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# Gary Johnson: A GOP Candidate Out but Not Down

Getty Images

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Gary Johnson, a GOP candidate for president and a former two-term governor of New Mexico, was nowhere to be found at Tuesday night's GOP presidential debate, New Hampshire. That's because, based on polling numbers, fundraising targets and other criteria, he didn't qualify for inclusion in the forum hosted by Bloomberg and The Washington Post. Currently, Johnson is polling in the slow single digits – at about 2 percent.

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This morning Johnson said his exclusion from the debate "sucks. It's unfair. It's completely unfair." He also reiterated his commitment to running for president. Invited by New Hampshire House Speaker William O'Brien, Johnson spoke this morning to state lawmakers in New Hampshire, along with businessman Herman Cain, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann, and former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum. He said he would submit a balanced budget if elected – echoing his previous comments on this subject – and also said the U.S. "is on the verge of a monetary collapse." In July, he told The Fiscal Times, "I'm in the camp that believes we're on the verge of financial collapse – it will be the bond market that collapses. And it'll be due to the fact there's no repaying $14.3 trillion in debt, given our ongoing deficits, yesterday, today and in the future."

Tweeting during the debate last night, Johnson pushed the fair tax, something he's long advocated. "Cain's 9-9-9 plan basically phases in the fair tax," he wrote, in response to the debate discussion about Herman Cain's tax plan. "Just implement [that]." Johnson also tweeted, "I promise to advocate throwing out the entire federal tax system and replace it with the fair tax." And he said, "The criticism of his [Cain's] 9-9-9 plan is justified in that the phasing presents all of the same old problems."

Johnson, 58, has not been on a lot of Republican radar screens: He has participated in just one GOP debate thus far, and was excluded from CNN's earlier GOP debate in June because he didn't poll above two percent nationally. But he's been campaigning across the country for nearly two years, and recently completed a 458-mile bicycle tour across New Hampshire to push his fiscally conservative messages. (Johnson's positions on social issues – such as the decriminalization of marijuana – put him more in line with fellow candidate Rep. Ron Paul of Texas than Rep. Michele Bachmann of Minnesota.) Here are excerpts from an earlier interview:

**The Fiscal Times (TFT)**: What's motivating you to run? Is this about trying to raise your political profile?

**Gary Johnson (GJ)**: To win – that's my motivation. Maybe it's my misfortune I've only run for two political offices before, for governor of New Mexico and for reelection as governor. I was successful both times. I'm not a typical politician. After I got out of office as governor, I got involved in a couple of entrepreneurial ventures. I've always been an entrepreneur, as well as an athlete. My background is in construction. I started a handyman business in 1974 and grew it to 1,000 employees.

**TFT**: Why do you think you're qualified to be president of the United States?

**GJ**: As governor of New Mexico, I vetoed more than 700 bills. I had thousands of line-item vetoes. I may have vetoed more legislation than the other 49 governors combined. I vetoed legislation that had to do with government intrusion into business. And because I got to run state government and run all the agencies, the business climate in New Mexico improved dramatically. I also see government playing a role that no other entity can play. There are bad actors out there. The government has to set some rules and regulations

**TFT**: Why don't more of us know about you?

**GJ**: I wasn't invited to the CNN debate [in June] – I wasn't at the table. Yet a few [months] ago they did a poll about the presidential candidates and favorability in their states. Even though New Mexico is two-to-one Democrat, and I made a name for myself as a Jeffersonian – man, did I pinch pennies [as governor, from 1994 to 2003] – there was only one candidate who had a high favorability rating in his own state. And that was me.

**TFT**: How can you increase your visibility in order to be a viable candidate?

**GJ**: You're pointing out the catch-22 for me. The concern with people when it comes to me is, "Wow, I like what you've got to say, I like what you've done, but man, you're not even on the radar screen." You've hit on the crux of the issue for me.

**TFT**: So how will you address this?

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