

# The Daily Tar Heel

## Why Trump won't be the only Republican presidential candidate in the N.C. primaries

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President Donald Trump will not be the only name on the Republican Presidential ballot in the upcoming North Carolina primaries on March 3.

Against the wishes of the N.C. GOP, the N.C. State Board of Elections voted unanimously in December 2019 to add Bill Weld to the ballot for the Republican presidential primary after a request was made by his campaign.

N.C. GOP Chairperson Michael Whatley said in a statement that under state law, the Republican Party is required to submit the names of candidates who are generally advocated for and recognized in the news media for placement on the primary ballot.

“As President Trump is the only candidate who currently meets those requirements, his is the only name we have submitted,” Whatley said.

Jonathon Sink, the executive director of the N.C. Republican Party, said at the December meeting that the N.C. GOP believed Weld was not generally recognized in media throughout the country or the state.

“A simple Google search will show any reasonable person, or if you asked 100 people on the street who this person was, they will not be able to tell you that he is running for president,” Sink said.

According to a state statute, however, the State Board of Elections may nominate any candidate as long as they are recognized in the news media.

In a letter to the State Board of Elections requesting that Weld be included on the ballot, Natalie Cookson, the chief of staff for the Weld 2020 Presidential Campaign Committee, said Weld’s campaign team believed Weld met these requirements. The letter said Weld has received contributions from all 50 states and had already qualified for the primary-election ballots in Arkansas, California, Florida, Michigan, New Hampshire and Utah.

Bob Orr, a former N.C. Supreme Court justice and an attorney in Raleigh, advocated for Weld at the meeting.

“Governor Weld, as everyone knows, the former governor of Massachusetts, has worked at a number of capacities, he was the Libertarian vice presidential candidate in 2016, but he has been a lifelong Republican,” Orr said.

Orr said although he was at the meeting in an official capacity, he was also asking on behalf of a large number of registered Republicans that they be given a choice in the presidential primary.

Weld served two terms as governor in Massachusetts, where he cut taxes 21 times and never raised them. He was ranked as the most fiscally conservative governor in the country by the Cato Institute and Wall Street Journal. He previously served seven years in the U.S. Department of Justice under President Ronald Reagan.

Although Weld's website says Weld has been a Republican since the age of 18, Weld was the running mate of Libertarian presidential candidate Gary Johnson in 2016.

Susan Hogarth, chairperson of the N.C. Libertarian Party, said Johnson's decision to include Weld's name on his ticket was contentious within the party. She said although the party was happy to see someone of Weld's stature and intelligence in the party, he seemed dedicated to running against Trump.

"When he moved back to the Republican Party to make the greatest impact against Trump that he could, which is what I assume what his purpose was, we all wished him well in that endeavor," she said. "We do think it's important to have someone within the Republican Party standing against Trump because it's not a very popular position. I can't speak for everyone, but I absolutely respect that."

According to his campaign website, Weld's platforms include fiscal conservatism, free trade and international diplomacy, dedication to environmental issues and closing the income equality gap.

"We're glad he's on the ballot to offer a more free-market choice, we're not glad that it was through state intervention," Hogarth said. "We would love to have Weld rather than Trump, besides Trump. The thing that's important, he's saying things most Republicans don't want to say because they have a stake in the political game."

Weld received one of 40 delegates in the Iowa caucus and is preparing for the New Hampshire primary on Feb. 11. North Carolina voters will see Weld's name on the Republican ballot in the primary on March 3.