



More Debates to Come As Libertarians Take the Stage

Bruce Majors

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Libertarians, and their presumptive presidential candidate, former New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson, are enjoying increased press coverage in the wake of dissension within the two major parties.

In the GOP, conservatives from Congressman Paul Ryan to *Weekly Standard* editor Bill Kristol are holding back on endorsing Donald Trump even after he put away 16 challengers. In the Democratic Party, Hillary Clinton has failed to put away Senator Bernie Sanders, who won the West Virginia primary and is poised to win most of the next 8 primaries. This past week Johnson appeared on ABC's This Week and was covered in The Atlantic, The Nation, SiriusXM radio, and a variety of other media.

Libertarians are also giving at least the Democrats a run for their money in terms of the number of debates they've held. Many were at state party conventions and not televised anywhere, or only watchable, like the New York Libertarian Party hosted debate, on YouTube.

But there was also the first national televised Libertarian debate on FoxBusiness's Stossel show, back on April 1. Though Stossel routinely uses libertarian events like the annual FreedomFest conference or the International Students for Liberty conference as fodder for his show, his subsequent announcement that he has been diagnosed with lung cancer retroactively gave his becoming the first national broadcast journalist to host a Libertarian Party debate a bucket list feel.

And Stossel almost missed being first.

Two more national broadcast outlets will now provide voters with debates among Libertarian contenders, Governor Johnson, software millionaire John McAfee, and former Fox News associate producer Austin Petersen, before a Libertarian presidential nominee is selected at the party's national convention in Orlando, May 27-30. Party officials expect 1,000 convention delegates and attendees, for the largest Libertarian convention ever.

First is RT America (Russia Today) TV, the Russian government cable TV channel, which will broadcast live Thursday, May 12, in a time slot Hillary Clinton or Debbie Wasserman-Schultz would envy, 4 to 6 pm. The RT debate features Petersen, but not Johnson or McAfee. Instead Petersen will be debating two candidates from the Libertarian version of the undercard debate, Cleveland Clinic anesthesiologist Marc Allen Feldman and New Hampshire book publisher Darryl Perry.

Johnson and McAfee bowed out of the RT debate, perhaps recognizing that some Libertarians would not be happy with them for participating on a government – and formerly totalitarian government – network. CATO Institute Vice President David Boaz asked, ex officio, on Facebook: “WTF are candidates for PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES doing debating on a Putin propaganda network? And answering questions from Putin employees? Maybe they’ll carry Moscow. But why would an American want to pick a president in such a debate? Maybe it’s no surprise that Green Party candidates would be OK with this, but Libertarian candidates ought to have more sense. Let RT stick to Trump and Putin. Fortunately, it doesn’t look like Gary Johnson is joining this stunt.” (RT had aired a similar Green Party debate on Monday.)

As with the Stossel debate, Libertarians around the country will be hosting debate watching parties in public venues, like the Hard Times Cafe in Arlington, Virginia’s Clarendon neighborhood.

The final pre-convention debate will be hosted by long time libertarian, magician Penn Jillette, and will be recorded May 16 in Las Vegas, again with Governor Johnson, John McAfee, and Petersen.

Structured more as a townhall where the three candidates will contrast themselves with Clinton and Trump, rather than debate each other. Though there will be a live audience, no details are yet announced about when and where the debate will be broadcast.

Proceeds from the ticket sales of the event itself will go to Jillette’s favorite charity, Opportunity Village.