

# The Salt Lake Tribune

## Rocky Anderson returns — this time shooting for president

Politics • Former Democrat plans to form a new party.

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Disgusted with what he calls the corrupting influence of corporate money and militarism in politics, former Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson is launching a new national political party and will likely be its presidential nominee.

“The end game is changing public policy in the interest of the people of this country. It’s changing our government,” Anderson said. “This is about taking on the two corporatist, militarist parties and in the process bringing the people of this country together so they can see that their interests, by and large, are really aligned.”

Anderson said he will likely be a candidate for the presidential nomination for the new party — which is yet to be named. He said the formation of the party will be announced next week “and shortly thereafter, I’ll be announcing my candidacy.” He has already started filling out paperwork for a presidential exploratory committee.

Once the announcement is made, he said a major effort to get on the ballot will start soon in all 50 states. The focus will first be on Mississippi and Vermont, which have a Jan. 1 deadline, but a relatively low bar to get on the ballot, Anderson said.

“This is being done with a long-term view so that we can grow and sustain a movement that will ensure that the public interest, rather than the corporate interests, are promoted by our elected officials,” said Anderson, who acknowledges he wishes he would have started the effort earlier.

Anderson said he is leaning toward calling the new organization The Justice Party or the Public Interest Party. He plans to host the party’s national platform and nominating convention in Salt Lake City during the



Keith Johnson | Salt Lake Tribune Former Salt Lake mayor Rocky Anderson speaks to a modest-sized crowd Friday at Pioneer Park in Salt Lake City during a protest. Anderson left the Salt Lake City mayor's office three years ago and founded High Road for Human Rights, a nonprofit organization.

Presidents Day weekend.

Anderson's party won't be alone in this election. The group Americans Elect has spent months qualifying its party for the ballot and plans to nominate a presidential candidate through a first-ever online primary. The group qualified for the Utah ballot earlier this month.

Anderson said the new party would converge nicely with the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations around the country, but his intention is not to co-opt that movement.

Thad Hall, a political science professor at the University of Utah, said Anderson is mounting a far-fetched, quixotic crusade.

Hall said states make it difficult to get on the ballot, and it's even more difficult to win.

"Basically what Rocky is saying is he wants a bunch of Republicans to get elected," Hall said, "because what's going to happen in these situations ... he's going to peel votes away from Democrats and end up electing a bunch of ultra-pro-life, ultra-gun, don't-tax-the-rich, cut-benefits-to-the-poor people."

Hall said American political parties are also well-branded and people "are well-sorted" into the Democrat or Republican bin. Few are truly independent, and "competing against their branding is going to be really frigging hard" and require an enormous amount of money.

Matt Lyon, executive director of the Utah Democratic Party, said he doesn't consider Anderson's latest action a repudiation of the Democratic Party — Anderson ran for Congress in 1996 as a Democrat.

"Rocky has always done what Rocky is going to do," he said. "He hasn't been involved with the Democrats for a very, very, very long time. ... He's just Rocky."

Anderson was in Washington last weekend meeting with supporters, formulating plans for the launch.

A leaked copy of the meeting agenda and minutes from a previous meeting noted that there was support for Anderson forming an exploratory committee as soon as possible. The document outlines a platform for the party focused on ending the corporate influence, stopping wars, promoting human and civil rights and ending for-profit prisons.

"The middle class in this country is being decimated and it's without regard for political affiliation," Anderson said in an interview. "All of us are being harmed while a very few are profiting enormously by the corruption, by bad public policy that they essentially purchase. These folks in Congress and the White House act as if they're on retainer by Goldman Sachs, the insurance industry, with the coal and oil and gas industry, with the defense industry."

Others involved in the discussions include Margaret Flowers, a doctor and proponent of a single-payer health plan; Kevin Zeese, an organizer of the Occupy D.C. movement; and former U.S. Rep. John Anderson, who ran for president as an independent in 1980.

Anderson said there is a "rich history" of third party candidates in the United States, from the Bull Moose Party of Teddy Roosevelt to the challenges mounted by Ross Perot and later Ralph Nader.

And he said it is unfair to blame Nader for costing former Vice President Al Gore the election in 2000 — although a relative handful of Nader voters could have swung the election in Gore's favor. Anderson said the blame lies with voters who backed George W. Bush.

In August, Anderson sent a scathing letter to House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, scolding her for failing to

oppose torture, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and increased defense spending and refusing to address climate change, health policy and defense spending.

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Paul Rolly contributed to this report.

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Rocky Anderson's road so far

The civil rights attorney was mayor of Salt Lake City from 2000 to 2008. He ran for Congress as a Democrat in 1996 and lost to Rep. Merrill Cook. He served on the boards of Planned Parenthood of Utah, Common Cause and the American Civil Liberties Union.

After leaving the mayor's office, Anderson started High Road for Human Rights, a nonprofit created to spur grass-roots advocacy on human rights and global warming issues. He announced recently that he is shutting down the organization because of the difficulty of fundraising during a down economy.

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Online

O Read about the meeting agenda and minutes outlining the new party's platform. • [bit.ly/u1Up7B](http://bit.ly/u1Up7B)

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