

TECHNICIAN

In Defense of Gary Johnson

Austin Robbie

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Two weeks ago, on Aug. 25, I read an opinion article in the Technician titled “It’s not worth voting for Gary Johnson.” From the title, I figured it was the typical spiel about how voting for Gary Johnson is a waste of a vote as it helps one of the other candidates win. I hear this from both Trump and Clinton supporters and I don’t buy into the premise. However, I was somewhat surprised after I read the article to find that this was not the case; the author was actually a libertarian trying to convince others not to vote for Gary Johnson because he was, in fact, not libertarian enough.

The author goes onto explain several issues where he believes Gary Johnson is “grossly misrepresenting his adopted party’s core philosophy.” Yet, many of the points the author made are either incorrect or don’t actually clash with libertarianism.

First, the author has an issue with the fact that Johnson supports the Trans-Pacific Partnership — a free trade agreement between the U.S. and 11 other pacific rim countries — and the North American Free Trade Agreement, another free trade agreement between the U.S., Canada and Mexico. Free trade between countries is a staple of the Libertarian Party, as it is explicitly stated in the party platform.

I do realize that there is a difference between truly free trade and these 1,000-page trade agreements that have rules, regulations and exemptions. However, the CATO Institute, a libertarian think tank, reviewed the TPP this summer and expressed their support for the partnership saying that “the TPP would be net liberalizing — it would, on par, increase our economic freedoms. I hope it will be ratified and implemented as soon as possible.” What’s more, the executive vice president of the CATO Institute is none other than David Boaz, the same person the author mentioned people should read if they want to learn more about libertarianism.

Next, the author claims that Johnson is open to a carbon tax to fund a basic universal income program. Johnson did say he was open to the idea of a basic universal income program as a replacement for other bureaucratic welfare programs that generate large amounts of wasteful spending. However, on the very day this article ran, Johnson told a rally in New Hampshire that the carbon tax might make sense in theory, but not in practice.

Finally, the author takes exception with the fact that Johnson only wants to legalize marijuana and not all drugs. Although I do agree that legalizing all drugs should be the end goal, I also believe a great first step would be to legalize marijuana. Also, on Johnson's campaign page in reference to other illegal drugs, it states: "It is, however, their belief that drug rehabilitation and harm-reduction programs result in a more productive society than incarceration and arrests for drug use." Johnson and Weld are clearly in favor of ending or at least significantly scaling back the war on drugs and are miles closer to the libertarian position than either Trump or Clinton.

Johnson may not be the purest libertarian but he is still libertarian. He has always stood for lowering taxes, shrinking government, reducing spending, term limits, preserving civil liberties, criminal justice reform, state's rights, stopping government surveillance, free trade, free markets, ending the wars in the Middle East, ending foreign aid, ending subsidies and, most importantly, adhering to the Constitution. All of these are libertarian positions and most of them go directly against what Trump or Clinton would do as president.

You could, as the author has done, nitpick and conclude that Johnson is "the lesser of three evils," and a Johnson presidency would not actually be any different from a Trump or Clinton presidency. I would argue if you look at all of Johnson's platform, it is pretty clear that he is committed to his party's general philosophy. I would encourage anybody who is libertarian or just disgusted at the prospect of a Trump or Clinton presidency to vote for Johnson.