



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on November 5, 2012

## Johnson, Stein in Election Eve Debate

Should our federal government be big and “green” or small and frugal? That question is likely to be at the heart of the final debate of the 2012 presidential campaign, when candidates Dr. Jill Stein of the Green Party and former New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson of the Libertarian Party meet in an election eve debate between “alternative candidates” for president.



The candidates will discuss and spar over issues for 90 minutes (9:00 p.m.-10:30 p.m.) in the RT America television studio in Washington, D.C. RT (Russia Today) America is the English language, state-funded Russian television station that is sponsoring and televising the debate. It will be carried on some satellite dish and cable TV systems, as well as on the [RT YouTube channel](#).

The debate will also be shown on [Free Speech TV](#). The previous alternative candidates debate on October 23 was also televised on the C-Span cable channel. [Free and Equal Elections Foundation](#), organizers of the debates, is encouraging people to contact C-Span and other media outlets to cover Monday night’s debate as well.

The match is a face-off between the top vote recipients from the four-way debate on October 23. Viewers were invited at the conclusion of that event to vote for the candidates they would like to see go head-to-head in the second and final debate. Johnson drew more than 25,000 votes and Stein collected about 15,000, to finish first and second, eliminating candidates Rocky Anderson of the Justice Party and former Virginia Congressman Virgil Goode of the Constitution Party. Tonight’s debate was originally scheduled for last Tuesday, but was postponed because of Hurricane Sandy.

While both campaigns obviously believe it is important to get their respective messages on pressing issues to as wide an audience as possible, neither expects to draw a percentage of the national vote higher than low-to-middle single digits. Johnson has posted on his web site the goal of five percent of the total vote to assure future Libertarian Party candidates “equal ballot access and federal funding.”

Both Johnson and Stein have run up against closed doors in debates involving candidates of the two major parties. Johnson, elected as a Republican to his two terms as New Mexico’s governor (1995-2003), entered the Republican presidential primaries, but was not included in most of the debates, despite ranking higher in some of the early polls than debate fixtures Herman Cain and Rick Santorum. Johnson dropped out of the Republican contests at the end of last year and won the Libertarian nomination at the party’s convention in Las Vegas in May. Retired Superior Court Judge James P. Gray was nominated for vice president.

Stein and running mate Cheri Honkala were both arrested and charged with disorderly conduct when they tried to enter the debate site at Hofstra University for the second debate between Barack Obama



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and Mitt Romney on October 16. They later held a press conference, ripping Democrats, Republicans, and the Commission on Presidential Debates for staging a “mockery of democracy.”

Stein, a physician specializing in internal medicine, is a graduate of Harvard and Harvard Medical School and a resident of Lexington, Massachusetts. She has long been active in environmental and health issues and is the author of the widely published 2000 study, *In Harm's Way: Toxic Threats to Child Development*, which has been translated into four languages. She also published *Environmental Threats to Healthy Aging* in 2009. She was the Green-Rainbow Party candidate for governor of Massachusetts in 2002, the year Mitt Romney won the office. Stein finished in a field of five with about 3.5 percent of the vote. She ran again in 2010, receiving 32,816 votes of the 2,287,407 votes cast.

As the Green Party candidate, Stein is offering a “Green New Deal” that would provide government grants and low interest loans to “green” businesses and cooperatives, and a full employment program she claims will provide “25 million green jobs in sustainable energy, mass transit, sustainable organic agriculture, and clean manufacturing, as well as social work, teaching, and other service jobs.” She is calling for an end to bailouts and a breaking up of the banks that have often been regarded as too big to fail, “starting with Bank of America.”

Stein wants to eliminate “tax giveaways” and corporate subsidies, shrink the “bloated military budget” by 50 percent, and revise the tax code “to be truly progressive with tax cuts for working families, the poor and middle class, and higher taxes for the richest Americans.” Proposing to “bail out the students instead of the banks,” Stein wants the federal government to forgive student debt and establish a program of “free public education from kindergarten through college.”

Johnson offers a far more limited view of the role of government, having earned the nickname “Governor Veto” by rejecting a record 750 bills passed by the New Mexico legislature during his eight years as governor. Far from calling for free college education, he blames government grants and loans for contributing to the dramatic rise in college and university tuitions. He calls for the abolition of the federal Department of Education and favors putting K-12 education dollars in the hands of parents to allow them to choose the schooling they want for their children. He opposes government initiatives for creating “green energy” jobs, arguing that free markets, if left unimpeded, will find the best opportunities for investment in and development of resources and technologies needed to meet energy demand. Rather than a “progressive” income tax, Johnson calls for the elimination of the income tax and abolition of the Internal Revenue Service and he adoption of the FAIR tax, a national retail tax of 23 percent, with a “prebate” to exempt necessities from taxation.

Despite the stark contrast in taxing and spending policies for domestic programs, the candidates agree on cutting military spending, with Johnson advocating a 43-percent reduction in the Pentagon budget, which, he says, would restore military spending to its 2003 level. Both are opposed to continuing the war in Afghanistan to the 2014 deadline favored by Obama and Romney for the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops. Johnson has said military force should be used as a last resort to defend the United States and its legitimate interests and in accordance with the Constitution, which assigns to Congress the power to declare war. He opposes using our overseas military personnel for constructing schools, hospitals, roads or “nation-building” projects, while Stein has voiced strong opposition to the Obama administration’s use of drones to combat terrorism.

“Dropping bombs on weddings and funerals is not the way to win the hearts and minds of people in the Middle East,” she said in the October 23 debate. The candidates share a good deal of common ground on civil liberties issues as well, with both favoring repeal of the Patriot Act, which gives government



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broad powers of surveillance of citizens, and the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which empowers the president to keep terror suspects, including U.S. citizens, in military prisons indefinitely, without charge and without trial.

Both are opposed to the federal war on drugs, with Stein calling for the treatment of drug abuse as a “public health” problem and Johnson insisting the issue “belongs with families, not in the criminal justice system.” Johnson frequently compares drug prohibition to the prohibition of alcohol in the 1920’s and early 1930’s and argues that the violence associated with the illegal drug trade is similar to what the nation endured in the Prohibition era that ended in 1933.

“Today,” Johnson notes on his web site, “no one is trying to sell our kids bathtub gin in the schoolyard and micro-breweries aren’t protecting their turf with machine guns. It’s time to apply that thinking to marijuana.”

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



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