



Why I'm Voting for Gary Johnson

Liz Mair

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On November 8, libertarian-leaning voters across the country will face probably the worst choices for the presidency offered up by the major parties in recent history. As a Republican who has worked hard to elect major names in the party to national and state-level office, and to broaden the appeal of leading figures like Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, it greatly saddens me that I cannot in anything approaching good conscience support my party's nominee for president this time—especially since his opponent is Hillary Clinton, who has to be one of the least libertarian-friendly records of any major politician out there.

But this is how it is; and it's how it is for millions of other Americans who share my philosophy and outlook.

There are a number of issues that are important to me in casting my vote. It's difficult to order them precisely, but they include free trade, health care, spending and the national debt, immigration, taxation, civil liberties, same-sex marriage and gun rights.

On all of these issues, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are abysmal.

They are both protectionists, who will curtail our trade relationships with other countries to the detriment of the American economy and U.S. consumers, most specifically.

They both support massive government intervention in the health care space, with Hillary Clinton having been the real author of what we call Obamacare back during the 2008 campaign and Donald Trump being a long-term advocate of single-payer and government-run health care—including during this campaign.

Both Clinton and Trump want to increase spending. The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget says Clinton would increase the deficit by \$200 billion over ten years; they calculate that Trump would increase the deficit by a full \$5.3 trillion over ten years.

We already have a \$19 trillion debt load; all both candidates want to do is add to it.

On immigration, Clinton sounds pro-immigration notes, but her constant pandering to supporters of Sen. Bernie Sanders—many of whom view immigration roughly as unfavorably as Sen. Jeff Sessions—concerns me and makes me skeptical of what she will do; she is also far more comfortable with executive action on this and other subjects than I am. Trump is abjectly bad on

immigration from my standpoint, favoring mass roundups and deportations of millions of people, and restriction of legal immigration going forward.

On taxation, Trump sounds a better note than Clinton, who supports even more tax increases than Americans have already sustained in recent years. However, his past support for wealth taxes to fund unreformed entitlements makes me highly skeptical that as President, he would adhere to an economically conservative line. It's also worth noting that he is, in fact, proposing at least one tax increase as part of his tax plan.

On civil liberties, Clinton and Trump are both terrible. As a senator, Clinton supported mass surveillance of American citizens until the very last minute when she was desperate to score points with left-libertarians more drawn to then-candidate Obama. She was a critical part of the Obama administration, which oversaw mass surveillance that made it look like a continuation of the Bush administration. Trump supports these kinds of policies, too, as well as reworking libel laws to curtail free speech, and ignoring key civil liberties where they apply to minority groups he believes deserve special attention from law enforcement and national security agencies.

On same-sex marriage, Clinton came very late to the party and is a profile in cowardice. Trump probably privately supports it, but claims to oppose it as a candidate.

On gun rights, Clinton is clearly an opponent who would vastly curtail the Second Amendment in practice. Trump claims to be pro-gun, but supports stop, search and confiscate policies where they apply to minorities carrying weapons (in many cases, perfectly legally), and has advocated for various other gun control measures in the past—again, making any thinking libertarian skeptical of what he would actually do on guns if elected.

Basically, on the issues, there's minimal difference, and to the extent there is, it is negated by Trump's blatant dabbling in racism and his other demonstrated character flaws—many of which have been on display to a huge degree in the last week or so. Both he and Clinton are unelectable in my view—and if you look at their favorability/unfavorability ratings, it's clear that I am not alone in this assessment.

The good news is, this year, voters in all 50 states and the District of Columbia have a third choice on their ballot: Former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson. While he is not perfect, and he will not win, Johnson allows voters like me—in *every* state across the country—to cast a ballot for a president that we can feel good about, while simultaneously allowing us to send a message to the major parties that their nominating decisions this cycle were thoroughly unacceptable, that they must not nominate candidates like these ever again, and that they cannot take our votes for granted.

On trade, Johnson is a committed free-trader who knows that protectionism hurts ordinary Americans and our economy.

On health care, he wants to get government out, and has the right general instincts. Note [Johnson's comments to the LA Times](#) that:

What is genuinely needed when it comes to healthcare is a free-market approach, recognizing that healthcare right now is about as far removed from the free market as it could be. I reject the

notion that in a free-market approach to healthcare we would have insurance to cover ongoing medical need. We would have insurance to cover ourselves for catastrophic injury and illness and we would pay as you go for a system that I believe would be absolutely affordable. How affordable? Maybe a fifth of what it currently costs.

Johnson wants to cut taxes (as New Mexico governor he did not raise taxes even once). He also proposes cutting spending by 43 percent. As governor, Johnson was rated by the Cato Institute better than the overwhelming majority of all fifty of his peers with regard to fiscal governance, in every year that they assessed him.

So, with regard to fiscal matters, he is inherently more trustworthy than either Clinton or Trump—at least from a fiscal conservative standpoint.

Johnson sees immigration as a net positive, not a negative as Trump does, and as many of Clinton's supporters do—at least with regard to certain immigrants.

Johnson is opposed to the kind of mass surveillance policies instituted by the Bush and Obama administrations, which Clinton supported as a senator and apparently as Secretary of State, and which Trump continues to support. Unlike Clinton and Trump, he believes in protecting and defending all of our rights, not just a few protected by select Amendments that his base favors. This includes gun rights, on which he has historically been strong and where he has not supported the kind of overt infringements that Clinton and Trump have, and continue to favor.

Johnson was not my first, second or third choice for the presidency—I'll readily admit that. But compared to Clinton and Trump, he is miles better and someone I will be happy to vote for on Election Day.

The bottom line is, if enough people join me, the major parties will be forced to reckon with the fact that libertarians will not just go along with whoever they nominate, no matter how poor on our issues or of whatever poor character, and that they have to work harder to accommodate us.

A message will be sent to the next president (at this point, almost certainly Clinton) that even when you're running against probably the most conceivably unelectable opponent, a win still does not issue you a mandate to govern in an authoritarian-tinged, big government fashion that tramples over the most basic principles on which this nation was founded.

I hope you will join me in voting for Gary Johnson on November