



Libertarian case for Jon Huntsman

By [Eduardo J. Lopez-Reyes](#)

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Last May, when Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels was pondering a White House bid, Jason Sorens of the University of Buffalo wrote a commentary that went largely unnoticed. Wanting to "take a look at Jon Huntsman," who has been "widely viewed as a 'moderate' Republican, but whose" policies "stake out a position that may be more libertarian than Daniels'," Sorens concluded that after former Gov. Gary Johnson and Texas Congressman Ron Paul, Huntsman offered the most libertarian credentials — besting even Daniels.

Sorens's views deserve recognition in New Hampshire, a generally conservative state with decisively libertarian leanings, as our first-in-the-nation presidential primary approaches.

Without question, Paul and Johnson represent the most libertarian GOP factions, but Huntsman's record and views may be best aligned with President Ronald Reagan's, who stated that "the very heart and soul of conservatism is libertarianism." Sorens suggested labeling Huntsman's philosophy a "no-label libertarianism." In fact, like Reagan's, Huntsman's views might be best described as "middle-America libertarianism."

While definitely not libertarianism in the Johnson and Paul mold, Huntsman's libertarianism still aims to return power back to the states, embrace a realist foreign policy paradigm, and tap into the "heart and soul" of Americans whose main concern is getting our nation back on its feet through job-creation, fairer trade policies, and innovative thinking.

The truth is in the numbers. While Huntsman was governor, Utah led nationally in job-creation amidst a recession, was rated best-managed by the Pew Center, and was recognized by the Cato Institute for sound fiscal policy.

Huntsman's domestic policy is informed by knowledge of the challenges that arise from a blurring line between foreign and domestic affairs. Having served abroad in many capacities, his foreign policy experience is unparalleled and groomed to navigate these gray areas to our nation's advantage.

To those of us who prefer the GOP focusing on fiscal issues, a truly conservative foreign policy and states rights, Huntsman's views and record are promising. He believes the Federal Reserve should be audited, supports the 10th Amendment on issues such as medical marijuana and has a solid record on Second Amendment rights. Perhaps one of the most significant differences between Huntsman and all other candidates excepting Johnson and Paul is his desire to bring our foreign policy out of the Cold War and into the 21st century. Huntsman favors reducing our troop presence abroad, where a surgical and strategic intelligence approach could replace the gargantuan investment made overseas since World War II and escalated after 9/11. Nothing could be fairer to the American people, our troops and their families.

The GOP will hold a clear advantage over President Barack Obama in the 2012 election if it nominates a candidate whose universal appeal is rooted in a set of consistent, federalist beliefs. Recognition of Huntsman's libertarian stock in no way diminishes what Paul and Johnson bring to the table. Huntsman is a conservative. He is a pragmatist. His record, like Reagan's, shows a consistent grounding in the principles that libertarian-leaning Republicans value.

Paul and Johnson supporters tend to be among the most empathic Republicans, recognizing how a partnership of excessive government and corporate welfare deprives average Americans access to opportunity in a genuinely free market. While Johnson and Paul supporters can illustrate where Huntsman is "less libertarian," the points Sorens underscores transcend academic debate and are more relevant to the future of the GOP and our nation.

On Jan. 10, voters would benefit from selecting a candidate who can bring competing factions of the GOP together and can appeal to sufficient independents and Democrats to win the general election. They should give Gov. Huntsman a serious look.

Eduardo J. Lopez-Reyes of Portsmouth is the National Vice Chairman of the Republican Liberty Caucus. The views expressed here are those of the author, not the Republican Liberty Caucus.