



First Time on TV: CNN to host Libertarian Town Hall

CNN will host a televised Townhall for the Libertarian ticket of Governors Gary Johnson and William Weld tonight at 9 pm eastern, the first time any non-major party candidates have been given this exposure.

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No other media are being allowed access to the event. For the past two days the Libertarian Townhall has been the subject of the CNN countdown clock that appears in the lower right corner of the screen on CNN broadcasts.

It is another first for Gary Johnson, a former two term Governor (while a Republican) of New Mexico.

Earlier this year the Libertarians had their first nationally televised debate, among contenders for the party's nomination, on the FOX Business show "Stossel." There were also subsequent debates on both Russia TV (from which Governor Johnson abstained) and Glen Beck's online BlazeTV (hosted by magician Penn Jillette).

Governor Johnson will also have another first, news we are breaking here, when he will speak to the National Hispanic State Legislators Association. Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump had been invited to speak to the group and have declined to do so.

The Town hall will be hosted by Chris Cuomo at CNN studios in New York, but local Johnson campaign supporters and Libertarian Party affiliates will be hosting debate watching parties at public venues around the country.

Johnson has been polling between 9-12 percent – and 18 percent among millennials.

The Commission on Presidential Debates, which most voters are unaware is a private organization completely owned and controlled by the Republican and Democratic Party establishments, has previously ruled that it will not invite anyone to debate who is not above 15 percent in polls.

Johnson has a non-profit group that is employing Constitutional attorney Bruce Fein (who was a Johnson delegate at the Libertarian Party nominating convention Memorial Day weekend in Orlando, Florida), to sue the Commission, to allow any candidate on enough state ballots that they could win the 270 Electoral College votes needed to be elected President into the presidential debates. In practice only the Libertarians – aside from Democrats and Republicans – (and perhaps the Green Party), are ever on enough state ballots to be admitted to the debates under this formula.

Many pollsters report that Johnson pulls voters from both Trump and Hillary, as well as from the ranks of people who might otherwise not vote.

One group particularly in play this year are gay voters, with Trump, Hillary, and Johnson — who along with Weld supported marriage equality before most other Republicans or Democrats — all claiming to be the best for gay voters.

Reports from local chapter presidents of Log Cabin Republicans (the gay Republican club), is that along the east coast corridor many gay Republicans, who had previously supported Rubio, Kasich or Fiorina, were leaning toward supporting the Johnson-Weld ticket, while in the west and midwest they were more likely to back Trump. Johnson opposes gun prohibition laws that disarm Americans, including gays, and Trump favors more vetting of immigrants from Muslim countries that practice terrorism including anti-gay genocide.

Since Johnson's nomination three weeks ago he has been endorsed by two elected officials: Nebraska state senator Laura Ebke, who switched parties from the GOP to the LP, and Paden, West Virginia Mayor Joel Davis, who was elected in June after having served on the city council.

Much is riding on Johnson's performance at the Town hall. Among Libertarian Party activists, a number express hope that Johnson will mature and become more substantial at the Town hall and in the rest of the campaign, and that Governor Weld will provide an influence in that direction. Johnson has been known to engage in dramatic humor some of his supporters are hoping he tones that down during this campaign.

Others are hoping the Johnson-Weld campaign will release substantial white papers on issues including education, budgets and taxes, entitlements, and foreign and military policy. In 1980, Libertarian presidential candidate Ed Clark did that, with many papers written by people, like Peter Ferraro, who went on to become go-to experts in the conservative movement.

Johnson is often reduced in the press to simply being a “pro pot” candidate, as Bill O’Reilly mentioned last night on a comedy segment with Greg Gutfeld and Bernard McGuirk. Ed Crane — the former CEO of the CATO Institute and the campaign manager for the 1980 Clark campaign — now heads the Purple PAC, which has raised money for Senator Rand Paul and Libertarian gubernatorial candidates. Crane and is reported to be ready to raise large donations for Johnson and Weld if he sees substantial white papers and policy proposals.