

Now That Was a Debate: The Other Presidential Candidates Speak Out

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[War is a Crime](#)

Here's a video with highlights of Tuesday's presidential debate:

<http://youtu.be/iiPtjkK58lo>

Participating were Jill Stein, Rocky Anderson, Virgil Goode, and Gary Johnson. Moderating was Larry King. Larry was a bit unprepared, but his questions were far superior to those asked at any of the corporate funded debates thus far. They weren't his questions, though, as they'd been submitted through the internet and selected by <http://FreeAndEqual.org> Also contributing to the debate was an audience that was permitted to applaud and frequently did so. Johnson was the clear favorite of the crowd before any words were said.

The first question dealt with election reform, and Stein and Anderson made clear they would clean the money out of elections. Goode proposed to ban PACs but to let the money flow through individuals. Johnson made no proposal to limit private election spending, even though it's the primary reason most Americans have no idea he's running for president. Instead, Johnson claimed he'd like politicians to wear NASCAR suits advertising their funders. However, he was not wearing one.

Following the first question, it was pointed out to King that he'd skipped opening statements. So those were made. Stein and Anderson described a nation in crisis, suffering from expanding poverty, lack of healthcare, homelessness, and an erosion of civil liberties. Goode tackled the pressing issues of the deficit, immigration, and his desire for term limits (as he would throughout the evening). As a former constituent of Goode, I'll have you know we had to vote him out before he would leave. Johnson focused his comments on the need to end wars, including drone wars, as well as the war on drugs. He agreed with Stein and Anderson on civil liberties, proposing to repeal the PATRIOT Act and indefinite detention. But he also proposed to virtually eliminate taxes. Johnson tried to address the apparently unfamiliar topic of poverty that Stein and Anderson had raised, referring repeatedly to policies that "disparagingly" impacted the poor (he meant disproportionately).

The second question dealt with the drug war, and all but Goode proposed to end it, and to reduce incarceration. Anderson said that he would pardon all prisoners convicted of only drug crimes. Goode said he'd keep marijuana illegal but cut funding for enforcing that law. Cutting funding in his view is clearly desirable even when he approves of the funding.

The third question was whether military spending should be so incredibly high. All four agreed with the majority of the rest of us that it needs to be cut. Goode didn't specify how much he would cut, and his record suggests he would cut little or nothing. Johnson proposed cutting 43%. Stein and Anderson failed to specify but have both said elsewhere, including on

their websites (which will always remain the best source of most information debates provide), that they would cut 50%. Johnson, Anderson, and Stein, listed off the wars they would end. Stein stressed that climate change is where she would move much of the money.

Tuesday's debate included a great deal of denouncing the Obama-Romney position on a range of topics, and a great deal of developing slight differences among agreeing candidates. But the fourth question brought out dramatic disagreement. Asked about the cost of college, Goode said he would cut spending on education, apparently because cutting spending is just more important than anything else. Johnson, in a slight variation, said he'd stop funding education because without student loans students would just avoid education and eventually schools would have to lower their costs. With at least one leader of the Chicago Teachers strike in the room, Stein and Anderson said they would make college free. This resulted in Johnson and Goode arguing that there is no such thing as free, that the money must come from somewhere. A flight attendant on the airplane I took out of Chicago shared their view when I asked her if the online internet was free and she rather angrily informed me that "Nothing is free, sir." But of course the porno-cancer-scans and gropes from the TSA are free. What we choose to fund collectively is often not thought of as a consumer good at all. Stein and Anderson came back with an argument that "we cannot afford NOT to invest in education." But neither of them pointed out that by cutting the military and/or taxing billionaires we could have far more money than needed. At no time in the course of the debate was the room full of libertarians (who imagine we all have an equal right to spend money) informed that 400 Americans have more money than half the country.

The fifth question dealt with the presidential power to imprison anyone forever without a charge or a trial, a power contained in the 2011 National "Defense" Authorization Act, and a power which Obama's subordinates are currently struggling in court to uphold. All four candidates, coming from very different places, agreed that this power needs to be removed, along with powers of assassination, warrantless spying, and retribution against whistleblowers. Clearly there is a broad public consensus on these issues that is derailed by lesser-evilism, with half of those who care about such things holding their nose and backing Republicans, and the other half Democrats.

A sixth and final question, before closing statements, asked the four participants for one way in which they would amend the Constitution. Goode and Johnson proposed term limits, a rather silly solution that would not fix elections but just remove one person from them, accelerating the pace of the revolving door between government and lobbyist jobs. Anderson proposed an equal rights amendment barring discrimination based on gender or sexual preference. And Stein, to huge applause, proposed an amendment clarifying that money is not speech and corporations are not people.

Here's the full video:

<http://www.c-span.org/Events/Third-Party-Presidential-Debate/10737435220-1/>

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