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Ivanka Trump and Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin speak to an audience at Morehead State University's Space Science Center on Oct. 26.

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BEVIN

itancy to officially launch his re-election campaign.

BEVIN BEING BEVIN

Throughout the summer, when Bevin was asked if he would seek a second term, he often dismissed the question, saying he had plenty of time to decide.

It wasn't until after U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell suggested Bevin should run for re-election, which pushed speculation about Bevin's political future to a boiling point, that Bevin put the rumors to bed.

"As an incumbent with the ability to self fund, it removes the urgency that many candidates feel like they need to increase their name ID and raise money," said Les Fugate, a Republican lobbyist.

And Bevin does still have time. The filing deadline isn't until Jan. 29 and a significant primary challenger seems out of the question. He's active with the Republican Governor's Association, the Koch Network and the

Heritage Foundation and would likely be able to raise cash quickly after announcing his candidacy. Plus, he's a multimillionaire with name recognition from his first four years as governor.

But the delay has the potential to make backers nervous and opens the door for others to enter the race on the off chance Bevin bows out.

"I think the last thing you do is try to tell this governor what to do," Fugate said. "He always blazes his own path."

A RUNNING MATE

If it were just his name on the ballot, it's possible Bevin would have filed his campaign paperwork by now.

Instead, Kentucky law requires a gubernatorial candidate to have a lieutenant governor running mate before filing. That has left Bevin in a tricky situation.

In an interview with the Chamber of Commerce this month, Bevin said he would decide on a running

mate soon before saying he wasn't sure if it would be current Lt. Gov. Jeanne Hampton.

"There's never been, I don't believe, eight years of the same governor and lieutenant governor in the history of Kentucky," Bevin incorrectly told Jacqueline Pitts. (Former Gov. Paul Patton and Lt. Gov. Steve Henry served together for eight years and their term ended in 2003.) "It's not normal anywhere, and it's presumptuous of me to assume things on our lieutenant governor's behalf as to what her desires are."

Dropping Hampton, the first black woman elected to a statewide office in Kentucky history, could be a challenge for Bevin. Some Tea Party activists have already told him they won't support him if he chooses not to run with her and it wouldn't help a deeply unpopular governor to stir resentment among his base.

Should he decide to run with someone else, there's the challenge of finding a new running mate. Bevin alienated many Republican lawmakers with his comments on the legisla-

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*Les Fugate,
a Republican lobbyist*

ture's sexual harassment scandal and about teachers during the pension debate.

FREEZING THE FIELD

Republicans in Frankfort widely take Bevin at his word that he's running for re-election, but there is a chance he'll pull out at the last minute.

On almost every filing day, there's a politician who makes room for a handpicked candidate by freezing the field. They'll indicate they're running for re-election, maybe even file, but withdraw at the last minute to make room for the successor of their choice.

It often works because other potential candidates don't have time to get their paperwork filed in Frankfort. A last-minute filing is even more difficult for a gubernatorial candidate because of the constitution requires them to name a running mate.

That means Bevin could potentially freeze the field — people rarely want to go up against an incumbent — and help his hand-picked successor avoid a primary in a Republican Party that has a deep bench of candidates waiting their turn.

There's no indication Bevin is planning such a move, but it remains a possibility until he launches his re-election campaign in earnest.

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Lexington Herald-Leader (KY) (Lexington, Kentucky), December 20, 2018: 2. NewsBank: America's News.

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