

By: Frederick Cosby

Allen West enlisted in the Army nearly 20 years ago, but these days, a growing number of Tea Partiers and conservative Republicans want to draft the black GOP lawmaker from Florida to run for president.

West, the flat-topped retired lieutenant colonel and Tea Party favorite who boasted last year that he had a higher security clearance than President Barack Obama, has been getting a lot of love lately from Republican-oriented folks who aren't impressed with the potential presidential pickings for 2012: Newt Gingrich, Donald Trump, Sarah Palin, and Michele Bachmann, Mitt Romney, Ron Paul and the rest.

"WE, THE PEOPLE of the United States of America, reject the current field of 2012 Presidential contenders," read an April statement from the Utah-based Draft Allen West for President 2012. "West has shown remarkable, unwavering leadership (in) his campaign for Congress, as well as his term as a freshman Congressman."

Search the Internet, and you'll find a bumper crop of sites like Allen West For President 2012, an Allen West for President Facebook page and "West for the West Wing 2012," and so on.

Even Fox's Glenn Beck has the fever for a West presidential bid, despite the fact that West has been on Capitol Hill barely four months.

"I want to start a draft Allen West movement," Beck said on his nationally-syndicated radio show last month. "He's not afraid to pull the trigger. He's not afraid, and he takes responsibility ... The No. 1 thing we need is a man of honor, who will say 'You know what? This is happening, this is what I did, this is what I believe in, and damn the torpedoes.' It's time to restore honor, and I think Allen West, I think he's got it."

Beck isn't the only one infatuated with West. Stephen Paul wrote on PartyofKnow.com: "I would

love to see Allen West become the 1st real Black American President."

"It would be such an honor to see someone of his caliber and ability (to) lead these United States," Paul gushed. "Please run and help save this country from the impending catastrophe of the Pinko Socialists, sir. I salute you."

Even the GOP presidential field has taken notice of the growing Westmania. Gingrich, who officially entered the race on Wednesday, told The Daily Caller last February that West might make a good vice president.

"Allen West would certainly be someone you'd look at," Gingrich told Florida's WPTV.

Jonathan Blyth, West's chief of staff, told the South Florida Sun-Sentinel that his boss is flattered by all the attention, but added that "Congressman West is focused on the constituents of the 22 Congressional District, who gave him the distinguished honor of representing their voices on Capitol Hill."

West himself didn't rule out eventually seeking higher office, telling WPTV "We don't know what the future holds, but I'm always willing to serve my country."

"I have to pray about it, and I have to clear it with my wife and two daughters," West told the station when asked about the VP spot. "I never thought that seven years ago when I retired here, I'd be a United States Congressman."

West retired from the Army after he was fined \$5,000 following an Army investigation for his firing a gun near the head of an Iraqi man while he was being interrogated in order to get the man's cooperation. Army investigators said the incident didn't warrant a court martial.

According to CNN, West was interrogating an Iraqi police officer who he believed had information about a plot to ambush a U.S. convoy and Kill West. West's supporters considered

him a hero, but military prosecutors said West's actions amounted to torture.

But West's actions in Iraq, his conservative streak and anti-Obama rhetoric made him a Tea Party darling and enabled him to become one of two black Republicans – Tim Scott of South Carolina is the other – to win House seats last year. Some entries on the draft West Web sites contain accolades like "well-spoken" and "articulate."

As for West's claim that his security clearance was better than the commander-in-chief, PolitiFact, the political truth-squad Web site examined it and gave it a "Pants on Fire" rating.

"That West's clearance - either today or in the past – was higher than any president's is ridiculously false," PolitiFact concluded. "The president has the highest security clearance in the land."