

Republican presidential candidate Walker led campaign against unions

Washington (dpa) - Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker is a Republican presidential hopeful who a year ago was routinely seen mowing the lawn in front of his parent's house, and could be found in the sports stadiums cheering and talking to other fans.

But these days, he has been travelling across the United States testing the waters for his White House bid.

On Monday, he finally waded in, tweeting the announcement.

"America needs big bold ideas from outside of Washington," he said in the video linked to the tweet. "We balanced budgets ... and enacted big bold reforms to power out of the big government special interests, and gave it to hard-working taxpayers."

Walker, 47, has been making national waves since 2011, when he stirred up a hornet's nest with his anti-union campaign in the mid-western state with a historically liberal reputation.

Walker has been in politics since his early 20s, dropping out of college at Milwaukee's Marquette University in 1990 just a few months before graduation.

Months later, at 22, he waged his first - and only failed - political campaign in a bid for a seat in the lower house, the state Assembly.

Since then, through successive 12 political campaigns, he has always won - climbing up from the Assembly to elected executive of the state's largest urban jurisdiction - Milwaukee County - and finally into the governor's office in 2011.

Walker's increasing absences from the state in apparent pursuit of the presidency has drawn criticism. On Sunday he signed off on Wisconsin's state budget that cuts hundreds of millions from public education, and keeps in place his tax cuts.

State Senate Democratic leader Jennifer Shilling charged Walker was selling out Wisconsin to advance his national ambitions.

"Republicans carefully crafted this budget to benefit one person who just so happens to be running for president," said Shilling.

Walker was born on November 2, 1967, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He spent most of his childhood in the mid-western state of Iowa and his teenage years in rural Wisconsin.

Walker's most controversial political move - one that put him into national headlines - was his proposal as the newly elected governor in 2011 to undermine the power of state employee unions and force public employees to pay more of their pension and healthcare costs. His reforms mainly affected teachers, city workers, civil servants and others.

He proposed a law that heavily reduced the right of state workers to collective bargaining and undercut the power of unions.

The angry scenes topped national news coverage for days as protesters swarmed into the state capitol building and camped out on the lawn.

Minority Democrats were unable to vote down the bill, so 14 of them - enough to deprive the legislature of a quorum - packed up and fled to the bordering state of Illinois for weeks in a dramatic attempt to foil the law.

Walker ducked the resistance, putting his anti-union measures into a different legal form that did not include a budget issue and therefore did not need a quorum for passage.

Soon after, Walker's opponents gathered enough signatures to demand a recall election, which pitted him against Milwaukee's Democratic Mayor Tom Barrett.

Walker won, and became one of the few American governors to survive a recall election

"Tonight we tell Wisconsin, we tell our country and we tell people all across the globe that voters really do want leaders who stand up and make the tough decisions," Walker said on the night of his recall election victory in 2012.

He went on to win re-election in 2014 for another four years.

During last year's debates, Walker was challenged about his commitment to Wisconsin if he was planning to run for president.

Walker said he would serve out his full four-year term, which drew scepticism from those who knew him and his ambitions. Once he was re-elected, he immediately hinted at his presidential ambitions.

"The folks in Washington like this top-down approach that's old and artificial and outdated that says the government knows best.

We believe that you should build the economy from the ground up," Walker said the night of his 2014 re-election.

Symbolic of the determination of this successful state politician is the name he has given to his super PAC organized to raise money for his presidential campaign.

He calls it "Unintimidated" - the same title of the book he wrote in 2013.

<http://www.dpa-international.com/news/international/profile-republican-presidential-candidate-walker-led-campaign-against-unions-by-jordyn-noennig-dpa-a-45937944.html>