

For some turned-off GOP voters, grudging acceptance of Trump

Associated Press

MIDLOTHIAN, Va. — Sheila Covert is worried about Donald Trump.

A loyal Republican voter from swing state Virginia, Covert calls the businessman “bombastic” and says there’s “just no substance” in his boastful campaign rhetoric.

But if Trump does become the GOP presidential nominee?

“Well, I’d definitely vote for him,” said Covert, an 81-year-old from the Richmond suburb of Powhatan. After a pause, she added, “But I hope and pray it doesn’t come to that.”

Covert is part of a legion of skeptical Republican voters across the United States coming to grips with the prospect that Trump, a candidate whose appeal they simply can’t understand, may end up being their party’s best chance for retaking the White House. The real estate mogul has scored three commanding primary victories in a row, including Tuesday in Nevada, and enters next week’s delegate-rich Super Tuesday elections in strong position.

Interviews with about two dozen frequent Republican voters in Virginia — an important general election battleground and one of several states with a primary next week — reveal the complex mix of emotions Trump evokes within his own party.

Among those who don’t plan to vote for Trump in the primary, there’s shock, confusion and anxiety over his candidacy. But there’s also a grudging acceptance of the billionaire’s political staying power and a feeling that despite his many flaws, he’d be better than another four years with a Democrat in the White House — particularly if that Democrat is Hillary Clinton.

“He says things you cannot imagine a president saying,” said Michael Glunt, a 42-year-old landscaper from Midlothian. But if



AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, File

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks at a caucus night Tuesday in Las Vegas.

“This is the first time in my 68 years that I have truly been scared of what is going to happen in this election.”

— Nancy Bradner,

Loyal GOP voter not supporting Donald Trump

Trump faces off against Clinton in November, Glunt will cast his ballot for the GOP nominee.

“In this particular case, I would vote for him,” Glunt said. “Hillary Clinton, I don’t trust her. There’s no trust.”

The voters interviewed by The Associated Press represent a tiny sliver of the electorate. But their views illuminate the debate within both parties about how a Trump nomination would play out in November.

Democratic officials are betting that Trump’s over-the-top rhetoric, particularly about women and immigrants, would turn off independents and some Republicans in battleground states like Virginia. Some anxious GOP leaders share that concern, contributing to the sudden rush of lawmakers and other party officials rallying around Florida Sen. Marco Rubio as an alternative.

Bill Ginther, a 69-year-old

retiree from Midlothian, is among the Republicans so turned off by Trump they can hardly envision voting for him if he’s the nominee. Ginther, who plans to vote for Rubio in Tuesday’s primary, says he’s “honestly shocked” that Trump has come as far as he has.

While some voters joke about moving to Canada if Trump becomes president, Nancy Bradner is looking at that possibility with some seriousness.

A supporter of past GOP nominees including Mitt Romney and George W. Bush, she’s now researching Canadian politics, as well as the country’s health care system and housing market.

Bradner doesn’t know if she’d really go through with a move north — “I can’t leave my grandbabies,” she said — but makes clear that “it would be an option.”

“I just don’t think I could be in the midst of it,” Bradner said. “This is the first time in

my 68 years that I have truly been scared of what is going to happen in this election.”

A recent AP-GfK poll, however, suggests Ginther and Bradner may be in the minority. The survey showed far more Republicans than not say they’d vote for Trump in the general election, and 86 percent of Republican voters think he can win in November — giving him a 15 percentage point advantage over anyone else.

For Cumberland County resident Tina Shumaker, the prospect of voting for Trump is deeply unappealing. Her top concern in the election is national security, and she can’t fathom Trump engaging in diplomacy or being able to keep the country safe.

But her concerns about him pale in comparison to her dislike of Clinton. And while Shumaker sees no good options in a general election contest between the two, the 66-year-old leaves no question about who would get her support.

“If it would have to come between him and Hillary, I’m afraid he’d get my vote,” Shumaker said. “I hope it doesn’t turn out that way. But it’s beginning to look that way.”

Apple could make it tougher to hack phones

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Suppose the FBI wins its court battle and forces Apple to help unlock an iPhone used by one of the San Bernardino killers. That could open all iPhones up to potential government scrutiny — but it’s not the end of the story.

Turns out there’s a fair bit both individuals and Apple could do to FBI-proof their phones and shield private information from investigators and cybercriminals alike. Those measures include multiple passcodes and longer, more complex ones.

Of course, increased security typically comes at the expense of convenience. Most efforts to improve phone security would make the devices harder to use, perhaps by requiring you to remember more passwords.

Making it more difficult for law enforcement to crack open iPhones could also spur legal restrictions on phone security, something that neither Apple nor other technology companies want to see.

“They are walking a tightrope,” says Mark Bartholomew, a law professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo who specializes in privacy and encryption issues. Requiring longer passcodes might annoy most Apple users, he says, while boosting phone security “sort of amplifies the whole argument that Apple is making things too difficult and frustrating law enforcement officials.”

Apple had no comment on any future security measures. In a recent letter to customers, it noted that it has routinely built “progressively stronger protections” into its products because “cyberattacks have only become more frequent and more sophisticated.”

In the current fight, the FBI aims to make Apple help it guess the passcode on the work phone used by Syed Farook before he and his wife killed 14 people at an office party in December. The FBI wants Apple to create special software to disable security features that, among other things, render the iPhone unreadable after 10 incorrect guesses.

Apple has resisted, maintaining that software that opens a single iPhone could be exploited to hack into millions of other devices. The government insists that its precautions would prevent that, though security experts are doubtful.

Should the FBI prevail, it would take computers less than a day to guess a six-digit passcode consisting solely of numbers, the default type of passcode in



AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster

An iPhone is seen in Washington on Wednesday. The San Bernardino County-owned iPhone at the center of an unfolding high-profile legal battle between Apple Inc. and the U.S. government lacked a device management feature bought by the county that, if installed, would have allowed investigators easy and immediate access.

the latest version of the iPhone operating system. Even with security features disabled, each passcode guess takes 80 milliseconds to process, limiting the FBI to 12.5 guesses per second.

For security-conscious individuals, the simplest protective move would be to use a passcode consisting of letters and numbers. Doing so would vastly increase the amount of time required to guess even short passcodes. Apple estimates it would take more than five years to try all combinations of a six-character passcode with numbers and lowercase letters. Adding capital letters to the mix would extend that further.

Changing to an alphanumeric code is as simple as going into the phone settings and choosing “Touch ID & Passcode,” then “Passcode options.”

Another option is simply to pick a much longer numeric code. An 11-character code consisting of randomly selected numbers — that means no references to birthdays or anniversaries that could be easily guessed — could take as long as 253 years to unlock.

But longer, more complex codes are harder to remember, and that’s probably why Apple hasn’t yet required their use. It could, however, easily do so. In fact, iPhones moved to six-digit passcodes from four last September.

Apple may have other tricks up its sleeve. For instance, the company could add additional layers of authentication

that would thwart the security-bypassing software the FBI wants it to make, says computer security expert Jonathan Zdziarski.

Apple phones rely on a feature known as the “secure enclave” to manage all passcode operations. The software demanded by the FBI would alter the secure enclave, Zdziarski says. But the software couldn’t do so if the secure enclave required the user passcode to approve any such changes.

“This is probably the best way to lock down a device,” Zdziarski says.

Apple could also require a second passcode whenever the phone boots up; without it, the phone wouldn’t run any software, including the tool the FBI is requesting. “It would be like putting a steel door on the phone,” Zdziarski says. Currently, iPhones automatically load the operating system before asking for a passcode.

For now, Apple CEO Tim Cook is focusing on winning the current battle with the FBI in a Southern California federal court while also trying to sway public opinion in the company’s favor. The skirmish could go all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In the meantime, Apple is probably already working on security improvements for the next version of the iPhone operating system that it will probably announce in June and release in September.

BRIEFLY

Obama bans U.S. imports of slave-produced goods

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama signed a bill Wednesday that includes a provision banning U.S. imports of fish caught by slaves in Southeast Asia, gold mined by children in Africa and garments sewn by abused women in Bangladesh, closing a loophole in an 85-year-old tariff law that has failed to keep products of forced and child labor out of America.

An expose by The Associated Press last year found Thai companies ship seafood to the U.S. that was caught and processed by trapped and enslaved workers. As a result of the reports, more than 2,000 trapped fishermen have been rescued, more than a dozen alleged traffickers arrested and millions of dollars’ worth of seafood and vessels seized.

Until now, U.S. customs law banning imports of items produced by forced or child labor had gone largely unenforced because of two words: “consumptive demand” — if there was not sufficient supply to meet domestic demand, imports were allowed regardless of how they were produced.

Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, who offered the amendment eliminating that exception, said Wednesday his office is already asking U.S. Customs and Border Protection to ensure they begin enforcing the new rules when the law takes effect in 15 days.

“It’s embarrassing that for 85 years, the United States let products made with forced labor into this country, and closing this loophole gives the U.S. an important tool to fight global slavery,” he said.

White House considers Nevada Gov. Sandoval for Supreme Court

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House is considering Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval of Nevada as a possible nominee to the Supreme Court, two people familiar with the process said Wednesday.

The nomination of a Republican would be seen as an attempt by President Barack Obama to break the Senate GOP blockade of any of his choices. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has said his 54-member GOP caucus is opposed to holding confirmation hearings or vote on Obama’s pick, insisting that the choice rests with the next president.

The officials declined to be named because they weren’t authorized to speak publicly.

Mari St. Martin, Sandoval’s communications director, said Wednesday that the governor hasn’t been contacted by the White House.

“Neither Gov. Sandoval nor his staff has been contacted by or talked to the Obama administration regarding any potential vetting for the vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court,” she said.

Sandoval met with Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid on Monday in Washington while he was in town for a meeting of the National Governors Association.

At the governors’ meeting over the weekend, Sandoval said he was honored his name was mentioned as a potential successor for the late Justice Antonin Scalia, but had heard nothing to think the Democratic president is considering him.

Before Sandoval, 52, became the state’s first Hispanic governor, he was the state’s first Hispanic federal judge. He supports abortion rights, a position that might assuage some Democrats nervous about the nomination of a Republican. But liberal groups came out against the idea.

Senate GOP leader holds fast in blocking Obama court pick

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic foes gloat that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has guided his Republicans into a political dead end with his unbending edict that President Barack Obama’s successor will fill the Supreme Court vacancy of Justice Antonin Scalia.

The six-term Kentucky Republican has abysmal public approval ratings nationwide. Polling suggests independent voters side with Obama on the issue. Editorial boards insist the president should fill the vacancy now.

But McConnell, the architect and face of the GOP strategy to block Obama’s upcoming pick, appears entirely comfortable, even as he upends Senate precedent by denying even a hearing to a nominee.

And anybody who’s observed McConnell over the years knows he’s not changing his mind.

“My view, and I can now confidently say the view shared by virtually everybody in my conference, is that the nomination should be made by the president the people elect in the election that’s under way right now,” McConnell told reporters after emerging from a closed-door meeting with GOP senators this week.

That Republicans would stymie any pick by Obama should be no surprise. If Scalia is replaced by a liberal or moderate Obama nominee, the balance of the court would change, with potentially enormous consequences for issues like abortion, union rights, immigration and congressional redistricting this year alone.

If there’s a political cost, and that’s a big “if,” it’s one that has to be paid.

McConnell never makes a move without thinking of the consequences for his colleagues. The GOP is defending 24 Senate seats in November to the Democrats’ 10, including six in states Obama won twice.

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