Will

No Labels ~~Won't~~ Help Trump

Third Way's *Redline*

Our polling shows that a unity ticket would pull from both parties equally.

Joe Lieberman · October 12, 2023

As No Labels works to gain ballot access for a potential 2024 independent presidential ticket, most of the vitriol directed at us comes from the Democratic establishment, which is anxious that we'll hurt President Biden and help elect Donald Trump. But if these concerns were well-founded, I wouldn't be a part of this effort.

No Labels has spent almost two years conducting extensive polling and modeling to understand our potential effect on the race and what our path to victory could be, including a poll late last year of more than 25,000 registered voters nationwide. It found that a moderate independent ticket would pull equally from both parties: 14% from registered Republicans, 14% from registered Democrats. This finding is backed by precedent: Ross Perot pulled equally from both parties in 1992.

Of course, since No Labels would be nominating a unity ticket that could include a Republican and Democrat as running mates, much depends not only on who the candidates are, but the order in which they appear on the ticket. In July and August we tested how the partisan breakdown of the ticket would affect the race by surveying 10,000 registered voters in the top eight presidential battleground states: Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

The poll, conducted by HarrisX, found that a unity ticket led by a Republican presidential candidate had a stronger path to victory and drew more votes from Mr. Trump than Mr. Biden in seven states, with North Carolina the sole exception.

Yes. There are no polls that show No Labels winning, but numerous polls—including their own—show they re-elect Trump. Many people, including close No Labels allies, are alarmed.

No Labels neglects to mention the most important finding from this poll: that a No Labels candidate comes in a distant third place and hands Trump a 5-point victory in a three-way race.

The two parties are not equally reliant on moderate voters. Democrats require a supermajority of moderates to win. The GOP can win with a sliver. That's why Democrats see more danger.

This metric is meaningless. It only matters how much of the vote a No Labels Party candidate will siphon from Biden and Trump. And the horse-race shows they take more from Biden's column.

Ross Perot didn't win one state or even a single electoral vote.

This data shows No Labels has known for months that warnings they would re-elect Trump are correct. A Democrat leading their ticket hands Trump a victory in nearly every battleground.

HarrisX's polling has been harshly critiqued by former staffers. The former senior manager of the political polling division said, "there's a reason [HarrisX doesn't] detail their methodology and you shouldn't trust a single thing they release." He called their poll explanation "nonsense analysis."

This is the first confirmation of reporting that No Labels is pursuing a Republican-led ticket. But this poll is the ceiling, not the floor. An unnamed candidate without any history or baggage outperforms a real candidate. But don't take our word for it. Multiple pollsters have found support for a named third-party candidate barely reaches beyond the **single digits.** (And they're spoilers for Trump.) Larry Hogan polled at a measly 6% and a Jon Huntsman-led ticket was nowhere close to winning. Monmouth wrote, "the more concrete you make an alternative to the major party candidates, the less attractive it becomes."

This doesn't show that No Labels has a path to victory, but it confirms they can be a spoiler. No Labels must win every single battleground state plus an additional 14 states, including Biden strongholds like RI (+21), WA (+19), DE (+19), IL (+17), NJ (+16), OR (+16), CO (+14), NM (+11), **and** VA (+10). It's a fantasy. But the data shows they would divide the anti-Trump vote and hurt Biden.

Let's pretended this data is reliable and accurate. It still shows Biden wins the necessary battlegrounds in a two-way race, but No Labels spoils for Trump in a three-way. Why would No Labels run if their own poll shows that Biden is on track to defeat Trump?

No Labels' ticket causes Biden to go from winning four crucial battleground states—and the White House—to winning just one state (-3 states). Meanwhile, Trump gains an edge over Biden when No Labels enters the race. Trump goes from winning four battleground states in a head-to-head to winning three in a three-way (-1 state). Trump flips a Biden state and ties up Michigan. No Labels all but ensures a Trump victory, as he would be within a few electoral votes of 270, and they prevent Biden from winning any battleground beyond Pennsylvania.

Who will be on our ticket is still an open question, and we are currently determining the process by which that will be decided. But one thing is certain: We stand by our original pledge that we will nominate a ticket only if the American people want it and if the polling is clear that we won't be a spoiler.

> This ticket will be chosen by insiders and donors, abandoning decades of reforms to open up party nominations. They're considering methods that deny millions of voters any say, like handing their nomination to "five to ten highly respected national leaders," a convention of 2,000 delegates selected through their vetting process, and an online vote by a "subset of Independent voters" that No Labels would pick. They even proposed limiting a vote to "No Labels members who have contributed" to the group.

> Not a single poll has shown that No Labels has a viable path to victory. This data shows that they will be a spoiler for Trump.

For now, both conditions are being met. Our polling shows that an independent ticket has a legitimate and expanding path to victory. In December, 58% of registered voters said they'd be open to voting for a moderate independent ticket if Messrs. Trump and Biden were the alternatives. By the summer that figure had grown to 63%, and some of the most significant growth occurred among a segment of voters who could be described as liking Mr. Trump's policies but not Mr. Trump.

> "Openness" is a bogus metric with no predictive value. The question that matters is the horse-race poll. They aren't within shouting distance of victory in a single poll, including their own.

> This 63% result is a massive outlier compared to **all other polling** this year.

> Five other polls from respected pollsters, including NBC News, YouGov, and Quinnipiac, found that voters were 10 to 20 percentage points less open to voting for a third-party candidate than what this No Labels number. Their own own pollster, HarrisX, conducted another survey in the same time period that showed that only 53% of voters would be open to a third-party candidate—ten points lower. Let's say it plainly: No Labels' 63% result is at best an unreliable outlier; at worst, it's cooked.

For any who are skeptical of No Labels's internal polling, let's remember that poll after poll shows that two thirds of Americans don't want a rematch of the 2020 election. A Gallup poll from October found that 63% of voters are open to a third party and that demand for an alternative is higher among Republicans than Democrats, suggesting that Mr. Trump could have more to lose from the entry of a viable third choice.

> This is blatant distortion of what the Gallup poll showed. According to Gallup, openness to wanting a third party is consistent with what it's been for decades—only 3% more voters today say they want a third party than did ten years ago.

> Data going back to 1980 shows this question doesn't predict a successful third-party bid. For decades, polls measured whether voters would be "open" to third-party candidates, and the answer for about half the country generally has been "yes." No Labels claims this time is different—it's not.

> Consider: In 1980, CBS/New York Times asked whether voters were satisfied with the major party candidates or if they wanted other choices—48% of voters wanted other choices. The third-party candidate that year, John Anderson, ended up with just 6.6% of the eventual popular vote, a drop of 41 points. The high-water mark for openness to a third party was in 1992, when 59% said they would consider other choices. That year, Ross Perot ended up with just 18.9% of the popular vote—**40 points lower than the CBS poll finding on openness.**

Of course, no one can know exactly what effect a third ticket would have, especially if you add a fourth or fifth ticket. While our data don't indicate that No Labels would hurt Mr. Biden, it's entirely plausible that Cornel West would, since he is running as a third party from the president's left. Similarly, reports indicate that the Trump team is preparing attacks against Robert F. Kennedy Jr. after its polling found that his independent run could take votes from Mr. Trump.

> Their data **does** show that they pull critical states out of the Biden column, dividing the anti-Trump coalition that prevailed in 2020.

> Neither Cornel West nor RFK are on the ballot in a single state. Any third-party effort, whether it is No Labels or other candidates, will divide the anti-Trump coalition. But No Labels is especially dangerous because they are targeting the swing voters Biden needs to win.

No Labels' opponents in the political establishment wrap themselves in high-flying rhetoric about protecting democracy when they are merely protecting their turf. This has been the two-party playbook for decades, and the resulting false binary choice hasn't served our country well. It's why a Pew Research Center poll last month found that support for both parties is at record lows, disgust and exhaustion with politics is at record highs, and voters are increasingly losing hope that it will get better.

In this environment, doing nothing is the greatest risk of all. No Labels is trying to do something to heal our broken politics. If we offer our ballot line to a presidential ticket in 2024, our purpose won't be to spoil the election but to enable a unity ticket to win. That would be unprecedented—but what about today's politics isn't?

Mr. Lieberman is founding chairman of No Labels. A Democrat and independent, he served as a U.S. senator from Connecticut, 1989–2013.

The No Labels Party is undermining our democracy. In addition to acting as a political party that doesn't play by the rules and building a nomination process determined by elites and donors, they are credibly accused of duping voters into disenfranchising themselves; spreading misinformation to falsely suggest that Joe Biden is as extreme as Donald Trump; and they are preparing to throw the presidential election to the House, which would make the chaos of the past few weeks look tame. And that's before we consider how a second Trump presidency would threaten the pillars of our democracy.

No Labels is offering an illusion, not a choice. They are providing an outlet for a protest vote that is already directly benefiting the anti-democracy party. If they don't stand down, they will re-elect an extremist Donald Trump in 2024.