

COSUMNES CONNECTION

Gary Johnson's Paragliding Accident Led to His Support of Legalization

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The first presidential debate is set for Hofstra University in NY on Monday 26 September, the second for Sunday 9 October at Washington University in St Louis and the third for the University of Nevada in Las Vegas on Wednesday 19 October.

Purple PAC, a super-PAC founded by Edward Crane, a former CEO of the Cato Institute and investments manager, is airing cable TV ads backing Johnson in hope of boosting his bid for a debate seat. Many Americans do not have only two options in this election, and would do more for their country by voting third party, and keeping the ruling parties honest.

Johnson needs to get to 15 percent in the polls to make the cut, and right now he stands at about 10 percent. Ross Perot, who joined the debates in 1992, won 19 percent of the vote that year. As a researcher, I would ask how big an effect that would have to be to get the kind of outcome he said.

The American people should be outraged that this "Commission" is controlling the debates when it is little more than an extension of the two major political parties. Several at the rally held signs calling to "Let Gary debate". Unfortunately for Johnson, in order to get onto the debate stage, he needs to reach 15% in an average of five national polls - he's now averaging about 8%, according to Real Clear Politics.

Should the Libertarian & Green candidates be allowed to participate in the Presidential debates? Since announcing former MA governor William Weld as his running mate, Johnson has risen in polls to the high single digits - and to the mid-teens in some swing states. "Three months ago [polls showed the party support] was 5 percent". In about four dozen independent polls reported since early July, he has averaged 8 percent.

There are also substantive reasons for this which could further exacerbate the problems Johnson could cause for Hillary should he be seen as a legitimate candidate by making the debate stage.

But those who support these third party candidates don't see it as a wasted vote.

"This is the first time [Johnson and Mr. Weld] really have a shot, especially considering how weak and controversial the other two candidates are", she says.

In some ways he's a more centrist voice than either the *Republican* or the Democrat in the field: A former two-term *Republican* governor from New Mexico, Johnson is liberal on social issues and conservative on money issues.

"We've never had anything like this - ever", Ms. Crawford says. He says that philosophy represents where most Americans stands.

"The more voices in political discourse - the better", says Mr. MacLaughlin. That is a sensible standard that limits the debates to candidates with a prospect of becoming president.

"We're no longer thinking, what western states and northeastern states could we take", Weld said.