

# Wallace Bids For 3d Term, Hints at 1976

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MONTGOMERY, Ala., Feb. 22—Gov. George C. Wallace, declaring himself the voice of "the mainstream of American political thought," today formally announced his candidacy for an unprecedented third term and hinted broadly he would seek the presidency again in 1976.

Addressing a cheering throng of supporters who jammed the gallery and floor of the State House of Representatives, Wallace said he had no "specific plans" beyond the gubernatorial race, in which he is a prohibitive favorite for victory.

But he said that "as Governor of Alabama again, I will be in a position to see that those I represented in 1968 and 1972 will be represented . . . in 1976.

"I certainly intend," Wallace said, "to let both parties know that they had better pay attention to the needs of the average citizen in this country, because those of us assembled here today represent the mass of America."

Wallace, 54, who held the governorship from 1962 through 1966 and reclaimed it in a hard-fought battle in 1970, is an overwhelming choice to defeat state Sen. Eugene McLean in the May primary. With filing deadline a week away, the Republicans have no candidate and State GOP chairman Richard Bennett emphasized today that he wants to avoid a challenge to Wallace in order to concentrate on legislative races.

The governor, paralyzed below the waist by a near-fatal assassination attempt that cut short his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination in May of 1972, told his supporters today that, "Im physically able to make any kind of campaign that is necessary. I am as well physically as I have ever been, with the exception of being unable to walk."

He pulled himself up from his wheelchair and stood erect at a lectern in the well of the house, supported by a leather strap across the back of his thighs for over an hour today,

to make his speech, answer questions and shake hands with well-wishers. Afterwards, he complained of a stiff back but otherwise did not seem fatigued.

While Wallace was making his long-expected announcement, preparations for a presidential race, which have never really stopped, were proceeding as usual at the Wallace headquarters near the Capitol. His organization collected over \$1 million last year to retire the remaining 1972 campaign debt. Saturday, Wallace supporters from a dozen states are to meet in Houston to discuss plans for electing delegates to the Democratic Party mid-term conference in December.

In recent months, Wallace has been courted by virtually every leading Democrat, and just last Monday President Nixon came to Huntsville to praise him at a patriotic celebration.



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Gov. Wallace announces candidacy for a third term at the capitol in Montgomery, Ala. Seated at right are his mother, Mozell Wallace, and his wife, Cornelia.

"I am very proud," the governor said today, "that the people of Alabama are recognized the length and breadth of our country as people who are in the mainstream of American political thought . . . I am proud of the fact that we are visited by people from the President and up and down, who now say we are the conscience and the heart of America, because I knew it all the time."

Standing beneath a plaque commemorating "The Ordinance of Cession which withdrew Alabama from the Union of Sovereign States on Jan. 11, 1861," Wallace emphasized several times how far he has moved away from his own political beginnings as a staunch segregationist.

He cited his record in education and social services and said his goal in seeking to become the state's first three-term governor is to "show the people of the nation that all the people of Alabama can live together in a spirit of peace and harmony."

"We know," he said, "that every person in this state is a citizen of this state, entitled to every one of the opportunities everyone of us assembled here today is entitled to." Wallace said that had always been his view, but "sometimes we have been misinterpreted."

The crowd today was overwhelmingly white, but Wallace made a point of being photographed with a handful of blacks who came to shake his hand after the speech.

It was a campaign crowd, waving banners and wearing Wallace hats, and they cheered every reference to his past and prospective presidential races.

But the biggest cheer of the day came when Wallace was asked about his health. Cornelia Wallace, his wife, stepped forward as if to answer, but Wallace waved her away from the microphone.

"What my wife is trying to say," he remarked, "is that I'm wearing her out." The capitol of the Confederacy exploded in cheers.