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Libertarian super PACs gear up for Gary Johnson

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At least one super PAC that was left hanging after the end of the presidential bid of Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) will now focus on helping Gary Johnson, the former governor of New Mexico who secured the Libertarian Party's nomination this past weekend.

Purple PAC, originally founded by former Cato Institute president Ed Crane as a vehicle for supporting the party's two-time Virginia candidate Robert Sarvis, briefly transformed into a pro-Paul group in 2015, with \$1.2 million in the bank. It hit the pause button in September, when Crane saw Paul tanking in the polls and doing little (apart from debate performances) to spread a libertarian message. The new-old Purple PAC, Crane said, may promote Johnson on social media and plan rallies for him, in addition to giving him air cover.

"We want to raise \$10 million, and hopefully we'll do even better than that," said Crane, who had gathered some potential donors to meet Johnson earlier in May. "If we don't have that much, there's no point going through this exercise."

Johnson's campaign, which is following its victory with a round of media hits in donor meetings, is looking to at least three other potential sources of support from super PACs. At a Sunday news conference, Libertarian Party Chairman Nicholas Sarwark would only name one of them: the Concerned American Voters PAC, led by Matt Kibbe. Eleven months ago, Kibbe left the fractious tea party group FreedomWorks to run CAV PAC in support of Paul's campaign, focusing on voter registration and outreach, not on TV ads. Over Memorial Day weekend, Kibbe was all over the Libertarian convention, introducing himself as a "recovering Republican" and cracking a beer at a pro-Johnson rally. ("This is freedom," he said, enjoying a pre-noon craft ale.)

Sarwark was also optimistic about a source of support that seemed to have closed off 32 years ago. When asked whether David or Charles Koch could support the Johnson bid, he said their denials came before the party chose its ticket — two former Republican governors whose policies closely align with the Kochs.

"Any party that includes both Rand Paul and Donald Trump stands for nothing," said Sarwark, referring to the Republicans. "As successful businessmen, I know they understand return on investment."