GOP presidential hopeful makes campaign swing through county

By Dave Abner
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A presidential hopeful made a campaign swing last week through Stone County. Indiana businessman Michael Petyo, 66, held two town hall meetings here last week, had coffee with locals at a local restaurant and met customers at a local convenience store.

Petyo, a Republican candidate for U.S. president, was accompanied by Stone County resident Jim Wright, who lives just south of the Kimberling City bridge near Point 7. Wright is serving as Petyo's campaign coordinator for Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas and Oklahoma.

Petyo made previous comments that seemed to indicate he thinks it acceptable if businesses pay little or no tax, as long as the employees of those same businesses pay taxes. He was asked to clarify his previous comments.

He said, "You've got to have big business or what?" Acknowledging he has little name recognition, as well as a decided uphill road to the Republican nomination, Petyo described how an Everyman might possibly get the nomination. To be successful, he said, such a candidate would have to be "really, really likable and he has to really be sincere and for the working man. He would have to be genuine—not smoke and mirrors."

Petyo's not yet registered with the Federal Election Commission as a presidential candidate because he hasn't yet raised any campaign money.

He pledged that he'll be on the ballot in Missouri and said he intends to be on the ballot in as many other states as possible. Asked to detail how many petition signatures he'll need to be on Missouri's presidential primary ballot, Petyo said, "I honestly don't know."

In a debated item, he said he'll collect the necessary signatures across the country as he holds town hall meetings in other states.

Petyo promises he's a bona fide presidential candidate. He said he's not a token candidate and said he's not running just to make some sort of statement, claiming that he's a genuine candidate. He said, "I declared a year ago."

Asked to detail if he's pro-life or pro-choice, Petyo paused and then declared himself pro-life.

Petyo's thoughts on Common Core, Petyo paused, and then asked, "About the schools?" He then replied, "I'd probably trash it in the next week. What happened to the Three Rs?"

He also said, "I think the whole education system needs to be reworked. Parents and teachers should ultimately decide education policy."

He's a gun rights candidate, saying, "Everybody has a right to defend themselves."

Petyo said he has already acquired nuclear weapons, he said, "I don't know." He should be permitted to have nuclear weapons, Petyo said, "I think we ought to eliminate anybody else from having nuclear weapons." He added that adding new nations to the nuclear list makes for a world order that is "too dangerous" both at home and abroad.

Petyo responded to the following lengthy question: "America has nuclear weapons. Why should America be allowed to have nuclear weapons, yet have a say in determining whether other countries should or should not be allowed to have nuclear weapons?"

Petyo's response: "That's real simple. We have been the defender of the world. We're still the defender of the world. The United States is like an attorney—our job is to help people."

Another question: "Some people say American spends too much time being the world's cop. How do you respond?"

Petyo replied, "I would have to agree. That's our job to help those who need help. There are times when we stick our noses in and times when we shouldn't."

He added that America "shouldn't pick a fight but shouldn't back down."

He described the theory that global warming is taking place as "bogus."

With virtually no name recognition on a national stage, Petyo faces a tough fight to gain traction in an already crowded field of GOP presidential hopefuls. Does he think he has any legitimate chance to gain the nomination?

He said, "Jobs will turn the tide. I can bring back the jobs."

Without detailing how he'd accomplish significant job creation, Petyo mentioned the many industrial jobs that have been lost in the Midwest over the past generation.

He also claimed he could rejuvenate the steel industry and create 20 million new steel industry jobs.

He said he favors expanding the defense budget, saying the country's defense budget has been "given crumbs" in recent years.

Asked to describe the preferred core functions of the federal government, Petyo said the government should "stay out of the lives of people, defend the country and have our own currency."

Petyo acknowledged he favors a return to the gold standard.

As noted above, Petyo said he declared his candidacy a year ago.

And asked why he hadn't raised any campaign money at all in an entire year, Wright interjected that, "Michael filed but he literally spent a year not doing anything."

In a related item, he was asked to detail how much of his own money he's spent on his campaign during the past 12 months.

Petyo said, "Not a lot—maybe a few thousand dollars."

Finally, one other question posed to Petyo: "How realistic are your chances to be the Republican nominee?"

Petyo said, "Some people would look at me like a snowball."

Indiana businessman Michael Petyo, right, is seeking the Republican nomination for U.S. president. Petyo made a campaign swing through Stone County, accompanied by Jim Wright of Kimberling City. Wright is serving as Petyo's campaign coordinator for Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas and Oklahoma.