

Carpenter, 'Darth Vader' among 1,500 vying for White House

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Chicago: Michael Petyo is a carpenter, a US Navy veteran, a grandfather and Russian Orthodox church cantor who likes to boast about his homemade nut rolls. He also happens to be a candidate for president of the United States.

The 66-year-old Indiana man has no big financial backers, little political experience outside of two failed runs for Congress and his odds of winning are almost nil. But that has not stopped him from thinking he is the one to succeed President Barack Obama.

Petyo is among a rising number of Americans who aspire to be president, due to what psychology experts describe as growing narcissism, distrust of leadership and the power of social media to reach the public.

Joining more than 1,500 others, according to the Federal Election Commission, Petyo admits he is a long shot, but figures he just needs some attention: "How do they know I'm not the next guy waiting in the wings?" he number of candidates seeking the White House has more than tripled from 417 in 2012, though some entrants have penned in possibly fictitious names such as "Disco Daddy" and "Darth Vader". Their ranks include Susan Young, a California social studies teacher aiming to give her students a lesson in democracy, Terry Jones, the Florida pastor known for organising Koran burnings, and anti-virus software pioneer John McAfee.

Another candidate, Edie Bukewihge, included her grandma's chili recipe on her web site along with the promise that the last two years of her term could be boring because she will have repaired the country's "damages".

For candidates like Petyo, the important thing is finding Americans who will listen to them, said Bart Rossi, a political psychologist.

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