
Subject: Let Libertarian Gary Johnson debate Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump
Posted by [CyberkNight](#) on Thu, 11 Aug 2016 13:04:19 GMT

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For many Americans, this presidential race is a train wreck in progress.

CNN's latest poll says Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are viewed unfavorably by a majority of voters. Clinton's negative number is bad -- 55 percent -- but Trump's is catastrophic: 70 percent have an unfavorable opinion of him. The Pew Research Center says 4 in 10 voters find it hard to choose; they think neither would make a good president.

But if many Americans see their options as casting a hold-your-nose vote or staying home, others wonder about a third-party candidate. We saw that interest spike after a July 7 editorial exploring potential alternatives, as readers found their way to our website to learn about Gov. Gary Johnson of the Libertarian Party and Jill Stein of the Green Party.

By July 19 when Johnson, the leading third-party candidate, met with the Tribune Editorial Board, his CNN poll numbers had climbed to 13 percent. That visit, again, led to a bump in web traffic, social media "shares" and reader feedback. Voters want to know more.

Stein and Johnson won their parties' nominations in 2012, but that November neither broke the 1 percent threshold. This year, Stein has polled as high as 7 percent. Johnson's ventures into double digits make him, especially, more than a fringe player. He could become the escape-hatch choice for a lot of people Nov. 8 -- if he's included in the autumn presidential debates. The first is scheduled for Sept. 26. The decision on who is included rests with the private, nonpartisan Commission on Presidential Debates. The group says eligible candidates must appear on enough state ballots to have a mathematical shot at winning the Electoral College vote.

Johnson expects to be on the ballot in every state. To meet a second requirement, though, he'll need to stretch: Candidates must hit an average 15 percent support level in five national polls. A new Fox News poll has Johnson at 12 percent, but in the latest CNN poll he fell from 13 percent to 9 percent amid the hoopla of the Republican and Democratic conventions. A RealClearPolitics average has him at 7 percent. He has time to raise his game. The commission won't start looking at numbers until after Labor Day.

Johnson tells us his biggest hurdle to reaching 15 percent is that many pollsters focus on the Clinton-Trump matchup and exclude Johnson or include him in a secondary question that gets ignored by the media and public. If the polls acknowledged that 2016 is not a two-way race, he says, "I'd be at 20 percent overnight."

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A former Republican governor of New Mexico, he's a moderate Libertarian with an agenda that is more or less socially liberal and economically conservative. He is a free marketeer and skeptic of government power, but not an extremist. Where his views are outside the mainstream, most are not radical, just different. He would, for example, abolish the IRS, replacing corporate and personal income taxes and the capital-gains tax with a consumption tax.

Another pet idea: bringing down health-care costs by spurring competition. That would be a

different answer to the Obamacare question than what voters will hear in the debates from Clinton and Trump.

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