull the lever for Nader, that's their business. It's a free country.

The more urgent question Democrats need to ask is whether former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore will run for president. In a column posted Feb. 22 on *The Nation's* Web site, John Nichols [points out](#) that Nader isn't the potential third-party contender to watch in 2004:

**Roy Moore, the Alabama jurist whose fight to display the Ten Commandments on state property [drew national attention](#) last year, is being courted by the right-wing [Constitution Party](#) as a potential presidential candidate. (The Constitution Party was on the ballot in 41 states in 2000, and retains a solid network of activist supporters nationwide.)**

This is, of course, the very scenario Chatterbox fantasized about in his Jan. 19 column, "[A Republican Nader?](#)" The fundamentalist whom Chatterbox envisioned running for president (and stealing votes from Bush) was [James Dobson](#), chairman of Focus on the Family. But Moore would be an even better rabble-rouser. Apparently his possible third-party candidacy is no mere fantasy on the left; at the very worst, it's a fantasy on the left *and the right*. John Fund [wrote about it](#) Feb. 2 in his online column for the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page:

**Last Saturday, Mr. Moore was a featured speaker at the Christian Coalition's "Family and Freedom" rally in Atlanta. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported he was "treated like a rock star, signing autographs and getting thunderous standing ovations." The week before that, Mr. Moore was the speaker at a dinner in Lancaster, Pa., sponsored by the Constitution Party, which has the third-largest number of registered voters in the U.S. ...**

**During a question-and-answer period, Mr. Moore was asked if he would run for president. "Not right now," he said, noting he is still appealing his dismissal from office for violating a federal court's order to remove the monument from the Alabama Supreme Court building. "I have to wait till all these things are done to decide my future." His friends say he is undecided about whether to run for president or to wait two years and seek Alabama's governorship.**

Bush's [recess appointment](#) of William H. Pryor to the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit, though generally a disaster for liberals, is a great boon in one largely overlooked respect. *It has very likely enraged Roy Moore*. It was Pryor who, as Alabama's attorney general, [helped give Moore the boot](#) when Moore refused to remove his [famous monument](#) to the Ten Commandments from his courtroom. (Pryor's conservative detractors say Pryor did it to shore up support for his judgeship in the Senate.)

If Moore does run, there's a lot of potential support for him out there. [According to the conservative \*Washington Times\*](#), evangelicals are angry at Bush for failing to act more decisively on the gay marriage issue:

**"I am just furious over [what's going on in California](#) and over what the president is not doing in California," a prominent evangelical leader confided. "He says he's 'troubled' — he should be outraged. If he's troubled, he should pick up the phone and call [California Republican Gov.] Arnold [Schwarzenegger] and tell him we want action against the rogue mayor who is breaking the law."**

A broader list of complaints is laid out by Patrick Johnston, a prominent Ohio evangelist, in an essay titled "[Why Christians Should Not Vote for George W. Bush](#)" on the Web site IntellectualConservative.com. According to Johnson, Bush is: Soft on abortion; soft on homosexuality ("He has appointed open homosexuals to high government positions at a rate that makes Bill Clinton look like a homophobe!"); soft on Islam and Shintoism ("He demoralized Korean and Japanese Christians by bowing down at a pagan Shinto shrine in Japan"); soft on the National Endowment for the Arts, which finances "blasphemous" art; soft on federal funding for education (why this is un-Christian is never explained); soft on the assault-weapon ban (ditto); soft on deficit spending (ditto); and so on.

This is an ember that wants fanning.

In the Feb. 21 *Weekly Standard*, Katherine Mangu-Ward [claims](#) that Moore "emphatically denies that he will challenge Bush this

year, 'period,' " and that the Constitution party already has a candidate. But Chatterbox does not trust and will not accept Shermanesque statements rendered in paraphrase. As for the candidate the Constitution party has purportedly chosen--one Michael Anthony Peroutka—he is [described by Constitution Party President Jim Clymer](#) as merely a "stand-in ... for ballot-access purposes."

Mangu-Ward can't be trusted on the subject of Roy Moore because she so obviously wants him to go away. Moore "might have provided a diverting rhetorical sideshow in a race full of verbal gaffes," she writes, "but would otherwise have been unlikely to make or break the Bush campaign's ongoing efforts to keep conservatives happily in the fold." She even makes fun of his poetry. Judge Moore, are you going to take this from ... a girl? They're *laughing* at you, Judge. Bill Kristol, Bill Pryor, and Karl Rove *are laughing at you*. Bet that fair-weather-Christian of a president's laughing at you, too. They might as well be laughing at the Ten Commandments. Are you going to just sit there and let them *laugh at the Ten Commandments*?

[*Update, Feb. 24*: Is Bush's [endorsement](#) of the [constitutional amendment banning gay marriages](#) an attempt to strangle Moore's presidential candidacy in the crib? Discuss.]

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