

LIBERTY PLEDGE

NEWSLETTER

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Libertarian Andy Craig for Congress Makes Case for Scaling Back FDA

Wisconsin Libertarian congressional candidate Andy Craig released the following statement regarding FDA delay of life-saving medical technology:

How the FDA is killing me: a personal perspective on diabetes and government

Since I was diagnosed at age thirteen, I have struggled with type I (“juvenile”) diabetes and its complications. Like many, I don’t always do the best job managing this condition. But like many other diabetics, my life has also been damaged and possibly shortened by the Food and Drug Administration.



Andy Craig

Diabetes management is largely a matter of balancing food consumed with insulin injected, to maintain blood sugar levels within an acceptable healthy range. Prior to the invention of insulin injections in 1920, a diagnosis of type I diabetes was universally fatal, usually within a matter of weeks. Today, I and many other diabetics use an insulin pump to keep us alive. This pager-sized device fits into my pocket, and I wear it at all times. It provides a steady drip of insulin, and larger doses at meal times, more closely mimicking an undamaged pancreas than traditional injections. It is, in my opinion, a miracle of modern medical technology.

However, even with the essential aid of glucometers to monitor blood sugar levels, it still boils down to an “eyeball it and guess” method of self-medication. It’s not ideal medical precision, and that shows in the large number of preventable hospitalizations and deaths each year from type I diabetes. The main obstacle to better diabetes management is not the availability of tools and medications for the job; it is the fallible human being who has to make these daily decisions.

There exists a device that could do this task better and easier. It is called an “artificial pancreas.” The artificial pancreas is not some kind of lab-grown human organ. It’s actually just a regular insulin pump, paired with another existing technology called continuous glucose monitoring, which checks blood sugar levels every few minutes instead of every few hours. Connect these two devices, and a simple computer program using a mathematical algorithm can manage a patient’s blood sugar levels all on its own, just like a natural pancreas does. It’s not quite fully automated, but it’s close.

Studies have shown up to an 80% reduction in out-of-range blood sugar levels using this type of computerized control, compared to current methods. The technology has also been around for years. The insulin pump I first started using ten years ago is capable of being wired to be an artificial pancreas.

Teenage diabetics who have been allowed to participate in trials with this technology, and their parents, have been reluctant to switch back at the end of the tests. Some patients have even resorted to unapproved “hacking” of their insulin pumps to implement similar features.

So why has this life-saving, and simple, combination of two already-approved devices not available on the market and in widespread use? Thank the federal government. The Food and Drug Administration has repeatedly held back the approval process on artificial pancreas research for years.

That delay has cost billions of dollars in preventable hospitalizations and complications such as organ failure and amputation. The delay can also be directly blamed for thousands of preventable deaths. But the FDA’s incentive isn’t to care if their delay cost lives: their only concern is they not approve something that might harm somebody. If artificial pancreases reach widespread use, somebody will misuse it or one will malfunction, and a patient will be killed or harmed by that. That is the unpleasant reality of how medicine works.

The balance of these concerns in this case is overwhelming in this case, but still the FDA continues to

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NM Ex-Gov. Gary Johnson Feigns Heart Attack to Mock Anti-Pot Crusader at CPAC

By Barry Donegan
From *BenSwann.com*
Published on March 3, 2015

During last Thursday's marijuana legalization debate at the 2015 Conservative Political Action Conference, former Republican Governor of New Mexico and Libertarian Party presidential candidate Gary Johnson mocked former Congresswoman Ann Marie Buerkle's claim that marijuana can cause heart attacks by clutching his chest and falling suddenly to the floor.

At the 2015 Conservative Political Action Conference's marijuana legalization debate, former Republican Governor of New Mexico and 2012 Libertarian Party nominee for president Gary Johnson, a supporter of legalization, faced off against ex-Congresswoman Ann Marie Buerkle, a former nurse who opposes legal pot. In the above-embedded video, Buerkle said, "Let's talk about marijuana. You have a 1 in 5 higher chance of having a heart attack within the first hour after you smoke marijuana. There are legitimate side effects to this drug."

Before she could continue, Gary Johnson began clutching his chest and dropped to the floor, pantomiming a heart attack in an obvious mockery of Buerkle's Reefer Madness-esque claim. The largely college-aged conservative crowd burst into laughter in response to Johnson's joke.

Said Buerkle in response, "You know, I think the Governor has had great fun with his humor, but it isn't funny that we're putting

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From the *Huffington Post* on Gary Johnson

By Eliot Nelson
Excerpted from *Huffington Post*
Published on February 28, 2015

Johnson is a friendly, kinetic presence, but he isn't exactly the brightest star in the political universe right now, a fact he'll readily concede and even point out. Like much of the Libertarian Party, he finds himself in a precarious position heading into 2016. On the one hand, his laissez-faire platform has never been more popular, with the public increasingly skeptical about developments like the war on drugs, the militarization of America's police departments and an increasingly intrusive regime of government surveillance.

On the other hand, his policy agenda is being partially appropriated by both of America's dominant political parties, and the popularity and likely presidential campaign of libertarian-leaning Sen. Rand Paul (R-Kentucky) has only served to further diminish the Libertarians' standing.

I encounter Johnson as he's manning the booth of his advocacy organization, Our America Initiative, talking with supporters and catching knowing glances from passers-by. Where most prominent politicians would never deign to be seen very long in the deepest, most zoo-like bowels of CPAC, Johnson is happily holding court. Indeed, it feels at times that Johnson is no more a sideshow than The Weekly Standard's photo booth or the gentleman nearby dressed as Captain America.

When an aide tries to interject some optimism by pointing out that Johnson finished third place in CPAC's 2011 straw poll of presidential candidates, Johnson, who governed New Mexico from 1995 to 2003 and turned 61 this year, offers a characteristic retort.

"Yeah, you can see where that got me."

Despite his less-than-hopeful outlook on his own political standing, Johnson remains cautiously optimistic about the

effects of Paul's success.

"If Rand Paul wins the nomination, that'd be terrific," he tells me. "If he were to prevail he'd be the best Republican nominee in a long time." His enthusiasm for the GOP field, however, ends at Paul. "Based on the current crop, I'd vote for the Libertarian candidate," he says.

But Johnson still sees a lot of daylight between him and Paul on issues like marriage equality, reproductive rights, drug reform, foreign policy and immigration reform, and makes no attempt to hide it.

"He's a social conservative and I'm not," Johnson says. "I think he's toeing a fine line on the whole military intervention thing" -- a reference to Paul's efforts to soften his image as an isolationist.

"I call it punting. His dad [former congressman and presidential candidate Ron Paul (R-Texas)] punted, too. They punt on drug policy, they punt on marriage equality."

Events like CPAC offer Johnson the opportunity to mingle with a largely receptive audience. Even supporters of other candidates come and pay Johnson respect -- seeking a sort of absolution from the current high priest of libertarianism. A woman wearing a Ted Cruz sticker asks Johnson about his views on disability policy.

One man wearing a Rand Paul sticker approaches and urges Johnson to get in the race to keep things competitive. A group of college-aged men profess their admiration. "You were such an inspiration to me!" says one. Another man, in a cowboy hat and a shirt that reads "COPS SAY LEGALIZE POT ASK ME WHY" is an old acquaintance who briefly catches up with Johnson.

Johnson *is* having great fun, which raises the question: Why on earth would he want to be president?

Walker withdraws one Libertarian for APOC, names another

By J. Wilson
 From *Alaska Dispatch News*
 Published on March 10, 2015

Gov. Bill Walker has swapped his choice for the Libertarian nominee to serve on the state commission that enforces campaign-finance and public-official disclosure rules.

Walker's initial choice for the Alaska Public Offices Commission, William McCord, faced skepticism at a confirmation hearing last week after legislators learned he moved to Alaska less than a year ago.

Walker's director of boards and commissions, Karen Gillis, said Tuesday that McCord's nomination had been withdrawn. He was replaced by Mark Fish, another Libertarian who ran unsuccessfully for U.S. Senate last year.

Gillis said Fish was the state Libertarian party's preferred candidate.

A hearing on Fish's nomination is scheduled Thursday in the House State Affairs Committee.

The five-member APOC has typically included two Republican and two Democratic members, but state statute required a change following Walker's election last year. The law says four APOC members will be drawn from the two parties whose gubernatorial candidates drew the most votes at the most recent election.

Last year, the Alaska Democratic Party had no gubernatorial candidate on the ballot. The party's candidate, Byron Mallott, agreed to run for lieutenant governor with Walker, a longtime Republican who dropped his party registration to receive the Democrats' support.

New and renewing Liberty Pledgers

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|
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Flowery Branch woman behind bill making it easier for 3rd-party candidates to get on Ga. ballots

From *Access North Georgia*
Published on February 10, 2015

The Flowery Branch woman who ran a third-party race for an open U.S. Senate seat in Georgia last year is among those in the state working for passage of legislation that would make it easier for third-party candidates to get on the ballot in Georgia.



Amanda Swafford

Amanda Swafford was the Libertarian candidate in the race eventually won by

Republican David Perdue.

Currently pending in the General Assembly is House Bill 58, a ballot access bill sponsored by John Pezold (R-133) of Columbus. The measure would significantly reduce the required number of signatures needed for third party and independent candidates in order to be on the ballot.

Georgia's ballot access laws currently require third-party and independent candidates to obtain signatures from 5% of registered voters in order to run in local races. Those rules haven't changed since 1943 even though the state's population has increased by almost 7 million since that time. Swafford says, consequently, an independent candidate has to

obtain thousands of signatures from an electorate unaware of ballot access issues and increasingly skeptical about giving up the kind of private details required by signature petitions.

HB 58 would still keep hurdles in place for ballot access and require independents to obtain signatures while Republicans and Democrats have no such requirement at all. However, it does lower the signature requirement to just 2% of the actual number of voters who last voted in that particular contest. In most local races, this reduces the signature requirement from thousands to hundreds.

More details about Swafford's efforts can be found at www.GoFundMe.com/GaBallot

Andy Craig makes case for scaling back FDA *continued from page 1*

delay. If the current policy had been in place in 1921, we'd still be watching children die for another five to seven years, waiting for government approval of insulin injections.

Diabetics aren't the only ones harmed by FDA bureaucracy. Medical innovations across the board are slowed, delayed, sometimes prevented altogether, all of which translates into lives lost. That's why, if elected, not only would I vote for legislation to fast-track approval of artificial pancreas technology. I would also propose legislation changing how the FDA works, mandating the consideration of reliable, objective estimates of life-years lost and other quantifiable costs due to the length of the approval process. If the FDA seeks to maintain a balance between blocking dangerous drugs and approving life-saving drugs, it must first stop ignoring one side of the equation.

With some states already contradicting the FDA on the legality of drugs ranging from marijuana to experimental treatments for the terminally ill, the FDA's decision might not be relevant in the long term. But until that occurs, this is a problem Congress needs to address, before the FDA literally costs me an arm and a leg, or worse.

Gov. Gary Johnson Feigns Heart Attack *continued from page 2*

our kids and the future of this country at risk."

However, Buerkle's argument that marijuana is putting college students at CPAC at a 1 in 5 increased risk of having a heart attack one hour after marijuana use is a significant mischaracterization of the findings of a Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School survey, published by *Circulation*, of 3882 acute myocardial infarction patients who were asked about their marijuana use around four days after suffering a heart attack. The study's findings did not suggest that perfectly healthy college students have a "1 in 5 higher chance" of suffering a heart attack within an hour of smoking marijuana. A more realistic characterization of the study would be that its findings suggest that there may be a possibility that someone already at risk of heart attack could face an increased risk, similar to that associated with sexual intercourse or strenuous exercise, of that heart attack occurring within one hour of smoking.

Another study by Harvard Medical School and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, published in the *American Heart Journal* after the one mentioned by Buerkle, tested this theory further and found no statistically significant increase in mortality for acute myocardial infarction patients who habitually used marijuana.