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< The NPR Third-Party Candidate Debate

Transcript

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Heard on All Things Considered

text size A A A

October 6, 2012 - GUY RAZ, HOST:

From NPR News, it's WEEKENDS on ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. I'm Guy Raz.

Here's what it's like to be a third-party candidate running for president.

RALPH NADER: You're excluded from the debates. You spend an exhausting amount of time, until Labor Day, just trying to get over the ballot access barriers. Your petitioners are harassed in the streets; you're subjected to baseless lawsuits by one party or another.

RAZ: That's Ralph Nader. He's run for president three times - four, if you count the time he ran unofficially. In 2000, he managed to win almost 3 percent of the national vote. And that year, he tried to get in on a debate between George W. Bush and Al Gore.

NADER: Well, I went Northeastern University in Boston where one of the debates was going on. And I had a ticket to go to an adjoining building, right next to the building that had a debate going on, and I was almost arrested.

RAZ: And to this day, try getting a third-party candidate into a debate and, well, it's practically impossible. The Commission on Presidential Debates says to be included, you have to poll 15 percent with voters, which is why George Farah, the founder of Open Debates - that's a group that wants the system reformed - it's why he thinks the commission is the main problem.

GEORGE FARAH: And this commission exists for the principal purpose of protecting and strengthening the two parties. And every four years, they allow the candidates, the major party candidates, to negotiate agreements that dictate many of the terms of the debates, including the exclusion of popular third-party voices.

RAZ: So given that the two major party candidates had 90 minutes and at least 50 million viewers on Wednesday night, we decided to invite two of the third-party candidates to an NPR debate. That's our cover story: the NPR third-party candidate debates. So cue the music.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

RAZ: Tonight, WEEKENDS on ALL THINGS CONSIDERED brings you the third-party debate. Two candidates vying for the White House will battle it out to win a piece of the electorate. Gary Johnson is the Libertarian Party's nominee. Jill Stein is the Green Party's.

(APPLAUSE)

RAZ: And we even have some canned applause. And now, let the debate begin. Gary Johnson is in Cincinnati, Ohio, welcome to you.

GARY JOHNSON: Thank you.

RAZ: And welcome also to Jill Stein in Houston, Texas.

JILL STEIN: Great to be with you, Guy.



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Transcript Johnson and Jill Stein, you both know the rules. We're going to focus on domestic issues, the economy, health care and the role of government. And I'm going to be keeping you to the time allotted for each answer. So, Gary Johnson, you have 30 seconds to make an opening statement. Go.

JOHNSON: Country's in deep doo-doo. Let's stop the growing police state. Let's stop our military interventions. Let's balance the federal budget. Let's eliminate income tax, corporate tax. Let's abolish the IRS, replace all that with one federal consumption tax that will create tens of millions of jobs in a zero-corporate tax rate environment.

RAZ: Jill Stein?

JOHNSON: How did I do? How much time did I have to spare, just to give me a sense?

RAZ: You actually have five, six seconds left.

JOHNSON: Oh, shoot. OK, I won't make that mistake again. Thank you.

(LAUGHTER)

RAZ: Jill Stein, you have 30 seconds to make your case.

STEIN: Well, we are in crisis. We're losing our jobs, decent wages, our homes, affordable health care and higher education; civil liberties are under attack, and the climate's in meltdown. The wealthy few are doing better than ever, and the political establishment's making it worse, imposing austerity on everyday people while they squander trillions on wars, Wall Street bailouts and tax breaks for the wealthy.

A vote for me is a vote for the solutions that we need for jobs, not corporate tax breaks, for health care as a human right, public higher education that's free, ending student debt and downsizing the military to pay for it.

RAZ: All right. Great. Let's start with the economy. Jill Stein, you're going to go first, and you will have 45 seconds. What is your plan to jump-start the U.S. economy? And please be as specific as possible.

STEIN: Great. Well, the economy is working great if you are a hedge fund manager or a big CEO or a bank, but it's not working for everyday people. So we need to, first and foremost, create jobs. We're calling for a Green New Deal that will create 25 million jobs that will jump-start a green economy and put an end to unemployment, and that will call a halt to climate change and make wars for oil obsolete, because we'll have a green economy.

RAZ: All right. Gary Johnson, your plan?

JOHNSON: I think we need to balance the federal budget immediately, or we're going to find ourselves in the midst of a monetary collapse. So I am promising to submit a balanced budget to Congress in the year 2013, which is \$1.4 trillion reduction in federal spending, and that would include the entitlements: Medicaid, Medicare, military spending.

I would eliminate income tax, corporate tax. I would abolish the IRS; I would replace all of that with one federal consumption tax - the fair tax. I think that's the answer when it comes to American jobs, because in a zero-corporate tax rate environment, if the private sector doesn't create tens of millions of jobs - I don't know what it takes to create tens of millions of jobs. It's also the answer when it comes to our exports with China, for example. We're going to bleed out all existing federal tax. That's what will make us competitive.

RAZ: We've reached 30 seconds. Let's move on to the topic of health care. Jill Stein, you are a medical doctor. What would a Stein administration's health care plan look like?

STEIN: We need to simply bring the eligibility age for Medicare down to zero. In fact, pre-zero, from the moment of conception, so that people would be covered throughout life and from the very beginning of pregnancy. Because in doing that, we can cover everyone comprehensively, including your teeth and your ears and your eyes and your pharmaceuticals and your mental health and your reproductive health and all those things that get chopped out.

We can cover it all and still save trillions of dollars over the coming decade because a Medicare-for-all plan actually reduces the incredible, massive, wasteful private health insurance bureaucracy, puts all our health care dollars into health care, and it reduces that inflation that's driving up the cost.

RAZ: All right. Gary Johnson, would a President Johnson repeal Obamacare, the Affordable Care Act? And if so, what is your plan to insure uninsured Americans?

JOHNSON: Well, first of all, I would not have insurance to cover myself for ongoing medical need if we had a genuine free-market approach to health care. And by the way, health care in this country is about

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Transcript ...om free market as it possibly could be. But I would have insurance to cover myself for catastrophic injury and illness, and I would pay as you go in a system that was absolutely competitive.

What about government embarking on the notion of doubling the number of doctors as opposed to restricting all the choices that we have? This is what's leading to high costs and the fact that we don't have a whole bunch of choices when a whole bunch of choices could exist.

RAZ: So you would repeal Obamacare, the Affordable Care Act?

JOHNSON: That, and I would also repeal the Republicans' Medicaid Part D - prescription health care benefits. Look, the alternative to not reigning in these costs is we're going to suffer a monetary collapse. And a monetary collapse is when the money that we have doesn't buy a thing because of the accompanying inflation that is going to go along with borrowing and printing money to the tune of 43 cents out of every dollar we're spending.

RAZ: OK. Jill Stein, your rebuttal.

STEIN: Well, we have plenty of examples, fortunately, of where Medicare for all, which is essentially the system - a single-payer insurance system that's used in practically every developed country around the world. They are providing health care at half the cost per person. Yet they are getting far better health outcomes. People are living longer, they're less sick, and lower infant mortality.

So instead of trying to invent a system that hasn't been found to work yet, through a free-for-all health caring system - there is no such thing as a free market in health care - and the U.S. comes as close as any to it and its complete chaos here, let's use the example of what's working. Medicare is working.

And, in fact, to really save money, we want to have not just a sick care system, as what we have right now, but a real health care system by implementing prevention and an infrastructure for health at the level of our community.

RAZ: All right. And that's time for you. Finally, the role of government for the both of you. Let me begin with Gary Johnson. What role do you believe the government has in ensuring the well-being of Americans?

JOHNSON: Government has a role to protect us against individuals, groups, corporations that would do us harm. Government has a role to protect us against foreign countries that would attack this country. But I use the notion of under attack. We are - we continually militarily intervene. And as a result of that, we have hundreds of millions of enemies to this country that but for these military interventions would otherwise not exist.

RAZ: Jill Stein, should government be making investments in infrastructure in this country?

STEIN: Yes, we should. And we need to use what has worked before, and we've been in an economic crisis before in the Great Depression. And one of the ways we came out was through the New Deal, which went a long way to get the economy back on its feet. I think we're in trouble now. And the role of government, I think, is to help us, to help we the people. We need a government of, by and for the people, not of, by and for the corporations.

There's way too much corporations running the show in government, but the solution to a bad, corrupt government is not no government, it's good government.

RAZ: Time now for closing remarks. Both of you have 30 seconds each. Gary Johnson, for those uncommitted to either President Obama or Mitt Romney, why should they vote for you?

JOHNSON: Whether you vote for Mitt Romney or Barack Obama, I'm going to offer up a couple of predictions. One is we're going to continue to have a heightened police state in this country. The other is, is that we're going to find ourselves in a continued state of military intervention. We are at continuous war with everyone. And then, lastly, we're going to find ourselves - regardless of which one of these two guys gets elected - we're going to find ourselves continuing to borrow and spend money in ways that are absolutely unsustainable.

And if we don't get control of this, we are going to collapse as a country. We are not immune from the mathematics of continuing to borrow and print money to the tune of 43 cents out of every dollar we spend.

RAZ: Okay. Jill Stein, why should Americans make you President Stein?

STEIN: Well, I agree with Gary that we are really headed in the wrong direction. In fact, we're accelerating in the wrong direction under both parties. And, in fact, Barack Obama has basically embraced most of the key policies of George Bush on the bailouts for Wall Street, the layoffs for Main Street, the expanding free trade agreements that offshore our jobs and undermine wages at home; the expanding wars, attack on our civil liberties, drill baby drill on the climate - you name it.

Transcript ...the wrong direction. We need a president. We need a political party that is of, by and for the people. If you go into the voting booth and you cast a vote for either Wall Street-sponsored candidate, you are giving them a mandate for four more years of the same.

RAZ: And that is all the time we have. Thank you to our candidates, Gary Johnson, the Libertarian Party's nominee for president. And thanks also to Jill Stein, the Green Party's candidate for president. Thanks for joining us.

JOHNSON: Hey, Guy, good job.

STEIN: Thank you so much.

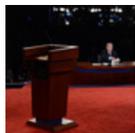
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**Mick Mcd** · 5 days ago

I frequently hear the argument that voting for a 3rd party candidate is "wasting" your vote. I would argue the opposite: voting for one of the two candidates that is committed to continuing the status quo is wasting your vote. Vote for someone else is the only way to send the message that the status quo is not acceptable.

174 | 5 · Share ›

**Derrick P** · 5 days ago · parent

I totally agree! I especially think that those who have decided not to vote at all should instead vote for a third party candidate. Perhaps this could at least build some momentum in the right direction.

67 | 1 · Share ›

**C Ellis** · 5 days ago · parent

I like to use this against the "wasted" vote people.

"Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost." John Quincy Adams

53 | 2 · Share ›

**J. McCrackan** · 5 days ago · parent

Unless you live in a swing state, your vote for President really doesn't matter at all. So don't waste it on the lesser of two evils; vote your conscience! Vote for the third-party candidate with whom you actually agree on issues that you care about!

41 | 4 · Share ›

**LarryRow** · 3 days ago · parent

Agreed. On the other hand, a third party candidate getting on the ballot in a swing state may as well be campaigning for one of the opponents. The wrong opponent.

This is why Karl Rove tried to get Nader on the ballot in swing states. 3rd party candidates are not serious competitors, they are pawns and tools. Sad but true.

0 | 8 · Share ›

**Wayne Roper** · 5 days ago · parent

If a 3rd party is to emerge in the USA it will need to do so at a local level first. Start by becoming governors and mayors. I thought the Tea Party would be more successful but so far many tea party candidates just seem like Republican candidates in disguise.

This country could really use a 3rd party because I dislike the pendulum of the US political system.

40 | 2 · Share ›

**Michael Peck** · 4 days ago · parent

Minneapolis railroaded a Green councilman.

1 | · Share ›

**D Scully** · 5 days ago · parent

Those are typically people who don't really understand how democracy works. You'll have a devil of a time explaining the concept of a protest vote to them.

If Stein is on my ballot, I'll be voting for her. In the future, when they look back on how America lost its democracy, it will at least show that some of us didn't fall for the propaganda.

Hitler, after all, talked a great game, about a fictional world that he would lead the German's to, if they simply believed. A great used car salesman can sell anything. An

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