



‘Third-party’ political group No Labels has an uphill climb: making centrism sexy

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July 18, 2023

Centrist political organization No Labels held a convention in New Hampshire to unveil their “Common Sense” platform on Monday — and, although it’s logical, it has as much fluff as actual solutions.

The group has teased a possible third party bid in the 2024 presidential race, if it comes down to another Trump/Biden face-off. According to reports, No Labels’ candidate of choice may be West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, who spoke at the summit — referring to himself as “the most independent Democrat you’ve ever met.”

For the 70% of American voters who don’t want Biden to run and the 60% of voters who don’t want Trump on the ticket, No Labels could be a much-needed alternative to another “lesser of two evils” ballot.

But No Labels faces a major hurdle: Making centrism sexy.

The group’s 30-point policy platform contains assertions that pretty much any American who isn’t blinded by partisanship can agree with — from fostering financial literacy, to promoting American leadership in the development of ethical AI, to advocating for border security combined with more logical legal immigration.

Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin is rumored to be a contender for No Labels’ 2024 ticket.

They’re all laudable stances that run perpendicular to partisan gridlock.

But the platform also contains points that read as self-evident truths — like “Every American deserves respect and freedom from discrimination,” “No child in America should go to bed or go to school hungry,” and “Building more homes in America will make housing more affordable for Americans.”

No Labels is providing the centrist groundwork for a candidate to build upon, but anyone who takes the mantle will need to figure out how to turn common sense positions — which will inevitably read as idealistic platitudes to skeptics — into courageously provocative solutions.

Some 70% of Americans say they don't want President Biden to run for re-election. Getty Images

Whoever the group chooses will have some important questions to answer.

No Labels asserts that “No child should be forced to go to a failing school.” Presumably, that implies advocating for broader school choice, perhaps through a voucher system — something that inevitably will alienate teachers' unions and the Democrats dependent upon them for donations.

The platform also asserts that “America must strike a balance between protecting women's rights to control their own reproductive health and our society's responsibility to protect human life.”

No Labels's “Common Sense” platform is in need of actionable solutions.

A candidate will have to answer where in the term of pregnancy a cutoff should be, fearlessly standing up to staunch pro-lifers and pro-choice absolutists alike.

And, while No Labels teases some possible gun reform measures to back up the assertion that “Society has a responsibility to keep dangerous weapons away from dangerous people,” a ticket will need to come down more firmly on specific measures and prepare for attacks from NRA-backed Republicans.

Unsurprisingly, partisans are already tearing into No Labels, hitting them with the classic “spoiler effect” and “washed-down centrist” accusations every major third-party candidate has weathered. Everyone from [The Washington Post](#) to [the Cato Institute](#) has taken their shots.

Looking ahead to the 2024 election, 59% of voters say they're amenable to an alternative to Trump and Biden. Whether No Labels can mobilize that majority is largely dependent upon choosing a candidate.

Only 3% of Americans say the best age for a president is over 70. That means Manchin, 75, is vulnerable to the same critiques as Trump, 77, and Biden, 80.

Injecting some young blood might be a path to attracting the Gen Z and Millennial voters who are growing in numbers and influence.

Gen Z and Millennial voters will be critical to any third party candidate's success.

Many Americans want something energizing, new and provocative.

Although young voters are often brushed off as a progressive monolith, many young people are fed up with the two-party false binary.

Millennials are moving to the right as they age, and a large proportion of Gen Zers are registered independents.

Young voters showed up in record numbers in the past several election cycles. Winning them over would be No Labels's ticket to the White House.

No Labels could be moderate America's only chance in the 2024 election.

There's a way to pitch a third option as a radical, restorative solution to the problems that so many Americans lament. But that will require being fearlessly confrontational, calling out partisan BS, and taking a provocative stand against the gridlock.

In an age of mind-numbing partisanship, moderates are the new radicals. The disaffected middle is growing in numbers.

But platitudes won't cut it. Only time will tell whether No Labels can rise to the occasion.