

LIBERTY PLEDGE

NEWSLETTER

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‘You’re no one until someone attacks you.’ —Anon.

Included in this issue of *Liberty Pledge* are two columns meant to be attacks on Libertarian presidential candidate Gary Johnson and on the Libertarian Party platform. They urge voters not to vote Libertarian—for the very reasons that many voters will.

Vote as if it matters

by Paul Krugman

Excerpted from the *New York Times*

Published on Sept. 19, 2016

Editor’s note: New York Times columnist Paul Krugman is a self-described “unabashed defender of the welfare state.”

Does it make sense to vote for Gary Johnson, the Libertarian candidate for president? Sure, as long as you believe two things. First, you have to believe that it makes no difference at all whether Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump moves into the White House — because one of them will. Second, you have to believe that America will be better off in the long run if we eliminate environmental regulation, abolish the income tax, do away with public schools, and dismantle Social Security and Medicare — which is what the Libertarian platform calls for.

But do 29 percent of Americans between 18 and 34 believe these things? I doubt it. Yet that, according to a recent Quinnipiac poll, is the share of millennial voters who say that they would vote for Mr. Johnson if the election took place now. And the preponderance of young Americans who say they’ll back Mr. Johnson or Jill Stein, the Green Party nominee, appear to be citizens who would support Mrs. Clinton in a two-way race; including the minor party candidates cuts her margin among young voters from 21 points to just 5.

So I’d like to make a plea to young Americans: your vote matters, so please take it seriously.

Why are minor candidates seemingly drawing so much support this year? Very little of it, I suspect, reflects support for their policy positions. How many people have actually read the Libertarian platform? But if you’re thinking of voting Johnson, you really should. It’s a remarkable document.

[The LP platform] calls for abolition of the income tax and...privatization of almost everything the government does, including education.

As I said, it calls for abolition of the income tax and the privatization of almost everything the government does, including education. “We would restore authority to parents to determine the education of their children,

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Johnson not worth any liberal’s protest vote

by Jim Newell

Excerpted from *Slate*

Published on Sept. 15, 2016

Editor’s note: *Slate*, an ultra-left, big-government publication, joined the attacks on Gov. Gary Johnson in reaction to polls showing that he might swing more voters away from Democrat Hillary Clinton than from Republican Donald Trump.

Do the young know anything about Gary Johnson, the Libertarian nominee for president? Recent polls suggest that a good number of them sure seem to like him, or at least consider him a worthy receptacle for a protest vote.

And at first glance, it’s not hard to see why. Johnson’s fun. He’s a fun, funny dude. I personally liked him when he was asked about Aleppo and was all, *What in the hell are you even talking about?* Ha! [That] probably made it a net-plus for him in the end. He likes #extreme outdoor sports and thinks weed is great. He mostly supports abortion rights, LGBT rights, and rolling back America’s global military footprint. He has a responsible adult politician as his running mate. And he’s real. America’s young people, we’re constantly told, value honesty and authenticity. They certainly see Hillary Clinton as inauthentic and dishonest, while Donald Trump, on the other end, is a walking reminder of the wisdom of employing scripts, political calculation, and simple discretion as bulwarks against unleashing one’s full self to the public. Gary Johnson? He’s just Gary Johnson.

There’s a lot more to Gary Johnson, though, that these young, liberal voters may want to consider before pulling the lever.

First, the polls: In the 2012 election, President Obama won 18- to 29-year-olds by 23 percentage points, 60 to 37 percent, according to exit polls. That was a decline from 2008, when he carried the same cohort by 34 percentage points, but in the same ballpark. But among young voters this cycle, according to recent polls, Clinton is struggling to match those in Obama’s two victories.

It’s not that young voters are going to Donald Trump. He properly repels them. It’s Gary Johnson, the Libertarian candidate,

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Johnson's surprising stands on Social Security and health care

by **Richard Eisenberg**
 Excerpted from *Forbes*
 Published on Sept. 23, 2016

Gary Johnson, the Libertarian Party's presidential candidate, won't be on the debate stage with Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump on Monday [Sept. 26]. But that doesn't mean voters aren't interested in where he stands on the issues.

So, as part of Next Avenue's Election 2016 reporting on the candidates' proposals for domestic policies of keen interest to older voters, below is what we know about Johnson's stances.

Social Security

In his recent "60 Minutes" interview with running mate William Weld (the former Republican governor of Massachusetts), Johnson said: "There has to be reform for Medicaid [the federal/state health program primarily for the poor] and Medicare [the federal health program for Americans 65 and older] and Social Security. And if we're going to put our heads in the sand, if we say we're going to do nothing in any of these areas, it's a fiscal cliff."

Which particular reforms to Social Security (which Johnson has called a "Ponzi scheme")?

Actually, the 2016 Libertarian Party platform goes further than a simple "reform," to my eyes—more like an eventual abolishment.

It says the United States should "phase out the current government-sponsored Social Security system and transition to a private, voluntary system." Retirement planning, the platform says, "is the responsibility of the individual, not the government."

Johnson has personally endorsed privatizing Social Security, too—an idea favored by some Republicans (but not Donald Trump). This arrangement would let Americans self-direct their Social Security retirement funds through personal investment accounts, allowing them to buy stocks, for instance.

Health care, long-term care, Medicare, and Medicaid

On the face of it, the Libertarian Party's view on health care, long-term care, Medicare, and Medicaid sounds hard to argue with.

The platform says: "We favor a free-market health-care system. We recognize the freedom of individuals to determine the level of health insurance they want (if any), the level of health care they want, the care providers they want, the medicines and treatments they will use, and all other aspects of their medical care, including end-of-life decisions. People should be free to purchase health insurance across state lines." (That last part echoes what Trump has said.)

But probe a little deeper into Johnson's positions and the proposals verge on the radical, compared to our current health care system. He'd essentially abolish most health insurance and would eliminate any government involvement in health care.

Johnson would repeal Obamacare "in a heartbeat" if given the opportunity, he has said. "If the GOP bill lowers costs and improves care, I'll sign it," Johnson proclaimed in a CNN Libertarian Town Hall in June.

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New and renewing Liberty Pledgers

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What's unusual, though, is that the young, liberal voters more aligned with Clinton are falling for Johnson.

That's strange, because aside from a few issues, he is a small-government, free-market ideologue.

Johnson not worth a protest vote

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who's not only picking up a huge share of young voters, but is actually neck-and-neck with Clinton among them.

It's Gary Johnson, the Libertarian candidate, who's not only picking up a huge share of young voters, but is actually neck-and-neck with Clinton among them.

In the Quinnipiac national poll released Wednesday, Clinton's support among 18- to 34-year-olds [is] 31 percent. Trump's support among the youngs [is] 26 percent. And sitting right there in the middle is Johnson, earning 29 percent of 18- to 34-years-olds.

Under Johnson, rich people would be richer, poor people would be poorer, and sick people would be sicker.

The story's the same in Thursday's fresh new *New York Times*/CBS News national poll. "The third-party candidates draw their strongest support from younger voters," the Times writes. "Twenty-six percent of voters ages 18 to 29 say they plan to vote for Mr. Johnson, and another 10 percent back Ms. Stein. A little more than one in five political independents say they will vote for one of the third-party candidates."

Support for minor-party candidates has shown no signs of ebbing the way it usually does by now. That makes sense in a race with two historically disliked major-party candidates.

What's unusual, though, is that the young, liberal voters more aligned with Clinton are falling for Johnson.

That's strange, because aside from a few issues, he is a small-government, free-market ideologue.

When Johnson ran for president in 2012, he proposed a 43 percent, across-the-board, single-year federal spending cut, the worst idea proposed by any candidate running for president

that year. Even the most ardent balanced-budget fetishists propose doing so over the course of five or 10 years. Johnson's goal is to do it in one fiscal year, indiscriminately. The single-year spending cut he's proposing in this year's run is around 20 percent, in line with lower annual deficit projections. A 20-percent single-year cut in federal spending would still be an absolute disaster — and yes, he would bring the budget into balance entirely through spending cuts, as he's barred any tax increases. (Consider, too, what it would mean in the likely event of a recession to have a president who will refuse to enact anything but a balanced budget.)

Since we're talking about young voters here, too, don't ask Johnson for much help on college tuition. Same goes for your union drive.

One response of liberals who look fondly on Johnson goes like this: *there's no way Congress would allow him to implement his fiscal plans, so vote for him for his foreign policy, over which he has more latitude.*

Johnson would certainly be loath to launch new overseas wars — although, as Obama has shown, it's not easy to *entirely* resist the Pentagon, CIA, congressional hawks, and the entirety of D.C. foreign-policy groupthink once you're in office.

But the idea that Congress wouldn't allow him to implement his fiscal plans seems only half true, and not for the policy priorities that young liberal voters would consider the good half.

Republicans will hold the House in November, and their chances of retaining Senate control are improving by the day. (In any case, if they were to lose the Senate, they'd probably pick it back up in 2018.) Which parts of Johnson's agenda get through a Republican Congress? Cuts to Medicare and Medicaid would seem to be on the agenda. Johnson, who believes "the government should not be involved in health care," would also cheerily sign on to a repeal of the Affordable Care Act, and his replacement would not be a single-payer health system. Already-cut discretionary spending programs would learn a new meaning of "cut." •

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Mike Fellows's hometown paper: 'Libertarian was a great fellow'

Excerpted from a

Billings Gazette editorial

Published on Sept. 22, 2016

The *Billings Gazette's* own Tom Lutey once called perennial Libertarian candidate Mike Fellows of Missoula, "the god-father of third-party politics in Montana."

Virtually no politician worked harder than Fellows, who could be seen at nearly every county fair and political rally, helping to spread a Libertarian message. Fellows literally died on the job as he was heading back from a campaign event in Seeley Lake.

Fellows's determination should be something that all Montanans admire, even if they disagree with his beliefs. He stood up for something he believed. He spent countless hours fighting for what he thought was right. And most important, he was never discouraged by the almost inevitable losses he endured at the hands of the two major political parties—defeats that would have sent the average politician home, discouraged and embittered.

His website, almost endearingly outdated, reflected the personal views he held so passionately. When the webpage loads, it's startling because an embedded video starts with Fellows rattling off a couple of rounds. But that was Mike Fellows, who fervently believed that the Second Amendment was not about hunting, calling gun

control, "victim disarmament."

He railed against Congressional spending, including money that was spent to build Billings's Dehler Park. He concluded by saying, "Kick the bums out."

"Government is simply force with a little mob rule thrown in," Fellows said.

[A] short biography on his site said, "Mike Fellows is a graduate of Havre High School and a graduate of the University of Montana. Mike lives in the liberal city of Missoula."

Fellows seemed resolved to carry on after election defeats, waiting like clockwork until the next open filing. During his life he ran for state legislature, Montana's Secretary of State, and five consecutive bids for the U.S. House.

He lost every race he entered since 1996—20 years.

However, he came close to winning an office in 2012 when he received more than 40 percent of the vote for state Supreme Court clerk—an elected job [for] which he may have lacked technical qualifications but ran with enthusiasm.

In a U.S. House debate two weeks ago in Billings, Fellows could not attend, hospitalized because of a kidney condition. Those close to Fellows said that he had even tried arguing with doctors, but eventually decided that it was not safe for him to be on the road. It's a testament to Fellows that both Rep. Ryan Zinke and Democrat challenger Denise

Juneau insisted Fellows be included in the debates. Fittingly, a podium was left on stage the night of the debate, reminding viewers of the candidate who fought relentlessly to be included in the statewide political discussions.

The Montana Libertarian Party (MLP) rightly mourned their candidate, noting, "because of Fellows's single-handed perseverance, the MLP garnered enough votes to be legally recognized as a major political party and has maintained ballot access across the state for more than 20 years, something few third-party state affiliates have been able to accomplish."

The most fitting legacy for Fellows would be for the Libertarians to carry on his scrappy hard work.

He is a good example of what determination can do. He literally helped establish and keep a third party on the ballot. Now, Libertarians and those who believe in more than two choices in elections need to continue his fine work. Democracy is about choices—and Fellows gave others a different perspective and a different choice. And Fellows came very close to proving that someone who didn't have a D or an R behind [his] name could compete.

We salute the legacy of Mike Fellows, which has little to do with partisanship and everything to do with believing enough in the system to make a difference.

And he did. •

Krugman: Vote as if it matters

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without interference from government." And if parents don't want their children educated, or want them indoctrinated in a cult, or put them to work in a sweatshop instead of learning to read? Not our problem.

What really struck me, however, was [that] the platform...opposes any kind of [environmental] regulation; instead, it argues that we can rely on the courts. Is a giant corporation poisoning the air you breathe or the water you drink? Just sue: "Where damages can be proven and quantified in a court of law, restitution to the injured parties must be required."

Now, maybe you don't care. Maybe you consider center-left policies just as bad as hard-right policies. And maybe you have somehow managed to reconcile that disdain with tolerance for libertarian free-market mania. If so, by all means vote for Mr. Johnson.

But don't vote for a minor-party candidate to make a statement.

Remember, George W. Bush lost the popular vote in 2000, but somehow ended up in the White House anyway, in part thanks to the Nader vote—and nonetheless proceeded to govern as if he had won a landslide. Can you really imagine a triumphant Mr. Trump showing restraint out of respect for all those libertarian votes?

Your vote matters, and you should act accordingly—which means thinking seriously about what you want to see happen to America. •

Johnson's surprising stands

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Johnson would like to get rid of health insurance as we know it. Instead, Americans would buy health insurance only for catastrophic events and illness.

[Johnson] believes a free-market [healthcare] system would lead to more affordable health care with price transparency and open competition.

He believes a free-market system would lead to more affordable health care with price transparency and open competition. This system, Johnson told Rogan, "would probably cost about one-fifth of what it currently costs. We would have Gallbladders 'R' Us. We'd have gallbladder surgery for thousands of dollars as opposed to tens of thousands of dollars. We'd have Stitches 'R' Us; we'd have X-rays 'R' Us. We'd have the radiologists next to X-rays 'R' Us, to read those X-rays."

Johnson has referred to [Medicaid and Medicare] as "the worst runaway expenditure in the federal government today." •