



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on November 6, 2012

## Johnson, Stein Warn of Growing Police State

Presidential candidates Gary Johnson of the Libertarian Party and Jill Stein of the Green Party agreed during Monday night's alternative candidates debate that liberty in America is endangered by a growing police state. They were united in their opposition to the Patriot Act and the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act. They agreed that military interventions have resulted in more, rather than fewer, enemies of the United States in the Middle East. They agreed that the federal war on drugs has been a disaster and that marijuana should be legalized. They even agreed on mandated labeling of genetically modified foods. But they differed sharply on enough issues to prevent an excess of harmony from ruining a good debate.



"I just think that's absolute baloney," Johnson said after Stein reiterated a list of things she believes government should be doing in a 'Green New Deal' to "jump start the green economy." They include employing millions of people in weatherization and conservation programs, providing subsidies for green startup companies, providing universal health care through "Medicare for all," improving public transportation, forgiveness of student loans and free higher education for everyone.

"Between a healthy transportation system and a healthy food system and pollution prevention, we can create the jobs we need, we can put a halt to climate change, and we don't need to go down that desperation road of austerity," Stein said.

"In our own lives, we can't spend more money that we take in," Johnson protested. The former Republican governor warned repeatedly that the continued borrowing of 43 cents out of every dollar the government spends will lead to a monetary collapse. He proposes to balance the budget in one year, cutting federal spending by a whopping \$1.4 trillion.

"Nothing is free," Johnson said. "There isn't free health care, there isn't free education, it comes at a cost. That cost is here and now and I think Americans recognize that we can't bury our heads in the sand, that there needs to be mutual sacrifice on the part of all of us or we're going to find ourselves with a collapsed government."

The election eve debate between Johnson, the former two-term governor of New Mexico and Stein, a Lexington, Massachusetts, physician and long-time advocate of public health and environmental causes, was held in the Washington, D.C., studio of RT (Russia Today) America TV, which sponsored the forum. It was organized by the Free and Equal Elections Foundation, which brought Stein, Johnson, and two other candidates together in a similar forum two weeks ago. In the online voting that followed, Johnson and Stein out polled Rocky Anderson of the Justice Party and former Virginia Congressman Virgil Goode to become the finalists. Last night's debate, postponed from last Tuesday because of Hurricane Sandy,



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was seen by an undetermined number of viewers on Freespeech.org or on either the RT website or its TV channel, which is carried by a limited number of satellite dish and cable systems.

With most of the viewers watching and listening online, Johnson made the Internet itself an issue by asking Stein if she is in favor of a government takeover of the medium. Stein said she would support a policy of “net neutrality” to preserve the Internet as a “fair, open accessible marketplace, a real underpinning of democracy ... Absolutely, I oppose the government stepping in as the tool of private corporations,” she said. Johnson espoused a hands off policy, arguing that net neutrality is really a “promotion of those who are already entrenched in the Internet” and would like their interest to “grow and become a monopoly.”

That was the only time either candidate asked a question of the other. Questions for the debaters were submitted by viewers and read by members of a panel. The first had to do with free trade versus protectionism. Stein came out foursquare against the free trade agreements that have been ratified by Congress, starting with the North American Free Trade Agreement adopted under the Clinton administration in 1994. She also warned that a new Trans-Pacific Partnership pact “is being negotiated as we speak, behind closed doors.” The agreement, Stein said, would “continue to offshore our jobs, continue to undermine wages here at home and, in fact, undermine American sovereignty as well, because the free trade agreement actually gives the power to an international corporate board to decide what regulations and what legislation we have passed in this country passes muster with them. So they in a sense retain a veto power over our legislation.”

Johnson described himself as an “absolute advocate” of free trade, arguing that imports offer American consumers the advantage of lower prices. Much of the criticism of free trade, he said, is really a criticism of crony capitalism, with government offering trade advantages to companies “willing to pay for loopholes.” The way to bring back jobs that have gone overseas and create new jobs here at home, Johnson said, is to eliminate both the corporate and individual income taxes and replace them with a single national consumption tax. Johnson said the tax he advocates is the “Fair tax.” His web site invites visitors to go to [Fairtax.org](#) for more information. There the tax is described as a 23 percent retail tax levy on “all new goods and services.”

“Millions of jobs will flock back to this country because of a zero corporate tax rate environment,” which attracts both U.S. and foreign investors, Johnson said. Our current corporate tax rate, the world’s second highest, is a barrier to companies like Volkswagen, which is looking to expand internationally, he said. “Are they doing it in the United States? Absolutely not, because of a 35 percent tax rate environment,” Johnson said. “We need to get back to the corporate tax rate which corporations started with in this country, which was zero.”

Stein disagreed, calling for tax cuts for middle class and working class families, but higher rates on corporations and wealthy individuals. A New Deal approach to unemployment is needed, she said, “in order to jump start the economy, get those revenues going again and help erase out national deficit and debt.”

Both are opposed to using military force against Iran over that nation’s nuclear program. The nation needs to return to “the notion that we’ve been the country that stood up to the bully, instead of being the bully,” Johnson said. “Look, the largest demonstration in the world in support of the United States after 9-11 was in Iran, where over a million citizens showed up in support of the United States. And we’re going to bomb Iran? We bomb Iran and we’re going to find ourselves with another 100 million enemies to this country that we would otherwise not have.”



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Stein also rejected a military solution to the tensions arising over Iran's nuclear program, but she also proposed a diplomatic effort to rid the region of nuclear power as well as nuclear weapons. A nuclear-free Middle East should be the first step to creating "a nuclear-free planet," she said. On the question of foreign aid, Stein said military aid often goes to warring factions under the guise of foreign aid. American arms and interventions in the Middle East have not produced stable democracies or dependable allies, she said. Johnson argued more generally against foreign aid and nation-building overseas.

"We're building roads, schools, bridges and highways halfway around the planet when we have those same needs here in this country," he said.

Concerning the growing police state, both candidates are in favor of repealing the broad surveillance powers in the Patriot Act, first passed by the Congress shortly after the September 11 terrorist attacks of 2001. Both are opposed to the provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2012, giving the president the authority to imprison terrorist suspects, including U.S. citizens, indefinitely and without charge or trial. Stein noted that President Obama's interpretation of the Authorization of the Use of Military Force, passed by Congress after 9-11, to mean the president has the power to "not only imprison people, but actually to assassinate anyone, including U.S. citizens. This is a dreadful attack on our civil liberties." She similarly deplored legislation that criminalizes protest demonstrations in any area the government designates a security zone, undermining the First Amendment guarantee of the right of the people to peacefully assemble and seek redress of grievances.

Johnson called the Department of Homeland Security "incredibly redundant" and accused the Transportation Security Administration of turning the nation's airports into "Constitution-free zones." Neither candidate sees much hope for change offered by either Obama or Romney. The election of either, Johnson said, will virtually guarantee at least three things:

"We're going to find ourselves in a heightened police state," he warned. "We're going to find ourselves in a continued state of war. We're going to find ourselves in a continued state of unsustainable spending.

*Photos of Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein and Libertarian Party presidential candidate Gary Johnson: AP Images*



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