

The Libertarian vs. Romney/Ryan Vote Debate

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Framing the Debate

Debates are raging on numerous Facebook groups and other sites regarding whether Tea Partiers and other Conservatives should support the Romney/Ryan ticket.

This blog attempts a detailed exploration of the common arguments in an effort to exhaust the point so we can all move on.

Most Tea Party supporters and other Conservatives are voicing support for Romney/Ryan over Obama/Biden and are unwilling to consider a vote for Gary Johnson (Libertarian party) or to write in Ron Paul.

Strict Libertarians, on the other hand, insist that a vote for Romney/Ryan is wrong and that Tea Party people and Conservatives should vote for Gary Johnson or Ron Paul.. or no one at all. The more radical among these actually say they'll vote for Obama if Paul doesn't emerge from the GOP convention as the nominee, in order to punish the GOP and maybe even hasten the collapse to some unknown benefit. The rest of this blog purposely ignores the latter group as outliers, outside the scope of the mainstream argument.

In most cases, though at times heated, these arguments boil down to a point of strategy among people who share primarily the same goals. All those involved in these debates would do well to remember that.

The Common Reasons Among Those Supporting Romney/Ryan

1. A Romney/Ryan administration, while not ideal, is better than a 2nd term of Obama/Biden. Some believe the difference is great while others small... but better is still better.
2. A Romney/Ryan win doesn't fix our problems but it is still better to slow the country's momentum in the wrong direction as we continue our work in the Tea Party and other liberty groups.
3. Neither Johnson or Paul have a chance of winning (assuming Paul doesn't pull off a convention miracle and get the GOP nomination).

In short, there are no illusions that a Romney/Ryan win is any great victory or "cure all" solution (so attacking them is truly futile). It is just one small tactical battle in a much greater, long term, "war" for the restoration of liberty in this country.

Romney = Obama

For many, the first argument against the above reasoning is that Romney is no better, at all, than Obama. I'm not going to attempt a side-by-side comparison. But, to them I say, do you really think a 2nd term Obama is no more dangerous than a 1st term Romney? Obama himself has said that he anticipates "[more flexibility](#)" after he wins his 2nd term and, presumably, will no longer need to worry about what voters think.

To me, this is like the trump card. It is all the argument I need to support Romney/Ryan over Obama/Biden. No more arguments are required. But, for the rest, I will continue.

Still Evil

Those who will agree Romney may not be quite as bad as Obama still say that "Voting for the lesser of two evils is still a vote for evil." That may be true but allowing the greater evil to win is still the greater evil.

Tea Party Values

Libertarians next attack Romney and Ryan as not being examples of Tea Party values and even as being part of the problem. Therefore, to vote for them is to betray our principles.

Regarding Romney/Ryan not embodying Tea Party values, in short, we know! Chris Littleton, in a blog about the [Ryan selection](#), recently quoted Corie Whalen, political director of Campaign for Primary Accountability, as saying, "I am not saying vote against Romney/Ryan. Go ahead and support them." But, she rightly goes on to say "I think it's bad when a national tea party organization acts like the Ryan pick is an embodiment of Tea Party values." I completely agree.

Romney/Ryan support over Obama/Biden is a strategic choice, **not** a statement of endorsement for all Romney/Ryan stand for. Make no mistake, this is a "lesser of two evils" selection for the specific purpose of slowing the demise of the US and its economy as we continue to build Liberty groups, etc.

This is also an acknowledgement that change takes time. We didn't get here overnight and the many 3 to 4 year old Liberty groups will require more time to counter the effects of Liberal political activism dominance. This might be hard for the hard for the "microwave generation" to accept.

As for betraying our values, it is not a betrayal if we believe the move slows the digression away from our values as we work toward a future where more positive progress is possible.

Insanity

Conservatives have been voting for Republicans for a very long time and have been continually let down by them. Doing the same thing, and expecting different results, is commonly referred to as the definition of insanity.

That would be true. However in the past, Conservatives only voted for the lesser evil and then just hoped for the best, assuming that if the Republican won, they could relax and count on a more conservative approach to be taken by our government. They were wrong! Only the first part (i.e. vote for the lesser

evil) remains the same, for now. But no longer will we assume that a Republican win means time to relax. We will continue to grow the Liberty movement, gain greater influence over the GOP from within through the precinct process, and be active in building coalitions to address important political issues. We will continue to raise awareness, fight against whoever violates Tea Party principles, be they Republican, Democrat, or otherwise. In truth, the strategy has changed.

I respectfully point out that, most of the Libertarians making this argument, asking us to vote 3rd party, have been doing this same thing for the last several election cycles, though it is clear they can not and will not win. So who is it that's doing the same thing and expecting different results?

Voting Equals Consent

Some say voting Romney/Ryan “equals consent.” The implication is that we are to blame for the faults of the two primary parties, and their faulty candidates, if we continue to vote for them. I'm reminded, however, that in-action can also be construed as consent. If the “greater evil” wins, due to Libertarian in-action (not voting or voting for those who cannot win), they are as complicit in the results as anyone who voted.

Earn the Vote

The best argument I think I've ever heard in favor of not voting for any candidate you disagree with (e.g. sticking with the Libertarian candidate even when they can't win) is that by sticking to your principles, you force the Dem/Rep candidate to respect and earn your vote. Unfortunately, I see two problems with this. First, it simply hasn't worked in all this time and there's no indication this time would be different. Refer back to the “insanity” argument. Second, many of us, locally, have seen a close-up example of where a Libertarian, and his supporters, were so stuck in this approach that they ran against Mike Wilson (founder of the Cincinnati Tea Party) and earned more votes than the margin of Mike's loss in that election. If Mike Wilson isn't good enough to get Libertarians to vote GOP then, in my opinion, no one is. So what's to be earned?

Our Strategy Fails Because of Your Strategy

When describing the strategy of continuing to vote for the “lesser evil” while also working on taking over the GOP from within, building liberty groups, etc. Many Libertarians and 3rd party supporters claim that they only fail because of myself and others like me. While the two are related, I think the above argument gets cause and effect confused. Or, at the very least, we're stuck in a chicken-and-egg conundrum.

The counter perspective is that Tea Partiers and others like me refuse to vote 3rd party because Libertarians have long failed to win, or even come close to winning, Presidential elections. This seems to turn the cause and effect on its head.

The fact is that whether I vote for Gary Johnson or not, he'll lose... and lose big. The same goes for writing in Ron Paul. Those who blame the Tea Party and Tea Partiers for the impending loss of Gary Johnson are conveniently forgetting that 3rd parties have been losing for long before the Tea Party came along.

And, we all remember Perot. Short of a situation involving runoff laws (see section below), I estimate a roughly ... hmmm... let's just call it a 0% chance that Libertarians will get enough people to take a chance on a 3rd party vote to actually win.

The Tea Party people represent an excellent example. Here we have the most politically frustrated group of people you could ever hope to meet, dissatisfied with Democrats and Republicans alike and, yet, Libertarians have still failed to make substantial inroads in convincing Tea Partiers to vote 3rd party. What chance do you have with the general public?

Unfortunately, Libertarians bear the burden of needing to prove, first, that they can even come close to winning before momentum could turn in their favor for a 3rd party candidate. Tilt at windmills all you like but this is a reality and all the ... again, short of the following.

Runoff Laws

All the above said, I think runoff laws change everything. Those who live in states where a candidate cannot win without a majority of the vote, the absence of which leads to a runoff between the top two candidates (or something to that effect), have the luxury of simply “voting their hearts and minds” and I encourage them to do so. That’s right. I encourage those in these states to vote Johnson or Paul (ironically, another example of splitting the vote).

Meanwhile, I suggest that Libertarians look to the results of votes in such states. Have any Libertarian candidates ever won in those states for a Presidential election? Have they come close? I don’t think so. If a 3rd party can’t win in a state with runoff laws, it has no chance... wouldn’t you say?

If I could change one thing about the Presidential election process, it would be to get all states to have runoff laws so 3rd parties could really stand a chance. If Ohio was such a state, I’d vote Paul over Romney as I did in the primary.

Some Concluding Points...

Taking over the GOP vs. Attempting to Win the Presidency with 3rd Party Runs

This really just comes down to numbers. A party is just people. The number of people active in the Republican party is far far fewer than the number of people you must convince to vote 3rd party in order to win a Presidency.

I hope that Libertarians will join us in working to take over the GOP from within. Keep in mind two things. First, this is the Ron Paul approach. And, second, this approach is not mutually exclusive to you continuing to vote Libertarian if that is your inclination. I happen to know that many Libertarians are already joining in this effort.

Biggest Risk of a Romney/Ryan Win

To me, the biggest risk of a Romney/Ryan win is complacency. Simply put, many people who see [Obama as the enemy](#) may be lulled to sleep by a Romney/Ryan win, erroneously thinking “[Mission Accomplished](#).” I believe that it is a given that we’ll lose some “weaker” Tea Partiers who will see such a “victory” as a reason to “take a breath” and back off. However, on the whole, I don’t think this will be a major problem. I, personally, haven’t met any Romney “disciples” who are claiming that a Romney/Ryan win solves our problems. I think people really have woken up and realize that the Republican party (pre-creation in the Tea Party’s image) is not the answer.

Other Benefits of a Romney/Ryan Win

Even if there were no difference between Romney/Ryan and Obama/Biden there are benefits to a Romney/Ryan win:

First, I've already made the point about a 1st term Romney vs. a 2nd term Obama. Enough said.

Second, no longer will the Tea Party, Libertarians, and other liberty groups be accused of being racist for opposing the President's views. These movements could expand significantly when more people see that we're willing to be just as critical of Romney/Ryan, when they screw up, as we were of Obama.

Conclusion

At best, it is an unproductive distraction to continue to argue over whether a vote for Romney/Ryan is the right thing to do in today's circumstance. At worst, continuing to argue about this can tear a rift in the Tea Party between its more or less Libertarian leaning members.

Libertarians continuing to attack Romney and Ryan to try to convince Tea Partiers to vote 3rd party is a waste of time. You may as well rent billboards that say $2+2=4$. We already know Romney/Ryan are not who we want. However, unless you can convince us they're worse than Obama/Biden (beyond unlikely), you will not sway us given all of the above arguments. The only thing Libertarians have to gain by arguing against voting for Romney/Ryan is to further alienate the best political allies they have ever had... their fellow Tea Party members. Oh... and to waste time and effort.

If you've made it through this lengthy blog, you've given the situation serious thought and will either vote Romney/Ryan or not. In any event, I strongly encourage all to either agree or agree to disagree on this point, then get past the in-fighting so we can all get back to the more important work of building Liberty groups, educating the public, and working on the important issues of our day.

If we can all agree that a Romney/Ryan win does not fix our problems, and I think we can, then we should at least agree to stop arguing about it and get on with more important work.

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