

LIBERTY PLEDGE

NEWSLETTER

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How debates hoodwink Americans

By James P. Gray

From the *Orange County Register*

Published on May 5, 2014

For debates, it was the worst of times. When President Barack Obama and former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney met for their three scheduled 2012 presidential election debates, there were many issues that neither of them wanted to discuss, and so mostly they didn't. These included the failures of our present immigration system, policy of drug prohibition and the so-called Affordable Care Act, and the fact that many of our public schools are failing our children.

But it could have been the best of times. Had candidates from other mainstay political parties participated in the debates, all of those issues, and more, would have been addressed. That would have, in turn, pushed the positions of both Obama and Romney more out into the open, thus resulting in a better-informed electorate. So our country would have won. Only the two main political parties would have lost.

Why did this happen? The presidential debates are controlled by the Presidential Debates Commission, which is comprised entirely of high-ranking Republicans and Democrats. So they are the ones who decide which candidates will be invited to the debates. And, for purely selfish reasons, they rig the system so that invitations are extended only to the Republican and Democratic candidates.

The criterion the commission used in the 2012 election was that only political candidates who were polling at 15 percent of the votes in three national polls were invited to the debates. Of course, the reality is that virtually no candidates other than Republicans and Democrats are even listed in any national polls. So that guarantees the commission's chosen and preordained result.

In years past, when the League of Women Voters controlled this process, the criterion was that any political party that was on the ballots in enough states technically to win the presidency would be included in the debates. Had this criterion been used in 2012, both the Libertarian and Green Party candidates would have been invited, since the Libertarians were on the ballots in 48 states, and the Greens in 40.

When it became apparent to the League of Women Voters that it was losing control of the commission to the Republicans and Democrats, it withdrew, saying that it would not be a part of the "hoodwinking of America." We should take guidance from the League, stop being hoodwinked by the commission and, for the sake of our democracy, change the criterion back to what the League used.

At this time, a lawsuit is pending in Washington, D.C., brought by Gov. Gary Johnson of New Mexico and me, as the 2012 Libertarian candidates for president and vice president, against the Presidential Debates Commission and the Republican and Democratic National Committees. Both the Libertarian and Green Parties have also been invited to join it as plaintiffs. The lawsuit alleges that the two of us should have been included in the 2012 debates because we actually met the commission's criterion in independent polls we sponsored, and because the commission is wrongfully restraining commercial competition in violation of antitrust laws. What more important effect is there on the marketplace than who is elected president of the United States?

Poll after poll shows that a majority of Americans want more choices. People are seeing that the two larger political parties are putting their own welfare ahead of the country's, and people are rightfully fed up with it. With this lawsuit, we are doing something positive about this problem, and you can follow our progress at www.OurAmericaInitiative.com.

Being a third-party college student

By Elena Novak

Excerpted from *ULoop College News*

Published on October 8, 2013

Third-party candidates can't seem to catch a break. No third-party presidential candidate has ever been elected to the presidency, and during election season they are absent from the presidential debates and from election coverage by major news networks.

The reason for their nonsuccess can be attributed to the lack of coverage by the media in addition to a lack of adequate funding for a competitive advantage and a lack of name recognition, according to an opinion article on *Amarillo Globe-News*. ...

At Florida State University, students who are independent or third-party voters are not uncomfortable expressing their decision to reside outside the dominant lines.

Alan Brooks, recent FSU graduate and active member of the Libertarian Party, said he chose his position in order to help bring a new voice to the table. From his perspective, the two major parties seem too similar: "Take the current debt debate for example. Democrats want to increase the debt ceiling and increase spending. Republicans also want to increase the debt ceiling and spending, but not quite

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Robert Sarvis: Libertarian for the U.S. Senate from Virginia

By Brian Doherty

Excerpted from *Reason*

Published on May 14, 2014

Robert Sarvis made the biggest splash for the Libertarian Party in many years with his surprising 6.6 percent—nearly 145,000 votes—total in 2013's Virginia gubernatorial race. The former tech entrepreneur and lawyer did this even while making Republicans angry that he was allegedly stealing votes from their man Ken Cuccinelli, dodging bogus accusations of being a secret Democratic Party plant, and annoying some of the Libertarian hardcore by answering questions about health care by [talking] about policies that stymied competition rather than just repeating “repeal Medicare!”

Sarvis is trying politics again, running for U.S. Senate in Virginia, in a race likely to include incumbent Democrat Mark Warner, vying for his second Senate term, and Republican Ed Gillespie, a former Republican National Committee (RNC) chair and consummate insider. (Gillespie does not yet have the nomination, which doesn't come officially until a state Republican convention in June, but seems to have it locked.)

Sarvis, who tells me he won't be working any other jobs for the duration of the campaign, is a calm, rational guy, not given to the emotionally charged side of the small government message. This served him well in the statewide race; we'll see how it plays in a Senate race that might get more national attention. It is telling that he treats “rational” and “freedom-centric” as synonymous. True, but does it play at the voting booth? We'll find out in November. ...

Reason: Running for office again—why are you putting yourself through this?

Robert Sarvis: The same thing that motivated me last year. I see policy being pretty abysmal and see both Republicans and Democrats not at all moving toward more rational policies, more freedom-centric policies. The front runner in the Republican race and the Democratic incumbent are not going to change their offerings, so I just felt the opportunity was here to build on the momentum from last year and reach more people with a message of freedom in economic and personal lives.

Reason: What's the story with your major party opponents?

Sarvis: Mark Warner, he's a former governor and completing his first term. He's pretty much been a big government guy, going along with all Obama's major spending programs and new programs. As governor he was responsible for a very large tax increase in 2004 and as senator he's been behind all expansions of government.

The Republican likely is Ed Gillespie. He is basically a big government lifelong Washington GOP insider, a former RNC chair, a former lobbyist on behalf of large companies. He was a subordinate in the George W. Bush administration, was big on Romney's campaign. He's the status quo in the GOP.

Reason: You've been trying to use your profile to grow the Libertarian Party as a whole. Talk about what you're trying to do in Virginia.

Sarvis: I've been trying to recruit a whole slate of candidates. It

helps the L.P. and the libertarian message to have more candidates around the state; the idea being to maximize our effect this year and make sure that every voter in every part of the state has a Senate and House candidate to vote for. We have off-year state elections in 2015, all state legislative seats go up, so it will be nice to set the L.P. up for a large contingent of state and local candidates [for 2015].

So I've been looking through who was enthusiastic about my campaign last year and trying to find people even remotely interested in running, letting them know it is doable to run for Congress.

I will help them, campaign with them, we're gonna work like a team. That helps people get over how difficult it is to get your name out [as a third party candidate]. Each opportunity I get to campaign, if there's media coverage I'll make sure the media is noting the fact we also have House candidates out there, trying to use whatever name recognition I have to help them to build [the party at large].

Reason: Have you begun campaigning in earnest yet?

Sarvis: We are going to be doing as much fulltime campaigning as we can, and right now are trying to build a team and build an organization that's more structured than last year, a bigger team that's more professionalized and more effective.

I'm getting significantly more [media] mentions this time [at a comparative point in the campaign]. I started working in total obscurity last year and this year reporters clearly [already know I exist]. They are still focusing mostly on the other two but [usually are] at least mentioning my presence; there has been some reaching out for comment on certain things [which I expect will] increase through the course of the campaign. Once we're past the primaries and ballot access [and the focus is on] policy, we'll have a real chance to distinguish ourselves as more responsible, more rational, more in line with what voters want.

June 10 is the signature gathering deadline. Each congressional candidate needs 1,000 valid signatures from registered voters in their district and I have to get 10,000 [statewide]. It's always a close call at the end. Ballot access is time consuming, resource intensive, and the [state L.P.] has 10, 11 candidates to worry about in addition to me. I think we'll make the ballot, I'll make it, and a vast majority [of the lower-ticket candidates will make it]. We've got no national help [from the L.P.] though some of the local affiliates are helping with signature gathering.

Reason: I saw Ed Gillespie talking about how the GOP needed to appeal more to the under-30 voter in this election.

Sarvis: Exit polls [from my governor's run last year] said 15 percent of the 18-29 crowd [went for me]. I think Republicans have a really hard sell [to the young]. They are kind of obsolete. Young people are really turned off by the GOP approach to civil issues. Both Republicans nor Democrats are awful for the situation of young people, with large debt transfers of wealth from young to old, so all the libertarian policies are very attractive [to young voters].

Reason: What are the main issues you want to run on in this Senate race?

Sarvis: I think the economy is the biggest. The great

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as much as Democrats ... The problem is that neither side is saying, ‘what if we stopped deficit spending entirely and paid off our debts?’” he said.

He went on, “The same thing happens in nearly every debate today at every level of government. It’s about time we had a few voices in there suggesting that maybe passing new legislation isn’t the answer to everything and that maybe the government shouldn’t try to regulate every aspect of life, commerce, and nature. Even if it is a minority voice, it might help temper the rhetoric a bit.”

Because third-party candidates are far less likely to win, many people are afraid to ‘throw their vote away’ on a near-guaranteed loser. Brooks likens this idea to horse racing.

“Unlike horse racing, you don’t get a prize for betting on a ‘winner’ in politics,” he said. “The reward in politics comes from choosing the person who will do the best job running the government.”

Jacob McLeod, a student in FSU’s Political Science department, voiced a similar sentiment.

“I value my vote most as an expression of my opinion, so I might as well cast it in favor of the candidate I most agree with,” he said.

He also believes a vote for a third-party candidate is not a toss-away: “At the margin, a third party vote is likely to be more influential; a one percent increase in votes for a third party candidate is probably of greater concern to the political establishment than a similar increase in favor of a mainstream candidate. Mainstream politicians will catch on to these trends and try to recapture some of those votes,” he said. ...

Going against the status quo can often lead to feeling ostracized by the community, but Brooks said he has never felt the dominant political community pushing back against him.

“I’ve never felt actively ostracized for my political views. As a Libertarian, there is enough common ground with both parties that it’s possible to fit in with members of either major group,” he said.

New and renewing Liberty Pledgers

James A. Alcorn	Glen Hilts	Ed Rankin
Curtis Arrowsmith	Rachel R. Hix	Parker Renfrew
Jerilyn K. Barthel	Bob Hoban	Joshua Resendez
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Gary L. Bechtold	Jarrett Jarrell	Jeffrey M. Scoville
Greg D. Bedsaul	Michael C. Jones	Shawn Shafai
John R. Boyd	Stanley P. Kerr	Bruce E. Shellenbaum
Katherine B. Byrne	Joseph King	Michael Shockley
Mark A. Byrne	Otto Knudsen	Marshall Smith
Amy Calandrino	Diane E. Kortsch	Christopher Somers
Paul Charnetzki	Dave M. Kraemer	Theodore Sputh
Thomas Collica	Tom J. Laurent	Amy M. Stern
Matthew Comtois	Nicole Lence	Wes Stiles
William Corey	Douglas Lunde	John Swapceinski
Ryan T. Daniel	Krista K. Mays	Craig Thighe
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Christine dos Santos	Mark A. Miller	Justin Trentadue
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Libertarian Party sees opportunity in GOP fractures

By Alexandra Gutierrez

Excerpted from *KTOO News (Alaska)*

Published on May 12, 2014

Republican Senate Candidate Joe Miller did something unusual on Thursday: He spoke out in support of party that was not his own. The comments concerned the [Alaska] Libertarian Party, which could be in a position to gain converts from some dissent within the state GOP.

As the state's biggest organized political party, the GOP represents plenty of different sects. There are big businessmen, and small businessmen, religious conservatives, Tea Partiers, and a slew of other subgroups.

The state's Libertarian Party is not so big. Its membership has hovered around 7,000 voters since the Division of Elections began tracking their registration in the late 1990s. But there may be a perk to that: With fewer members, you can have more cohesion.

"It's obvious the GOP is fractured. Everyone is well aware of that," says Brad Leavitt, Alaska Libertarian Party vice chair and chair of its platform committee. "And to be honest, we're reaping the benefits. People are coming over, and they're disgruntled."

Leavitt says he's one of those guys. He only joined the Libertarian Party a year

ago, and he often voted for Republican candidates before that.

Now, Leavitt says he's seeing more interest in his party from the Ron Paul faction of the GOP. That group took over the GOP in 2012 in a coup, but then lost control a year later to the establishment wing.

Because the Republican Party and the Libertarian Party platforms have a lot of things in common, Leavitt sees the organization appealing to some [of] the insurgents who might feel marginalized in the Republican Party. And one of the biggest position differences between the two parties was recently taken out by the Libertarians. Where the Republicans have an anti-abortion plank in their platform, the Libertarian position was that government should stay out of abortion.

Leavitt says the decision to remove it from the platform was:

"To make it an individual choice. Be it the individual's decision one way or another. It's the same for the candidate — not pigeonhole any candidate to say you must be this way or you must be that way. It's just it's about liberty."

That could make his party friendly to some of the Republican dissidents, including one big one: Joe Miller.

A U.S. Senate candidate in a three-way Republican Primary, Miller has had a strained relationship with the Alaska GOP over the years. While he has said he has no intention of running as anything but a Republican, Miller also rejected a pledge to support his Senate rivals if he loses the primary.

Miller is running against Dan Sullivan, a former attorney general and natural resources commissioner for the state, and Mead Treadwell, the sitting lieutenant governor. Sullivan has come out ahead in a recent primary poll, and he has also raised over \$2 million since joining the race, putting him ahead of Miller and Treadwell.

This week, Miller raised eyebrows when he sent out a press release criticizing Mark Begich for remarks the Democratic Senator made about Libertarians in an interview. Miller argued that Begich was misrepresenting the Libertarian Party for political benefit, and Miller also stated he was "proud to share ... values with the Alaska Libertarian Party."

While Miller was traveling on Friday and could not be reached, Leavitt says there is no arrangement for Miller to run as a Libertarian should Miller's Republican bid fail. But the Libertarian Party is open to the idea.

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recession, and unemployment levels, in many ways is caused by government policies and when it comes to longer-term economic growth, we have structural issues hampering the economy, with regulatory things that kill job creation and business activity. Increasing costs of hiring, an incredible uncertainty about the future of policy.

At the federal level, this is a much different race for me than last year, issues like foreign interventionism and immigration are really important. Democrats are only able to get away with calling themselves pro-immigrant in contrast to Republicans. I look at [the Democrats] as having a hugely protectionist constituency in labor and Libertarians have the responsibility to take the issue and run with it. Immigration is important for economic growth and improving living conditions of people around the world, allowing people to live to their maximum potential, allowing them to come to a free society. Northern Virginia is very diverse, and I'll have a good time reaching out to those voters.

And defense spending: In Virginia a huge portion of the economy depends on federal expenditures and the defense

industry, so I want to talk about how to reduce defense spending and I have to be up front about why I believe it and not try to pander to people reliant on the defense industry. ...

Reason: How will you deal with liberty-minded Republicans worrying that your presence or vote totals might harm the Republicans' chances of regaining a Senate majority?

Sarvis: I think last year's results are fairly clear: I probably brought to the polls a lot more people that if I hadn't been there would have voted for the Democrat than the Republican. This whole "stealing votes" issue gives me an opportunity to bring up things like instant runoff voting and range voting.

I think that liberty-leaning Republicans have no reason to invest in another big government Republican. Similarly on the Democratic side, people in favor of getting rid of corporate welfare and cronyism, if they want real drug policy reform, immigration liberalization, they should vote for me.

If the Senate is up for grabs, looks close to 50-50, that increases the importance of looking outside the two-party system. I'm just gonna make the argument that we are one out of 100 senators and what difference would it make sending another Republican or another Democrat? The way to make the biggest difference is to send a Libertarian. That immediately changes the game.