



The Establishment Libertarians?

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As recently as four years ago, Ron Paul was the face of American libertarianism: the wild-eyed old uncle with uncompromising ideas who got all the kids excited, stayed *just* within one of the two major party, and who was on the receiving end of convention shenanigans (seriously, *how* did I miss the obvious parallels between the elder Paul and Senator Bernie Sanders?). But Paul decided against a third-party run in the previous two cycles and Gary Johnson stepped in to the leadership void, earning a solid million votes as the 2012 Libertarian candidate. Just over the weekend, Johnson won the parties' nomination again.

For the most part, Johnson leaves me mildly unimpressed and a little dispirited (disclosure: I donated something on the order of \$50 to him in 2012, before he dropped out of the Republican race). By most accounts, his record as governor of New Mexico was middling and mixed, though Johnson has both his defenders and detractors. As a Libertarian candidate... well, let's just say that someone who runs a legal marijuana business, calls for a consumption tax, makes federal financing of his party a major priority, completely fumbles what should be an easy question about public accommodations, favors Ron Paul-style non-interventionism, and whose elevator pitch for libertarianism is "fiscally conservative, socially tolerant" isn't exactly my favorite flavor of libertarianism.

Regardless, to say that Johnson compares favorably to the alternatives is to understate the matter rather seriously for me. Johnson may be a squish on some issues wrong on others, but there doesn't appear to be anything personally dishonorable in his history and — on the extremely unlikely chance that he becomes president — we're talking about someone who earned B's from the Cato Institute when he had a Democratic legislature.

The same, interestingly, applies to William Weld, his running mate, and a former governor of Massachusetts. Weld's term predates my residency here, so I can't claim much knowledge, but this interview only left me moderately frustrated and offended only once (comparing a wall on the Mexican-American border to the Berlin wall is, frankly, odious) but that was a throw-away in a 10-minute interview.

In what is only the latest irony of this crazy race, the ticket headed by the pot-smoking triathlete may not only be the most boring of the available choices, but also the most experienced and responsible.