



Lincoln Chafee and the Libertarian Party are sadly made for each other

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Parents will often tell their children to dream big, shoot for the stars, that the opportunities provided by the American dream are endless and that in the face of a bright tomorrow, even they could grow up to be president.

I think we need to stop telling kids that last part, because even though you can technically attempt to become president, it doesn't mean you should.

Lincoln Chafee is the gas station sushi of American politics. The sushi may have looked appealing many years ago when it was all you could afford on a college student budget, but you look at it now as you stand in line to pay for gas and you know it's probably been there too long, the fish probably isn't real and the rice is most likely stale. It's anyone's guess whether the seaweed has gone bad, yet there it is, placed in a cooler where it will remain on sale for as long as time itself continues ticking forward. Just because you can eat gas station sushi, it doesn't mean you should.

In a recent op-ed, Mr. Chafee reminded those who actually remember he exists that several years ago he joined the Libertarian Party, and will perhaps be seeking the Libertarian nomination for president. For those who do remember him, it must have been confusing to remember which party he had been with previously. Mr. Chafee over the last three decades has been elected to various offices as an independent, a Republican and a Democrat. The last time anyone paid any real attention to him was in 2016, when Mr. Chafee, perhaps bored and lonely, decided he wanted to jump into the middle of Hillary's coronation and run for president, lasting one debate and then fading back into obscurity.

Mr. Chafee's potential addition to the 2020 field would be a funny and ironic one. Much like former Republican Govs. Gary Johnson and Bill Weld (who is running for the Republican nomination this go-around), Mr. Chafee could come into the Libertarian National Convention, get yelled at by the anarchist wing, and then end up pulling through and getting the nomination because the Libertarian Party's standards are so low.

Mr. Chafee's legislative record is horrifyingly un-libertarian (as governor of Rhode Island alone he received a "D" from the libertarian Cato Institute and received an "F" from the NRA) but records don't really matter in them, it certainly didn't stop them from nominating Republican Congressman Bob Barr in 2008 or granting Bill Weld the VP position in 2016. In fact, there are many Libertarian delegates and committee members hoping that if (when) Mr. Weld gives up his longshot primary campaign, he'll come back to the Libertarian Party and run as their presidential

nominee. There are even some very enthusiastic Libertarian activists who are pleading for Republican-turned-independent Congressman Justin Amash to run for their party's nomination.

Seeing a trend? The Libertarian Party loves people who don't love them. Mr. Weld could have essentially had a guaranteed nomination but instead decided he hates President Trump more than he wants to spread libertarian ideals. Mr. Amash could have easily converted to the Libertarian banner, but instead decided it was a better ideal to stay out of a partisan relationship and just be happily single. That's saying something when you'd rather run for office alone than take even some degree of party support.

The Libertarian Party is so desperate for attention, they'd probably take Mr. Chafee over longtime party members in a heartbeat, and to an extent, I don't blame them. Their current lineup of candidates includes boot-hat wearing Vermin Supreme (imagine watching on C-SPAN), the infamous (and on the run from the FBI) John McAfee, self-described [expletive] Arvhin Vohra (who joked about mass shootings of school boards being a good thing), and a whole slew of remaining candidates who have never held office, have no claim to fame, and all have probably as much of a chance of being president as Mr. Chafee when you step back and really think about it.

Libertarians, to their credit, in 2016 despite every gaffe and bump in the road reached record numbers in party membership enrollment and victories in local elections. For a moment in time, even a handful of elected Republicans in state legislatures throughout the country transitioned from Republican to Libertarian, only to retire by choice at the end of their term or be retired by the ballot. Despite running against two of history's most unpopular candidates, the Johnson-Weld ticket barely scratched the popular vote, and with that disappeared the dreams of many.

Third parties are important in American politics, despite their actual electoral impact. They force candidates on the record and bring up issues that often go ignored. What does Mr. Chafee bring to the table? Some more "Never-Trump" mudslinging? A chance to talk about holding the political center? Your guess is as good as mine, but at this point in time, they'd probably take Joe Walsh if it meant some free air time on MSNBC.