

KASICH from page one

locals as well as national media.

"He had 80 people there and only had been a candidate for a day and a half," said Gibson Center Executive Director George Cleveland.

"I think people were pretty pleased. He's good on his feet and a very nice guy."

In fact, the 63-year-old Kasich has been pleased with all the turnouts he received during a recent New Hampshire visit, which also included trips to Greenland, Wolfeboro and Nashua.

Executive Councilor Joe Kenney introduced Kasich to the Gibson audience as the "most qualified to be president of the United States" and someone who can balance budgets. He said Ohio, a state with 11.5 million people, is one that eight presidents have called home.

Kasich is a two-term governor who won reelection in 2014. He was a U.S. representative from 1983 to 2000. In that 1982 election, he was the only Republican in the country to beat an incumbent. In 1999, he briefly explored a presidential run but dropped out before the Iowa caucuses.

Right off the bat, Kasich apologized for being a little late to the Gibson Center but offered an excuse that seemed to get him off the hook with his audience. "I was at Zeb's," he said. "I wasn't coming out of there for anybody."

During a Q and A, Conway resident Joe Bagshaw asked whether a constitutional amendment would be needed to address the power of corporations in campaign fundraising.

Kasich responded: "It's a bad system when billionaires can be the ones who pick presidents. If I win, I will probably like it more. If I lose, I will say the system is bad."

Kasich said he doesn't have a firm plan to address campaign finance reform but is open to suggestions. Later on, he told a reporter he looks forward to hearing recommendations from a group called the New Hampshire Rebellion, which seeks to raise awareness of the issue.

"The beauty of New Hampshire is (candidates) can spend all the money in the world, but money doesn't buy you love in New Hampshire," said Kasich.

"You (New Hampshire voters) are like the TSA of politics, except you do a better job than they do," said Kasich, calling the state a "testing ground."

"I can come here a lot of times, and we will see if you like me. If you do, great! If you don't, I will shed a few tears, and I will still be the governor of Ohio, and that ain't bad."

He was then asked why it took so long for him to run. Kasich said he had to think about fundraising and put together a good team, which includes former New Hampshire Sen. John E. Sununu (R-NH). He said the biggest challenge will be increasing his name recognition. He was departing for South Carolina right after speaking in North Conway.

Conway's Steven Steiner, who lost a son to drug



Ohio Gov. John Kasich answers reporters' questions after an event outside the dining hall at the Gibson Center for Senior Services in North Conway during a campaign stop last Thursday, July 23. Kasich is vying for the Republican nomination in the upcoming 2016 presidential election. (JAMIE GEMMITI PHOTO)

abuse 14 years ago, asked if Kasich, as president, would enforce a federal law against marijuana in states that have legalized it.

"Probably not," said Kasich, while adding he plans to oppose an effort to legalize marijuana in Ohio.

Asked about immigration, Kasich said the border needs to be sealed. But he also thinks there should be a guest worker program. He said criminals should be jailed or deported, and recent arrivals need to be deported. Productive illegal immigrants should pay a penalty and then be allowed to stay.

As for health care, Kasich said he opposed the Affordable Health Care Act and contrasted it with an Ohio program that helps children with asthma by partnering hospitals with insurance companies.

Doctors found a way to treat asthma without hospitalization. This caused hospitals to lose money and insurance companies to make bigger profits because they don't pay a claim.

"Guess what? When you have fewer hospital visits and the insurance company makes more profits, they split it," said Kasich. "The child is healthier, the cost is less, and everybody is happier."

Kasich said he would have three priorities if elected president: to balance the budget (and create jobs); to build a strong national defense; and to unite the country politically.

Kasich painted himself as a man who can balance budgets. "I was one of the people that found the hammers, the screwdrivers and the wrenches that cost thousands of dollars," said Kasich of his early years as a congressman.

Ten years later, in 1997, he was chairman of the budget committee and "chief architect" of balancing the federal budget. During that time, the government paid down the largest amount of publicly held debt, cut taxes on investment and created a \$5 trillion surplus, Kasich said.

One man asked about his plan now to reduce the

federal debt, which stands at about \$18 trillion.

Kasich replied: "You can't reduce the debt until you balance the budget and begin to run surpluses. We actually balanced our budget for four years in a row, and that's how we were able to pay off some of the national debt."

Kasich also touted his record as governor.

"I inherited a terrible situation in Ohio. That was part of the reason I ran. I knew no matter how poorly I did I couldn't screw it up. It was so bad. Sort of like running for president now, right? Nowhere to go but up."

At the time he ran, he said, Ohio was \$8 billion in the red, and 350,000 jobs had been lost. About four years later, the state is \$2 billion in the black, jobs have bounced back and taxes have been cut.

At the same time, he said Ohio is dedicated to its developmentally disabled, mentally ill and drug addicted populations. "No one gets left behind."

Another man in the audience said he won't fly his American flag because he "despises" the Obama administration.

The man was apparently frustrated by news reports of American service people being shot at a military bases.

Kasich said later that America has been through tough times but said the nation will be "fine" and that people shouldn't "mope around." He then addressed the man with the flag.

"Put the flag back up and then take a picture of it, and I want you to send me the picture," said Kasich. "Whether I win or not, we are not giving up on our country."

That said, Kasich did have some criticism for the current inhabitant of the White House. For example, he said Obama's proposed nuclear deal with Iran should be rejected by the Senate.

"They are going to get a nuclear weapon and tons of cash," said Kasich. "What sense does that make?"

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