



Former gov a good fit for Libertarians

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Bill Weld surprised us, again, by joining former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson, vying for the Libertarian presidential ticket. Many people are asking, “Why now?” For him, life is a marathon, not a sprint.

On paper, Weld brings a lot to the Libertarian Party. As governor of Massachusetts he closed a \$1.3 billion budget deficit without borrowing from Wall Street, cut taxes 19 times, balanced every budget, and otherwise brought the state back from the brink of bankruptcy.

The Cato Institute, a leading Libertarian think tank, gave Weld in 1992 the highest grade in its Fiscal Policy Report Card on America’s Governors, saying, “The governor with the best record is Weld, who inherited one of the most bloated state budgets in the country.”

Behind Weld’s anti-tax crusade is his long held belief that there is no such thing as government money, only taxpayer money. He said in 1998, “Government is bad when it takes more than 30 percent of a taxpayer’s income in taxes. Proudhon was wrong when he said property is theft; it’s our federal budget that is institutionalized theft.”

On social issues, he similarly shares the Libertarian platform of reducing government interference in people’s lives. In 1992 he said in a speech at the Republican National Convention in Houston, “I want government out of your pocketbook and your bedroom.” He is pro-choice, supports gay rights and favors medical use of marijuana, views that made him a maverick in the Republican Party.

But just as important, Weld brings a style of governing that is absent in Washington and a significant focus of this presidential race: an ability to work across party lines to get deals done. Voters are tired of gridlock. They want results.

The Republican Party is dominated by social conservatives whose litmus tests on abortion, climate change, immigration and same sex marriage have hindered their ability to work together, not only with Democrats but also with members of their own party. The big tent of the Republican Party has evolved into a big fortress — ideologically rigid, uninviting and out of

touch with the country's changing demographics, namely the growing influence of younger voters, Hispanics and other minorities.

The Democrats have similarly catered to their base, at the expense of fiscal prudence, believing that big government is the panacea for every societal problem. The ensuing political stalemates, threats of government shutdowns and increasing polarization between the two major political parties have led to a broad public distrust of everything Washington.

If Weld is remembered for anything as governor it is his bipartisan record. As governor, one of his favorite sayings was, "You never know where your next coalition is coming from," which enabled him to get things done as a Republican in one of the bluest states in the country, where Democrats outnumbered Republicans 3 to 1 in the Legislature.

In reforming state government, Weld didn't get everything he wanted and neither did the Legislature, but they worked together in an unprecedented way to lift Massachusetts out of a very precarious time in the state's history. As he demonstrated, good government is good politics for everyone.

By any measure, Weld has achieved a tremendous amount of success in his career. But for him, the journey is what's really important. Most of his campaigns shared a common theme: he was an underdog. But he seems to relish that status and the challenge of steep hills.

Whether in politics or life that's where he feels his best — out there in the arena, running.