

## Is voting third party a waste?

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Third-party candidates have won over a small minority of voters and continue to campaign for more votes come the presidential election on Nov. 3. Green Party candidate Howie Hawkins and Libertarian Party candidate Jo Jorgensen are still running for the presidential seat.

According to [Pew Research Center's polling](#), Joe Biden is currently leading the polls with 52% support and Donald Trump comes second with 42%. Jorgensen is in third with 4% support and Hawkins is fourth with 1%. That means both third-party candidates together comprise about 5% of voter support.

Parker sophomore Conner Ammar is able to vote for the first time in the upcoming election and said he credits [Duverger's Law](#) as an explanation of why "our system is set up all across the country where basically all elections are going to be two party." This is why, he said, it's hard for third-party candidates to even come close to getting a majority of the votes.

"His theory is that when you have an election where there is one seat being filled and you have [a] simple majority election," Ammar said, "It's going to be two party, invariably."

Ammar said this is because there is a certain amount of votes needed to win over a seat, and voters aren't always encouraged to vote for what represents their beliefs best.

"Third-party voting in the United States has almost always been a little bit of a waste of time and a little bit of a waste of people's votes," Ammar said. "Largely speaking, people, when they vote third-party, usually vote for the Libertarian candidate. That is the most popular non-Democrat or Republican Party in the country right now followed not really closely by the Green Party."

Lauren Daugherty is involved with the Libertarian Party of McLennan County and ran for office as a Libertarian candidate for Justice of the Peace in 2018. She said she votes Libertarian because she wants to vote for what she believes in, not "against" what she doesn't.

"The libertarian platform best speaks to my values," Daugherty said. "I believe that our Constitutional rights are very important and that's what our country is founded on and that's what makes us special. I think individual rights are sacred and I want to support candidates who take that very seriously."

Ammar said he thinks many people who will vote third-party and who voted third-party in the 2016 election did so "because they were ticked off at Trump and/or Hillary and/or Biden." He said he predicts there will be a similar turnout of third-party voters in this election as in the last one.

"I think that for a lot of people our age, people are going to vote Libertarian or otherwise third-party because it's a protest vote in a lot of ways," Ammar said.

Voting for Kanye West would be an example of a protest vote, Ammar said, as [Kanye's Tweet](#) declaring his candidacy has created social media hype. Those who don't like Trump or Biden may "vote for him as a meme instead of for other third parties," Ammar said.

Ammar also said he thinks it's unclear how recent events, including the Black Lives Matter movement and COVID-19, will impact third-party voter turnout other than candidate responses to these events swaying voter opinions.

Reporter John Stossel is a recognized Libertarian voter who speaks openly about why he votes the way he does. In an [interview](#) with Ben Shapiro posted by The Daily Wire on Nov. 11, 2018, Stossel said he thinks the reason the third-party turnout is so low is because the majority of voters do not pay attention to politics consistently until election time.

"They're not paying attention to politics, then suddenly they are asked to vote," Stossel said in the interview. "Half those people then do vote, [and] they vote who? Republican or Democrat. They don't pay attention long enough to hear the Libertarian argument."

Another reason Ammar said people may vote third-party is in hopes of a change.

"Maybe some of them think that things can change and there can be multiple parties," Ammar said, "because they look at places like Britain where you have [many parties], and they all have substantial influence in Parliament, but we're built different. We don't have the same structure in our elections."

Daugherty said the "defeatist attitude" of voting third party is a big reason for the lack of voter turnout. "As with so many things throughout history," she said, "just because something has been the status quo doesn't mean it should continue to be the status quo."

On the ballot this year, the Libertarian candidate will be listed along with the Republican and Democrat candidate. This happened in the 2016 election as well.

"We only have three presidential candidates that will be on every single ballot in America," Daugherty said. "There's some others that will be on various ones, but only three will be on literally every ballot. And yet, only two of them are allowed at the debate."

Daugherty said this is a significant example of how the Libertarian Party isn't given the same platform, which causes less recognition as a legitimate option for voters.

Another factor Daugherty said affects third party voter turnout is the straight ticket voting system, which means voters are able to select one political party across the entire ballot without seeing the other options.

"A lot of people go in and only click that one button, and I think that does a great disservice to our democracy," Daugherty said. "I think people should see all of these different candidates and need to choose each one."

Libertarian candidate Jo Jorgensen said in a video of a campaign rally posted on [YouTube](#) by [Jo Jorgensen for President 2020](#) on Aug. 9 that she does not think voting third party always means wasting a vote.

"If it's somebody who lives in a very red or very blue state, I say you're wasting your vote by voting for whoever is going to take your state anyway ... If you're in California, your vote is

wasted if you are voting for Joe Biden, so how about voting for what you really want?” Jorgensen said. “Also, there are something like 40 million Americans who lean Libertarian. If everybody voted the way they wanted, we would win overwhelmingly.”

A 2017 study from the Cato Institute suggests voters with libertarian leanings may comprise around 20% of the U.S. electorate, though other studies yielded a range of estimates.

Especially in this election, Daugherty said “people need more options.” She said voters are often told there are only two options, which causes less people to vote for the Libertarian party even though they are a “good” and “viable” option.

“We see this very strongly in certain election years when people aren’t keen on the Republican nominee and they are not keen on the Democratic nominee and they wish there were more options,” Daugherty said. “I think when we give people more options, they can better choose what is best for them.”