

2016 US Presidential Election

An Insights and Analysis Briefing from
The Whitehouse Consultancy



Whitehouse Analysis

It is often suggested that American politics provides voters little by way of choice, with the Republicans and Democrats largely indistinguishable on many major issues. That is certainly not the case in this election, with Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump offering fundamental differences in terms of style and substance on foreign and domestic policy.

Clinton has retained a consistent lead over Trump in most of the polls since the start of the year and is ahead in the swing states likely to decide the election. The situation has become even more pronounced in the last few weeks with Trump facing a meltdown in response an ugly public dispute with the family of a dead US soldier, revelations about his former campaign manager's business activities in Eastern Europe, and controversy over comments regarding what "second amendment people" could do in response to a Clinton victory.

Looking at the state level polls, it is difficult to see how Trump can accumulate enough electoral college votes to reach the 270 needed to secure victory. Indeed, Clinton is pulling ahead of her rival even in states like Virginia that have historically favoured Republicans. Such is Trump's toxicity that some GOP insiders fear he could harm the party's concurrent Senate and House races.

However, the business tycoon's tenacity should not be discounted. A few polls have shown him narrowing the gap – although we should remember that a candidate can come close in the national vote share while going to a crushing defeat in the electoral college. Recent weeks have seen his team undergo a number of personnel changes and his tone has seemingly softened. If he can project a more statesmanlike appearance during the

presidential debates and demonstrate that he has the temperament to become commander in chief, he may start to look competitive again.

While most commentators predict a comfortable win for Clinton, the prospect of a Trump victory is not impossible and must be taken seriously. Although Trump has been vocally supportive of Brexit and has said he is supportive of an expedited post-EU trade deal, he has been quick to threaten tariffs or trade retaliations as part of his foreign policy discourse. His unpredictability and previous spats with UK politicians such as Alex Salmond and Sadiq Khan also suggest he would be a difficult negotiating partner.

"The prospect of a Trump victory is not impossible and must be taken seriously"

In terms of foreign affairs, Trump's questioning of the role of NATO and whether the US would honour its commitments under Article 5 is a matter of concern to European capitals. If Trump becomes president and the US rolls back on a very active foreign policy, this will have an impact on the extent to which the UK engages itself in international hot spots such as Ukraine and Syria.

Clinton, on the other hand, offers a degree of stability and predictability. While some have expressed concern that her worldview is too similar to that of the Republicans' neoconservative wing, she will likely be well received by senior figures in Theresa May's cabinet.

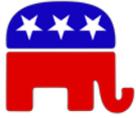


Carl Thomson

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Donald Trump

Background: Chairman and President of the Trump Organization; Founder of Trump Entertainment Resorts; Host of The Apprentice.

Running mate: Mike Pence, Governor of Indiana

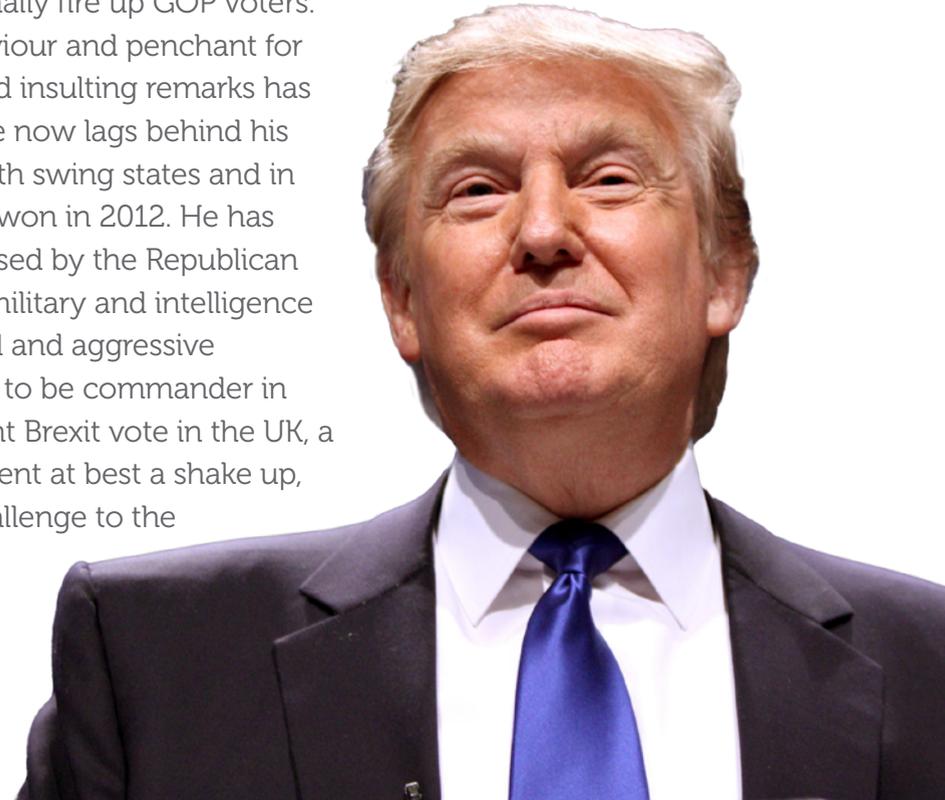
Fundraising: \$91.4m

Odds: 3/1

Key policies

- Stronger security vetting of immigrants
- Compel Mexico to pay for a wall along the southern US border
- Renegotiate US-China trade agreements
- Repeal Obamacare and support Congress-led healthcare reform with an emphasis on free market solutions
- Better support for veterans' mental health provision
- Streamline federal income tax from seven brackets to three

The Republican nominee was never expected to get this far, with most commentators assuming his campaign would crash and burn before the primary season kicked off at the start of the year. Often derided as a buffoon, Trump initially played a shrewd game, appealing to the fears and insecurities of America's blue collar workers and tapping into a feeling of disillusionment to see off 16 other GOP challengers. He found widespread and noisy support for his uncompromising position on immigration and denunciations of free trade. Significantly, he has slain some core Republican shibboleths, repudiating the Iraq War and doctrine of foreign policy interventionism, and adopting ambivalent or non-committal stances on social issues such as gay rights which traditionally fire up GOP voters. However, his abrasive behaviour and penchant for controversial statements and insulting remarks has repelled many voters and he now lags behind his Democratic opponent in both swing states and in several which Mitt Romney won in 2012. He has been only reluctantly endorsed by the Republican establishment, with senior military and intelligence figures warning that his wild and aggressive personality makes him unfit to be commander in chief. More so than the recent Brexit vote in the UK, a Trump victory would represent at best a shake up, and at worst a profound challenge to the established global order.





Hillary Clinton

Occupation: Lawyer; First Lady; Senator for New York; Secretary of State.

Running mate: Tim Kaine, Senator for Virginia

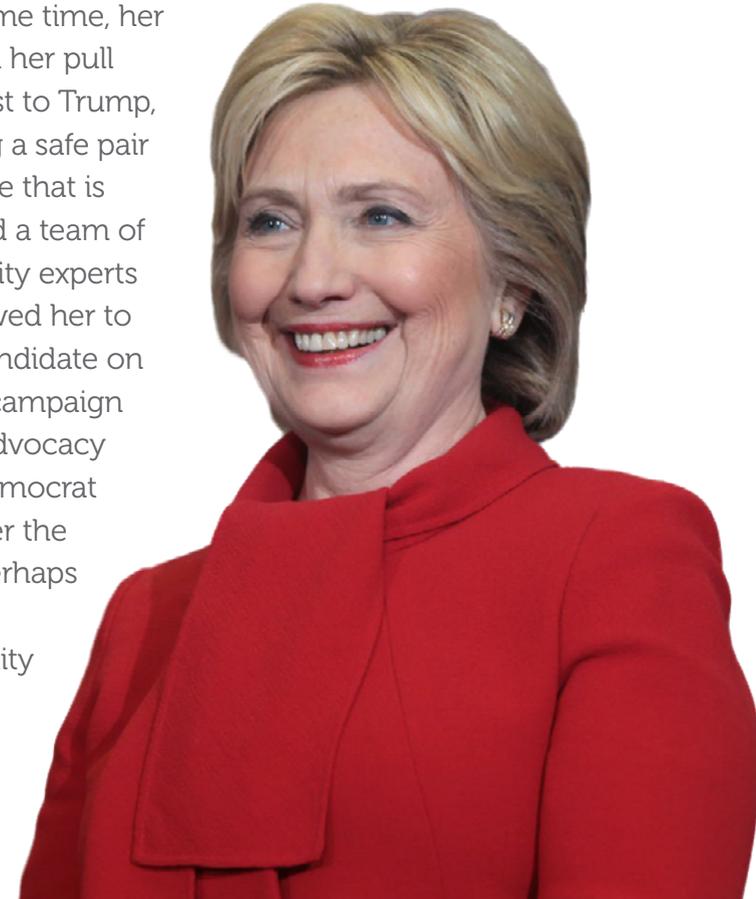
Fundraising: \$374.4m

Odds: 1/4

Key policies

- Introduce a “fair share surcharge” on higher earners
- Tax relief for working families and small businesses
- Expand background checks for gun sales and greater restrictions on military style weapons
- Promote teacher training and computer science in schools
- Increase the minimum wage and restore trade union collective bargaining rights
- Reduce mandatory prison sentences for non-violent offenders

The Democrat candidate has been in the public eye for over 25 years, serving as First Lady, Senator for New York and Secretary of State, narrowly missing out to Barack Obama for the Democratic nomination in 2008. However, there is a feeling of Clinton fatigue and her unfavourability ratings are on a par with those of her GOP opponent. Her authority has been further undermined by the scandal over her email arrangements, and she struggled to fend off a primary challenge from a candidate that should have been no match against someone of her stature and fundraising ability. At the same time, her Republican opponent’s toxicity has seen her pull comfortably head in the polls. In contrast to Trump, she has cultivated a reputation for being a safe pair of hands and projected a leadership style that is calm under pressure. She has assembled a team of foreign policy hawks and national security experts that, atypically for a Democrat, has allowed her to grasp the mantle as the most trusted candidate on terrorism and defence. By building her campaign around a sense of social duty and her advocacy of issues close to the hearts of many Democrat voters, she has also united her party after the bruising contest with Bernie Sanders. Perhaps ironically given the allure of electing the first female president, she offers continuity and stability at home and abroad.



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Gary Johnson



Jill Stein

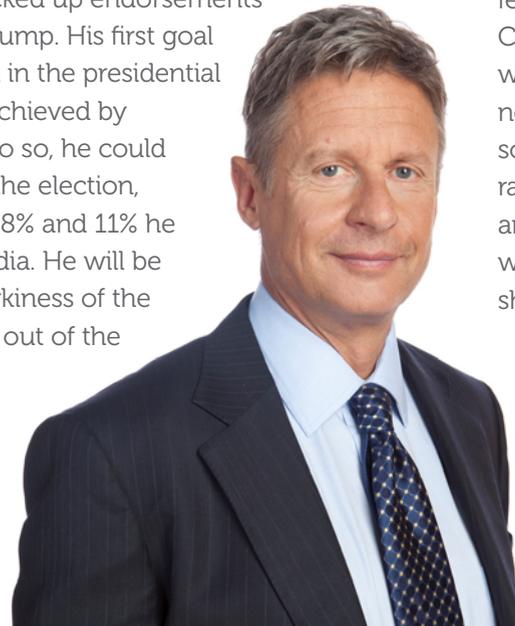
Background: Founder, Big J Enterprises; Governor of New Mexico; Libertarian Candidate for President in 2012.

Running mate: Bill Weld, former Governor of Massachusetts

Fundraising: \$1.4m

Odds: 150/1

A successful two-term governor of New Mexico and accomplished businessman, Johnson dropped out of the Republican primaries in 2012 and switched to the Libertarian Party in the hope that his blend of pragmatic economic conservatism and social liberalism would attract support across the political spectrum. Although he took less than 1% of the vote four years ago, he sees an opportunity in the divisive nature of this year's contest. Johnson offers more substantial executive experience than either of his opponents, and he has picked up endorsements from Republicans unable to support Trump. His first goal is to poll the 15% required for inclusion in the presidential debates as third candidate, a feat last achieved by Ross Perot in 1992. If he were able to do so, he could transform the nature and outcome of the election, but despite currently scoring between 8% and 11% he is struggling to gain traction in the media. He will be further handicapped by the innate quiriness of the Libertarians and their inability to break out of the political fringe.



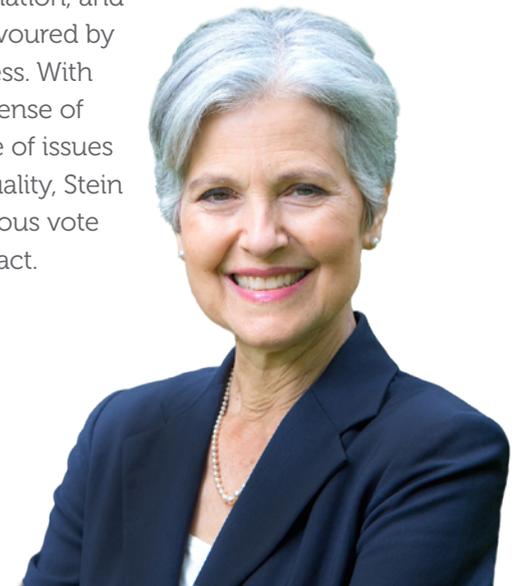
Background: Physician and Lecturer; Green Party candidate for President in 2012.

Running mate: Ajamu Baraka, civil rights activist

Fundraising: \$859k

Odds: 400/1

The high point of the Green Party's presidential fortunes was in 2000, when Ralph Nader took 2.7% and denied Al Gore crucial electoral college votes in swing states. Since then the Greens' fortunes have waned, with Jill Stein scoring less than 1% in 2012. As with Gary Johnson, the unpopularity of the mainstream candidates in this year's race provides space for her to pick up support. She has courted Democrat voters enthused by the insurgency campaign of Bernie Sanders – young, affluent and idealistic voters who feel betrayed by the mechanisms employed by the Democratic National Committee to deny Sanders the nomination, and who refuse to back a candidate also favoured by neoconservative hawks and big business. With some left-wing voters fired up with a sense of radicalism and the current prominence of issues around social injustice and racial inequality, Stein will undoubtedly improve on her previous vote share but is unlikely to make a big impact.



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States to watch

Nevada

Electoral college votes: **6**

Predominantly Republican in previous elections, Nevada voted for Obama in 2008 and 2012. However, Trump is popular with voters older than 30, white voters and non-evangelicals, and even with Clinton surging in recent weeks the state looks competitive.

Colorado

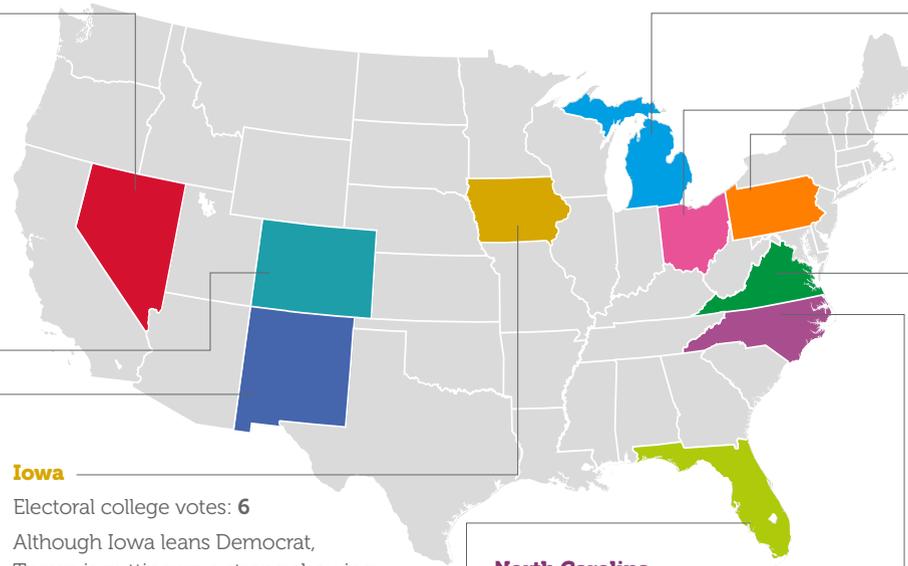
Electoral college votes: **9**

Colorado has voted both Democrat and Republican in recent elections and retains a strong independent streak. Gary Johnson is performing well here, with one poll putting him at 17%.

New Mexico

Electoral college votes: **5**

New Mexico has only failed to vote for the winning candidate twice – in 1972 and 2000. It therefore does not augur well for Trump he is lagging behind. Having governed the state for eight years, the Gary Johnson factor is very much in play.



Iowa

Electoral college votes: **6**

Although Iowa leans Democrat, Trump is putting up a strong showing. Notoriously contrarian, the Hawkeye State gave the first victory of the GOP primaries to Ted Cruz and famously dashed Hillary's presidential aspirations in 2008.

Florida

Electoral college votes: **29**

The quintessential swing state and a microcosm of the country as a whole, Florida was decided by less than 1% in 2012. This is the kind of state where Trump needs to mount a feasible challenge if he is to have any prospect of winning. Less than a month ago he was tied with Clinton, but in a trend seen in other swing states, the Democratic challenger has now well in the lead.

Michigan

Electoral college votes: **16**

Trump's campaign had suggested that their candidate's appeal to working class, blue collar voters could see him mount a challenge in the Midwest and rust belt states like Michigan. These hopes look dashed as Clinton is still comfortably ahead in a state that saw Obama beat Romney by almost 10% in 2012.

Ohio

Electoral college votes: **18**

Ohio has voted for the winning candidate in every presidential election since 1964. Its governor is John Kasich, who was the last establishment Republican candidate left standing against Trump. A few weeks ago Trump and Clinton were tied here with 41% each, but recent polls show Clinton in the lead.

Pennsylvania

Electoral college votes: **20**

Usually considered a battleground state, Pennsylvania voted Democratic in the last six presidential elections although it is home to a lot of blue collar voters who stayed at home in 2012. Polls earlier in the summer put Trump ahead by a narrow margin, but he now trails Clinton by as much as 10%.

North Carolina

Electoral college votes: **15**

In 2008 Barack Obama won North Carolina for the Democrats for the first time since 1976. Although the state voted for Mitt Romney in 2012, Clinton's support among minority communities makes this a viable target.

Virginia

Electoral college votes: **13**

Although Virginia voted twice for Obama, it usually leans Republican. Symptomatic of the difficulty faced by Trump in charting a course to the White House, this is another state where Clinton is ahead by a double digit margin.

To discuss how we can help your organisation
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