

# Arizona Daily Star

## Libertarian on Arizona ballot, but who knew?

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PHOENIX - Libertarian presidential candidate Michael Badnarik says he could be the nation's next chief executive if pollsters and debate officials would let him get his message out about less government.

Badnarik, in Phoenix Friday, pointed out that he is, in fact, on the ballot in Arizona - the only listed alternative to John Kerry and George W. Bush on Nov. 2.

He also already has qualified for ballot listing in 34 other states - enough, mathematically speaking, to get him the necessary 271 electoral votes.

Badnarik, who also campaigned in Tucson this week, said he is running because most of what the federal government does is unconstitutional.

He vowed to work to repeal the "blatantly unconstitutional" Patriot Act, which he said gives the government more powers to spy on suspected terrorists.

He also wants to bring home American troops stationed around the world, including in Iraq. He said U.S. actions there only help to drive more people to terrorism, as they see this country as occupiers.

Badnarik said voters today are actively looking for another choice, and they might find him if he can get into the three presidential debates later this year.

The Commission on Presidential Debates - set up by the two major parties - will permit others only if they show they have the support of at least 15 percent of the national electorate, as determined by five polling groups.

But Badnarik said he can't get there if he's not even listed as an option on surveys.

In Arizona, Bruce Merrill, who does statewide polling for KAET-TV, said he didn't intentionally exclude Badnarik from his surveys, but the Libertarian just did not cross his mind. He promised to add him next time he puts a survey in the field.

Pollster Earl de Berge, who runs the Behavior Research Center in Phoenix, said he was unaware Badnarik was on the ballot. He, too, said new polls will include Badnarik's name.

None of that will help Badnarik get the national poll attention he needs if he is to qualify for televised presidential debates. The Gallup Organization, for example, has made a conscious decision to exclude him.

Judith Keneman, assistant to Gallup's chief editor, said that to be included, a candidate has to qualify for the ballot in 40 states or have a name identification rate of at least 50 percent.

Badnarik counters, "I'm a legitimate candidate for a legitimate party, and I have a right to have my party's message heard."