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Tax Credit: The Tax Man Runneth

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The 2016 presidential election is 20 months away and candidates are already campaigning in early primary states like Iowa and New Hampshire. If it seems like some of them have been running since the last election, it's probably because they have.

There's one candidate running for the Republican nomination who you may not know. His name is Mark Everson and he's ready to wage war on a common enemy of all voters – America's tax system. It's a topic Everson knows quite well, having served as the Commissioner of Internal Revenue from 2003 to 2007.

Everson, 60, graduated from Yale University before launching a career that has taken him from business to government and back to business again. In 2003, George W. Bush nominated him for the IRS position, which he held for four years. He left to become President and CEO of the American Red Cross. Now he's vice-chairman for a tax consulting company.

Why is Everson running? He says he wants to make federal tax laws more consistent and less complex (Where have we heard that before?). He would replace the tax for lower-income earners with a value-added tax. "He also says he wants to restructure entitlement programs, including Social Security; set a military draft and system of national service; and break up banks that are poorly managed," the Associated Press reports.

And what does America's former top tax collector think of his chances? He's serious enough to be pouring \$250,000 of his own money into the race. "They're raising serious money, but we're going to raise serious issues," he says. "I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't believe I've got a chance. I think that who becomes president is not up to Wall Street and the fat cats across the country. It's up to the voters."

Everson does have one stumble on his resume. In 2007, after six months helming the Red Cross, the board demanded his resignation after he confessed to an affair with a staffer. Everson divorced his wife and, while he hasn't married his new love, the two are raising their six-year-old son together. "I've made mistakes, and I don't think that that precludes one from going forward and trying to contribute," he says.

Time will tell whether Everson knows how to translate his IRS experience into a shot at the most powerful job in the world.

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