



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on December 30, 2011

Ex-GOP Contender Gary Johnson Seeks Libertarian Nomination

Former Republican presidential hopeful Gary Johnson (left), the popular two-term Governor of New Mexico, officially announced this week that he would be dropping out of the GOP race to seek the Libertarian Party nomination. "I am excited. I am liberated. And I am committed to shaking the system as it has never been shaken before," he said in his announcement.



The news led to a mixed reaction among analysts. Some Republicans publicly expressed fears that the liberty-minded Johnson could peel away crucial voters from the GOP in the general election, possibly helping Obamas reelection campaign. But Johnson does not see it that way and declared:

"For those who say my decision to run as the Libertarian Party candidate will only draw votes from the Republicans and re-elect President Obama let me predict that, as my full platform based on freedom becomes known, my candidacy will draw votes from both the Republicans and Democrats and many, many independents, he said in an effort to address those concerns."

As a [successful businessman and popular politician](#) who vetoed a record number of bills during his tenure as chief executive more than all 49 other Governors at the time, combined Johnson is still a popular figure in New Mexico. But during his run for the GOP presidential nomination, the mainstream media and the Republican Party establishment largely succeeded in [marginalizing](#) his campaign.

Of course, some of Johnsons views on social issues particularly abortion and homosexual marriage alienated many conservatives. But his long track record and relentless push for limited, constitutional government did help him build a dedicated cadre of support.

After complaining about the treatment he received from the press and GOP Insiders including [being barred](#) from some debates, even when candidates with lesser credentials and name recognition were invited to participate Johnson threatened weeks ago that he was considering a third-party run. And finally, during a press conference at the New Mexico State Capitol in Santa Fe on Wednesday, he made it official.

It was both a difficult decision and an easy one, Johnson said in an [e-mail to supporters](#). It was difficult because I have a lot of Republican history, and a lot of Republican supporters. But in the final analysis, as many, many commentators have said since watching how I governed in New Mexico, I am a Libertarian that is, someone who is fiscally very conservative but holds freedom-based positions on many social issues.



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The ex-Governors campaign platform includes ending the deficit and slashing federal spending almost in half. Johnson would also pursue the so-called Fair Tax while seeking to end monetary manipulation by the Federal Reserve. And he is a strong supporter of gun rights and the U.S. Constitution.

However, Johnson stands out from most other GOP contenders, with the notable exception of Rep. Ron Paul, by opposing foreign wars such as those in Libya and Afghanistan. He also supports ending the criminalization of marijuana.

But his positions on important social issues were probably among his most damning attributes among activists in the conservative Republican Party base. In fact, Johnson holds views that are extraordinarily unpopular even among more moderate conservatives. He supports, for example, a woman's so-called right to choose an abortion. He is also a strong proponent of what he calls marriage equality for gay Americans.

I had hoped to lay out a full libertarian message on all the issues in the Republican contest. I think this election needs a libertarian voice, Johnson said in the message to his backers. While Ron Paul is a good man and a libertarian who[m] I proudly endorsed for president in 2008, there is no guarantee he will be the Republican nominee.

Johnson also noted in the e-mail that the elite national media and the political ruling class did not want his message to be heard, mostly because they are afraid of voters realizing that there is another way.

It frightens them because they know our message is one that actually reflects the true beliefs of millions of Americans and they don't want those millions of people to know there really is a candidate for president who represents them, whether they are Republicans, Democrats, Independents or Libertarians, Johnson added, saying there was apparently no room in the two-party system for a candidate who proved that governing as a libertarian actually works.

If Johnson succeeds in capturing the Libertarian Party nomination, which at this point seems likely, he will be on the ballot in all 50 states. And at least in New Mexico, his campaign could do very well possibly even playing the role of spoiler, as [polls show](#) he could even pick up one or more electoral votes.

"You see a lot of name recognition among New Mexicans for Johnson frankly, those were the good times," [explained](#) Lonna Atkeson, head of the Center for the Study of Voting Elections and Democracy at the University of New Mexico. "It was the '90s, there was lots of money, the economy was booming, and people were really happy. They know him much better than they know Gingrich or Romney."

Johnson's chances of actually becoming President are slim, and he knows that. But, there are other reasons to run. The life-long Republican hopes to use his Libertarian campaign to free himself from the two-party system, shake up American politics, and deliver the message he touts as fiscally conservative and socially liberal.

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