



By: TA | AP Insight

Could Nigel Farage's resignation backfire on him?



Nigel Farage says the political establishment is out to stop him. But the Reform UK leader's attempt to prove it has not gone to plan.

Facing awkward **questions about his finances**, the anti-immigration politician dramatically announced that he's quitting Parliament in order to run again, a move critics denounced as a ploy to dodge a parliamentary probe.

His resignation as a lawmaker became official on Wednesday.

Farage said the special election will be "people versus the establishment." But his opponents aren't playing ball.

All the major political parties say they will not field candidates against Farage, leaving him to run all but unopposed.

The gambit could backfire further if an investigation into his finances continues and creates a scenario requiring a second special election.

Farage is a skilled political provocateur

Farage only became a British lawmaker two years ago, winning election to Parliament after seven failed attempts, and has led a series of fractious hard-right political parties. But he is arguably one of the most influential politicians of recent decades.

His obsession with taking the United Kingdom out of the European Union helped turn Brexit from a fringe cause to a reality.

More recently, he has tapped into anxieties about immigration and social change in a way that echoes his ally, U.S. President Donald Trump, and European populists.

Farage has capitalized on concerns about migrants crossing the English Channel in small boats

Farage has capitalized on — critics say stoked — concerns about migrants crossing the English Channel in small boats, which he has called an invasion, and alleges that white people face discrimination from police.

Reform UK holds just eight of the 650 seats in the House of Commons, but consistently leads opinion polls and was the big winner in **local and regional elections** in May that led to the ouster of Prime Minister Keir Starmer at the hands of his own Labour Party.

If the pattern holds, Farage could become prime minister after the next election, due by 2029.

The politician's finances are under scrutiny

Farage has many sources of income other than a lawmaker's salary, including hawking gold bullion, hosting a TV current affairs show, public speaking and recording personal video messages on the Cameo website.

Parliament's standards watchdog is investigating a potentially rule-breaking donation of 5 million pounds (\$6.7 million) from Christopher Harborne, a Thailand-based cryptocurrency billionaire.

Farage says the money was a personal gift he used to fund his personal security and came before he was elected to the House of Commons.

Farage is facing questions about his financial relationship with George Cottrell, an aristocratic crypto-gambling entrepreneur who served a U.S. prison sentence for fraud

Newly elected lawmakers must declare gifts worth more than 300 pounds (\$400) received in the previous 12 months if they are related to political activities.

Farage is also facing questions about his financial relationship with **George Cottrell**, an aristocratic crypto-gambling entrepreneur who served a U.S. prison sentence for fraud.

A finding of wrongdoing could lead to Farage being suspended from Parliament, which in turn could trigger a special election for his seaside seat of **Clacton** in eastern England.

Winning an election won't end questions about finances

Rather than await the outcome, Farage made the first move by triggering an election himself.

But if Farage wins, as seems highly likely, the standards inquiry is set to resume. If it finds Farage broke the rules, there could be another Clacton election within months.

Farage has said he is frustrated and fed up with politics. He has a history of walking away from parties he led. He stepped down from both the UK Independence Party and its successor, the Brexit Party, in the last decade.

Fighting and winning a by-election is perhaps his best hope of suggesting to people that he is still very much a man alone, fighting the establishment - Tim Bale

Tim Bale, professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London, says he suspects Farage will stay put to lead Reform into the next election.

"Fighting and winning a by-election is perhaps his best hope of suggesting to people that he is still very much a man alone, fighting the establishment," Bale said.

Farage accuses opponents of skullduggery

Farage insists he has "done nothing wrong" and is the victim of dirty tricks by his political foes and "constant demonization" by the media.

Bale said the snap election allows him to distract attention away from allegations about his finances. But he said Farage risks being seen "as a self-pitying, angry guy on an ego trip who is determined to distract people from some awkward facts."



Reform UK has lost three consecutive special elections that it hoped to win, a possible sign its support may be sagging

Opponents called the move a stunt and a sign Farage is on the ropes. Reform UK has lost three consecutive special elections that it hoped to win, a possible sign its support may be sagging.

The most recent loss was to Labour's **Andy Burnham**, who is all but certain to succeed Starmer as prime minister within weeks.

Labour, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party all said they would not run against Farage.

"He's run himself into a cul-de-sac and it was a stunt," Starmer said Wednesday. The prime minister said Farage is "up to his neck in sleaze and he doesn't want to answer questions about it."

The garbage can that could block a path back to Parliament

So far only one candidate has announced plans

to run against Farage: Count Binface, a comedian with a trash can on his head.

Jon Harvey is the man under the can, a self-described 5,000-year-old intergalactic space warrior who is a perennial candidate with no expectation of winning in the U.K.'s highest-profile elections.

He has run against former Conservative Prime Ministers Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak, London Mayor Sadiq Khan and, most recently, Burnham.

Binface told the BBC on Wednesday that his main appeal in Clacton would be that "I'm not Nigel Farage"

Dressed like a character in a low-budget sci-fi film, Binface offers offbeat policies catering to locals, such as synchronizing traffic lights on a particularly busy street or moving the hand dryer in the Crown & Treaty Pub in Uxbridge "to a more sensible location." A standing pledge is to cap croissant prices at 1.10 pounds (\$1.47).

Binface told the BBC on Wednesday that his main appeal in Clacton would be that "I'm not Nigel Farage." He said the lack of other candidates said more about them than him.

"Are they running scared from old Binny, or do they think that Nigel's running a cunning stunt?" he said.