



US Libertarians pick ex-Republican governor Gary Johnson as presidential nominee

The US Libertarian party has nominated former New Mexico governor Gary Johnson as its candidate for the presidency. He was also the candidate in 2012 but hopes to improve his share of the vote this time.

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The Libertarian party again nominated Gary Johnson, a former Republican governor of New Mexico, as its presidential candidate at the party's congress on Sunday. Johnson's vice presidential running mate will be William Weld, a former Republican governor of Massachusetts.

"I will be the only third-party candidate on the ballot in all 50 states," Johnson said. "I'm it." The candidate for the vice presidency is to be Weld, a well-respected former Massachusetts governor who raised tens of thousands of dollars for former Republican candidate Mitt Romney's presidential runs.

Johnson won the nomination on the second ballot at the party's convention in Orlando, Florida on Sunday. He defeated Austin Petersen, the founder of The Libertarian Republic magazine and John McAfee, founder of the eponymous computer services company which produces antivirus software.

The 63-year-old Johnson said: "I am fiscally conservative in spades and I am socially liberal in spades," adding: "I would cut back on military interventions that have the unintended consequence of making us less safe in the world." Johnson has also pursued a years-long push to legalize marijuana.

Johnson's campaign is based in Salt Lake City, home to his most trusted political adviser and a state where Republican front-runner Donald Trump finished a distant third place in March's Republican primary election. "Utah understands how dangerous Trump is," said Howard Stephenson, a Republican state senator. "We're looking for someone to vote for."

"Gary will be an outlet for millions of Americans who just can't fathom the idea of voting for Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump," said Ed Crane, who co-founded the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute.

Seeking money and votes

In the 2012 presidential election, Johnson picked up 1 percent of the general election vote against President Barack Obama and Republican challenger Mitt Romney.

In order to qualify for the televised presidential debates, Johnson must average 15 percent in five recognized polls. He said he was hopeful of increasing his support due to the low popularity of Trump and Democratic challenger Hillary Clinton.

While his big party opponents have election budgets nearing a billion dollars, the Libertarian party spent \$2.5 million (2.2 million euros) on its 2012 campaign. Johnson hopes to raise "tens of millions of dollars" this time, he said.

The party's best showing so far was in 1980, when candidate Ed Clark got slightly more than 1 percent of the vote. The Libertarians first put forward candidates in 1972.

To date, US presidential votes have been a two-way fight between Democrats and Republicans. In 1912, former Republican President Teddy Roosevelt, running for the Bull Moose Party, managed 27 percent of the popular vote and 88 electoral votes. He finished second to Democrat Woodrow Wilson, the only time a third party candidate has done that well.