

Tulsi Gabbard Drops Out of Presidential Race - The New York Times

By Lisa Lerer and Maggie Astor

The representative from Hawaii, who often defied her own party, announced the end of her campaign and said she would back Joe Biden.



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Representative [Tulsi Gabbard](#) of Hawaii, who ran a foreign policy-focused campaign for the presidential nomination of a party she sharply criticized, announced on Thursday that she was dropping out of the race.

Ms. Gabbard, who had been one of only three candidates and the only woman remaining in the Democratic primary, said she would throw her support to former Vice President [Joseph R. Biden Jr.](#), who has accumulated a nearly insurmountable lead in the delegate count. Throughout the race, her campaign struggled to gain traction, never breaking double digits in state or national polls. She won only two delegates in the primary contests, both in American Samoa, where she was born.

In a video posted to social media on Thursday, Ms. Gabbard said she felt she could better serve the country in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic in her capacity as a major in the Hawaii Army National Guard.

“Our nation is facing an unprecedented global crisis that highlights the inextricable bonds of humanity, and how foreign policy and domestic policy are inseparable,” she said. “The best way I can be of service at this time is to continue to work for the health and well-being of the people of Hawaii and our country in Congress, and to stand ready to serve in uniform should the Hawaii National Guard be activated.”

Ms. Gabbard, who resigned her vice chairmanship at the Democratic National Committee in 2016 to endorse the presidential campaign of Senator [Bernie Sanders](#) of Vermont, Mr. Biden’s closest competitor this year, said she had “great appreciation” for Mr. Sanders’s work.

She also cited her relationship with Mr. Biden’s son Beau, who served in the Delaware Army National Guard and died in 2015.

“Although I may not agree with the vice president on every issue, I know that he has a good heart and is motivated by his love for our country and the American people,” she said. “I’m confident that he will lead our country guided by the spirit of aloha — respect and compassion — and thus help heal the divisiveness that has been tearing our country apart.”

Ms. Gabbard, 38, announced late last year that she would not seek re-election to Congress in the fall.

She campaigned for president on a noninterventionist foreign policy, denouncing “regime-change wars” and the idea of the United States as the world’s police. She said her own deployments — she served two tours of duty in the Middle East as a member of the National Guard — had taught her the costs of war firsthand.

“We should be coming to other leaders in other countries with respect, building a relationship based on cooperation rather than with, you know, a police baton,” [she said last year](#).

Her unorthodox platform, a mix of noninterventionist foreign policy, liberal social policy and libertarian leanings on issues like drug decriminalization, [attracted support from an unusual array of public backers](#). Alt-right internet stars, white nationalists, libertarian activists and some of the biggest boosters of Mr. Trump heaped praise on [Ms. Gabbard](#).

Many Democrats were far more skeptical of her effort, at a loss to explain her frequent appearances on Fox News, favorable coverage in Russian state media and an ideology that both argued for

getting out of foreign wars and refused to strongly condemn some autocratic leaders.

A public fight with Hillary Clinton [brought attention and fund-raising dollars](#), keeping Ms. Gabbard on the primary debate stage and attracting some support from independent and Republican voters, particularly in libertarian-leaning New Hampshire.

Her progressive economics and noninterventionist foreign policy seemed like obvious attractions for Democrats, her military résumé gave her extra credibility, and she broke barriers as the first Hindu and the first American Samoan elected to Congress. So it was not surprising when [she entered the presidential race](#) last January, even though no sitting representative has been elected president in 140 years.

In a race that at its peak included six female candidates, Ms. Gabbard ended up becoming the last woman standing.

But while she had a deeply devoted base, it was not large enough to sustain her. And at times, she seemed to be campaigning against the same party whose nomination she was seeking.

“Our Democratic Party, unfortunately, is not the party that is of, by and for the people,” she said [at a debate in November](#). “It is a party that has been and continues to be influenced by the foreign policy establishment in Washington, represented by Hillary Clinton and others’ foreign policy, by the military industrial complex and other greedy corporate interests.”

President Trump’s re-election campaign seized on that remark, clipping the first sentence and [blasting it out on Twitter](#) before the debate had even ended.

Perhaps no emblem of the establishment was a better foil for Ms. Gabbard than Mrs. Clinton, who [suggested in October](#) that Russia was backing Ms. Gabbard’s campaign and that Republicans were “grooming” her as a third-party candidate. Ms. Gabbard pushed back fiercely, calling Mrs. Clinton “the queen of warmongers, embodiment of corruption and personification of the rot that has sickened the Democratic Party for so long” and then suing her for defamation.

The clash [helped raise Ms. Gabbard’s profile](#) and won over some voters — including independents and conservatives — who dislike the Clintons, while simultaneously alienating some members of the party’s usual base.

Ms. Gabbard also broke from the Democratic pack on impeachment. She [was the last candidate](#) to back an inquiry last year, and when the articles of impeachment came to the House floor in December, she was the only Democrat [who refused to cast a yes-or-no vote](#).

“I came to the conclusion that I could not in good conscience vote either yes or no,” she said at the time, calling the process too partisan. “I am standing in the center and have decided to vote present.”

More Coverage of Tulsi Gabbard

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