

LIBERTY PLEDGE

NEWSLETTER

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There's still time for a serious third-party presidential run

by Russell Berman

Excerpted from the *Atlantic*

Published on April 6, 2016

It's not too late—yet—for Trump or an anti-Trump to make a credible independent bid.

How late is too late for an independent or third-party presidential run?

That question is becoming paramount as the Republican Party barrels through its primary season bitterly divided and with the chances growing that it will open its July convention without a nominee in hand. Conservatives resolutely opposed to a Donald Trump presidency have been investigating a third-party bid for weeks, hoping that if they can't rally the party behind Ted Cruz then at least they'll be [able] to give the Never Trump movement an alternative not named Clinton in November. And the recent, if hardly surprising, demise of the paper-thin "loyalty pledge" that Republican candidates signed last year means

that either Trump or Cruz could conceivably mount an independent campaign if they lose the GOP nomination in Cleveland.

The short answer is that no, it's not too late for a third-party or independent run, and it might even be possible for someone as wealthy and well known as Trump to launch a serious campaign as late as July. (Note: *Serious* does not necessarily mean *winning*.)

But for the anti-Trump forces scrambling to find a conservative alternative, time is very much running short.

The three main options for the anti-Trump group would be to use existing minor-party lines to field a conservative candidate, to create an entirely new party, or to back an independent candidate without a party affiliation. The consensus, [according to Erick Erickson, the Georgia-based conservative activist and radio host], is to use existing parties—although they might not be the same one in every state. The Libertarian Party already has a ballot

line across the country, and the Constitution Party—which runs on a strict conservative platform—expects to be on as many as 25 state ballots by November. "It's an all-of-the-above approach," Erickson said. "If, let's say, Candidate X is on the Constitution Party in one state and the Libertarian Party in another state, well the Electoral College members are bound to vote not for the party but for the person."

"For a change politically, we kind of hold all the cards."

—Nicholas Sarwark

And who might 'Candidate X' be? "We'll worry about the candidate later," Erickson told me.

That won't be good enough for either the Libertarian or the Constitution Party, neither of which is willing to simply let disaffected Republicans walk in and take over their parties. They view the current chaos in the GOP as a nearly un-

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John McAfee still thinks 'this is the year of the third party'

By Eli Watkins

Excerpted from CNN

Published on March 23, 2016

After terror attacks in Brussels on Tuesday, Libertarian presidential candidate John McAfee, who is better known [for his] eponymous cybersecurity software, had strong words for the government and dismissed anti-terror approach-

es offered by his more mainstream opponents.

McAfee said he supports a total overhaul of the nation's counter-terror apparatus, one that focuses on patterns within global communications and not individual conversations.

"We are blinded in our history in what used to work. It no longer works," McAfee said. "The digital

age has changed the paradigm."

He said Democrat Hillary Clinton's call for increased surveillance was outdated and dismissed a recent controversy over whether private companies should help the government break encryption on [a terrorist's phone] as irrelevant.

He also dismissed the reactions of

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McAfee: 'The year of the the third party'

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Donald Trump, who called for torture of terror suspects, and Ted Cruz, who called for law enforcement to “patrol and secure Muslim neighborhoods.” McAfee said they, like the government, had “missed the point” by focusing on monitoring individuals instead of foreign states with sophisticated cybersecurity systems.

McAfee said his preferred system would detect terrorist plots before they can go into effect.

“I believe this is the year of the third party”

Despite this lack of support for the Libertarian Party in recent elections, McAfee said his more mainstream rivals like Clinton and Trump are not right to lead in the digital age and that 2016 is the year his party can break through.

“I believe this is the year of the third party,” he said.

McAfee made millions developing the cybersecurity software that bears his name, and is now a privacy advocate.

McAfee’s campaign has been largely social media-driven coupled with appearances at Libertarian events in the lead-up to the party’s convention in late May. He has posted dramatic videos to his various accounts and published regular editorials, occasionally responding to current events by offering his cyber expertise to Trump and the FBI.

McAfee, who had few kind words for Trump, said the Republican front-runner’s appeal came from populist anger with the government and the established political class.

But he warned such anger came with serious risk.

“An angry people cannot create anything that is not imbued with anger,” McAfee said. “God, please let there be other options.”•

Libertarians can determine the outcome of the 2016 election

by **Lucy Steigerwald**
Excerpted from *Playboy*
Published on April 6, 2016

It feels in 2016 that anything can happen, election-wise. The GOP is splitting and spitting mad over the staggering success of a political amateur [sic]. Hillary Clinton is either almost there, or she's going to crash and burn under the weight of the Bern and an e-mail indictment.

None of this means the Libertarian Party can get anywhere. When having a televised debate at all is a victory, when 5 percent of the vote, and mostly likely handing the election to Clinton would be an unprecedented success, it's hard to know how optimistic to feel about the little third party that won't ever give up.

Formed in a living room in 1971, the Libertarian Party has forever struggled for any kind of relevancy on the national stage. The party was bafflingly early in its support of gay rights and marriage equality. Considering the familiar joke/accusation about libertarians being Republicans who just want to smoke

pot, you're damn right they've been good on the war on drugs for years as well.

It's a cold, true fact that the Democrats and the Republicans have a serial-killer-tight hold on the democratic process in America. Third-party candidates have to fight like mad to get around draconian ballot-access restrictions. And forget access to the debates. You have to poll at 15 percent to be considered. As Johnson sagely asks—and sues over—how are you supposed to reach 15 percent if they won't let you debate?

It feels in 2016 that anything can happen, election-wise.

Johnson did start out as one of the GOP contender pack in 2012, but he sensibly moved over to the LP side when he couldn't even compete with then-Rep. Ron Paul as the truth-telling protest candidate. Johnson, 63, is pro-choice, pro-pot, and if not purely antiwar, he's an improvement over any of the pos-

sible candidates for 2016.

The Fox Business News debate, pre-recorded and held in a conspicuously small studio, also included Austin Petersen, 35, a maker of various libertarian websites, and John McAfee, 70, who was once most famous for his eponymous virus-scan software.

For his part, McAfee had some oddly insightful answers at the debate. Plus, he can be honest. All of this real talk caused Johnson to walk over and smooch McAfee on the cheek. Nobody is doing *that* in the major parties.

This was mostly the mood of the debate—jovial. Stossel asked about gay marriage, ISIS, immigrants and abortion, and other currently volleyballed issues such as the right to refuse to bake a cake for a customer. Petersen was the only pro-life candidate. McAfee and Johnson offered unqualified support for it being the woman's choice. All supported marriage equality, and all offered a note of caution about foreign interven-

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The Blaze anticipating Libertarian forum on ‘Stossel’

by **Elias J. Atienza**

Excerpted from the *Blaze*
Published on March 9, 2016

The Libertarian Party has the chance to become a major player. Fox Business’s “Stossel” is nationally televised and has a sizable audience each week. If the candi-

dates can present their vision for America concisely and effectively, more people will look to the Libertarian Party.

But if the candidates devolve into a bitter spectacle of ego and personal attacks, then we will see another version of the GOP debates. What peo-

ple need to hear is about the issues. Personality is important, but policy is what ultimately matters the most.

This forum presents a path forward. Will they take it and continue their crusade to be [a] viable alternative for disaffected conservatives, liberals, and independents?•

Serious third-party run

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precedented opportunity to expand their reach—and as a potential threat.

The Libertarian Party has more ballot lines [than does the Constitution Party], and it won’t pick its nominee until a Memorial Day convention in Orlando. But its chairman, Nicholas Sarwark, has a similar open-but-wary attitude to the possibility of a GOP defector. “For a change politically, we kind of hold all the cards,” he told me. “So if somebody wants to come to Orlando and try to get our nomination, they’re going to have bring their A game and come and convince delegates that they’re Libertarians, or Libertarian enough. That’s something that’s going to be up to the delegates.”

He or she would also have to compete against several candidates who have been running for months, including former New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson and John McAfee, who developed the eponymous computer anti-virus program. To have a chance of winning, Sarwark said, a candidate would likely have to voice their support for marijuana legalization, and opposition to the drug war and interventionist foreign policy. “It will be a hell of a fight if someone tries to hijack it,” he said of the convention.

One option that might have been available four years ago but is not now is the Americans Elect line, which won ballot access in 29 states by 2012 but failed to recruit a bipartisan ticket nominated through an online

ballot. The organization shut down last year, and its founder, Peter Ackerman, actually went to court to get the ballot lines taken down so they could not be used by a candidate who ran counter to its mission. “We shut down specifically so Americans Elect was not available to anyone else,” Ackerman said.

If Cruz or another Republican toppled Trump at the GOP convention, the billionaire could still run as an independent either without a party affiliation, by running on the lines of other minor parties in different states, or by running as a write-in candidate in the 43 states that allow it. (“Trump” is easy to spell,” Democratic strategist Tad Devine noted this week in *USA Today*.) But there’s no indication that Trump’s organization is planning for that possibility, and if he doesn’t lay the groundwork now, the best he might be able to hope for, after July, would be to play spoiler.

The deadline for running as an independent or new-party nominee in Texas is in May, and those for other key states like Illinois, Florida, and Michigan fall before or immediately after the Republican convention. “There’s a lot of states where you’d be helpless if you didn’t start to do anything until the convention,” said Richard Winger, the longtime editor of a newsletter called *Ballot Access News*. Another obstacle for Trump would be so-called “sore-loser” laws in a few states, including Texas, that forbid candidates who have appeared on the primary ballot under one party from running in the general election as an independent.•

Determining the outcome

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tions. McAfee went downright “war, what is it good for?” in his first answer on the issue.

Johnson gave the LP its best showing in decades in 2012. He has

no social conservative baggage to scare off liberals and [he has] the fiscal muscle to welcome conservatives (he certainly likes trade better than Trump does). In a Hillary-and-Trump-plagued America, might not

a few people wash their hands of the whole two-party thing?

Johnson has been saying he could change the election’s outcome for months now. A few people agree with him.•