

Wallop seen by some as Republican unifier

Conservatives give him serious chance

By Ralph Z. Hallow
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Some of the conservatives who backed Ronald Reagan are looking to Sen. Malcolm Wallop of Wyoming as the man who can unite the Republican Party the way Mr. Reagan did at the end of the Jimmy Carter era.

"In this crowded field of Republicans, where everyone has his pluses and minuses and no one stands out, Malcolm really does have a chance to get the nomination," says Martin Anderson, a top Reagan economic adviser.

Mr. Wallop's "views are very much at the core of the Republican Party."

In his view, Mr. Wallop, 61, a three-term senator who is not seeking re-election this year, "has great integrity and character, which is what people are looking for."

In revealing his presidential interest last week at a luncheon with editors at The Washington Times, Mr. Wallop said he is "not one of those Republicans who believe it's too late to shrink the size of the federal government and have the states reassert their powers."

He would start the rollback of the welfare state and big government by cutting taxes, and by cutting entitlements without sacrificing national defense.

This is the sort of talk many conservatives like Gary Bauer, a Reagan White House domestic policy adviser, have longed to hear.

"As I travel around the country, conservatives are desperately looking for someone who understands the need to put together the whole Reagan coalition from economic conservatives to social conservatives," says Mr. Bauer, who now heads the Family Research Council.

Although Mr. Wallop opposes abortion, Anne Stone, who heads Republicans for Choice, applauds his interest in exploring a presidential bid.

"For those of us who cherish individual rights it would be great. Wallop is a great proponent of property rights," she says. "He is one of the foremost leaders in that fight, which will be one of the great confrontations between left and right in this decade."

Among those urging Mr. Wallop to consider a White House bid is Tom Ellis, chairman of the National Congressional Club in North Carolina.

Martin Anderson credits Mr. Ellis and his group with winning North Carolina for Mr. Reagan at a crucial moment in 1976, keeping him in the Republican nomination race that year and making his campaign successful four years later.

"Malcolm really does have a chance to get the nomination."

Mr. Ellis and his organization's executive director, Carter Wrenn, have run Sen. Jesse Helms' media, advertising and direct-mail fund raising for his last three Senate campaigns. Their friendship with Mr. Helms has cooled.

Mr. Ellis thinks the top prospects for 1996 — Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole of Kansas; Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas, chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee; and Jack Kemp, former housing and urban development secretary — fall short of the Reagan standards.

"Kemp believes government is part of the solution," he says. "Dole and Gramm are both great statesmen, but Dole has compromised on taxes in the past and on health care. You need someone who is saying we have to get our culture back."

"I'm not unsatisfied with Gramm, but I believe he hasn't been out there looking for a [Barry] Goldwater or a Reagan to run from any of the states. He's been looking for people he thought could and would back Phil Gramm."

Mr. Wallop acknowledges he has little national name recognition and comes from a small and not very wealthy state — somewhat like Arkansas — which makes it difficult for candidates to raise vast sums of money quickly enough.

Yet that need not count, Mr. Ellis says, because if "you get a good man and people see it, they will gravitate to him."

Mr. Bauer agrees. "I realize Malcolm Wallop is a dark horse," he says. "But a true conservative candidate doesn't end up coming from one state, but from a state of mind, and that brings him the potential for financial and other resources that transcends the state he happens to live in."

Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, a powerful element in any Republican coalition, is looking for someone who can unite family-values conservatives with economic conservatives.

"There is a huge pool of pro-family voters who are dying to hear a candidate articulate their values, and when that candidate appears, he will do very well and surprise a lot of people," says Ralph Reed, executive director of the coalition. "Whether Wallop is the one who can do it is too early to tell."