

ROMPER

Gary Johnson's Record As Governor Of New Mexico Is Getting Mixed Reviews

Becky Bracken

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Faced with Donald Trump as the presumptive nominee of the Republican Party, die hard conservatives who've grown weary of Trump's full-on racist brand of populist nationalism are shopping for an alternative candidate. Former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson, the Libertarian candidate for president might just fit the bill nicely. But Gary Johnson's record as governor of New Mexico is getting mixed reviews among right wingers. Can he convince conservatives he's their candidate?

Johnson served as governor of New Mexico from 1995 to 2003 as a Republican. He's since switched affiliation to the Libertarians and was nominated as the party's candidate for president in 2012, when he received more than 1.2 million votes, or about 1 percent of the popular vote, according to Ballotpedia. But 2012 was a whole different ballgame. The Republican establishment had its candidate in Mitt Romney, and threw its support behind him with gusto.

Now it's 2016 and conservatives steeped in principles of free trade, fiscal conservatism, and cutting taxes are finding it difficult to wrap their heads around voting for Trump, who seems to refuse to get in line with GOP ideals. Oh, and he's an unhinged racist and xenophobe, so that's a little hard for many Republicans, who still brag about being the "party of Lincoln," to swallow.

So Republicans, including "Never Trump" stalwarts like Bill Krystol, hard line neoconservative and founder of the conservative *Weekly Standard*, have been looking for a Trump alternative and a plan to block him from getting the official party nomination for president at the Cleveland, Ohio, convention in July, according to The Hill.

But why don't they just support Johnson instead? Johnson, along with his running mate, wildly popular former Republican Massachusetts Gov. William "Bill" Weld, look like an experienced, formidable ticket since they locked up the Libertarian party's nomination in late May.

Conservative types, like those at the *National Review*, say his record as governor of New Mexico doesn't show a commitment to cutting spending and taxes. An article published by *National Review* in late May takes on the details of Johnson's record in New Mexico and points out that spending had increased under his leadership. The article shreds not just his record in New

Mexico, but also his platform as outlined on his campaign website, and takes the position, "Never Gary Johnson." Ouch.

The Libertarian-leaning *Reason* magazine casts a much kinder view of Johnson's time as governor of New Mexico. It reported that Johnson used his power to veto in New Mexico more than 700 times, "...he thinks that's more than all his fellow governors at the times combined — the legislature ultimately has the power of the purse," the *Reason* article reported.

And in 2002, the conservative Cato Institute offered this favorable review of Johnson's time in office.

The Cato report said about Johnson's record:

Johnson ... favors school vouchers, term limits, privately run prisons, lean budgets, and deep tax cuts.... In his first term, he vetoed 200 bills —many of them spending bills, which he labeled as profligate. The state Democrats made defeating Johnson their top priority in 1998, but he won anyway.

Will the "Never Trump" conservatives ever be able to come around and support Johnson? Will they hold their noses and vote for Trump? Or will Krystol and crew pull off taking down the Trump candidacy in Cleveland? Voters will have to wait and see.

For now, Johnson's major hurdle, according to Politico, is hitting the 15 percent in the polls necessary to make the cut for the presidential debates against former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in the coming weeks leading up to the election.