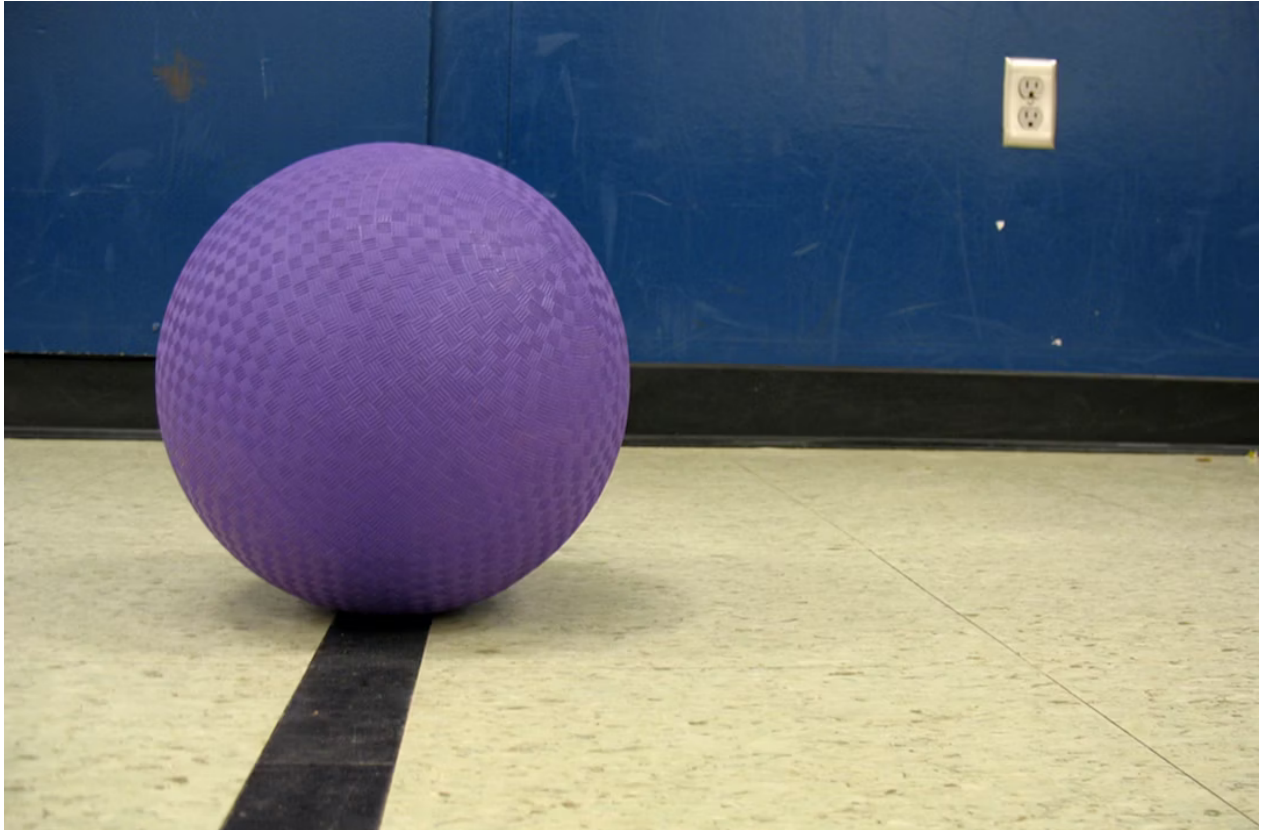


# Dodgeball: Analyzing the No Labels “Common Sense” Agenda



No Labels recently released its “Common Sense” agenda, a 72-page document containing what they call 30 “common sense” ideas from the political center. Our conclusion: just as their proposed third-party spoiler presidential plan dodges substantial questions on how they could actually win the 2024 election, this timid and vague policy plan dodges hard choices to move the country forward and openly evades many crucial issues.

## A Dodge on the National Debt

After a long preamble about the dangers of our national debt, No Labels’ agenda does not have a single, serious idea of how to reduce it. They offload discussion of specific and controversial ideas to a national commission (as many others have done) and then shrink from choosing a single policy idea they’d fight to see come out of it. For example, there seems to be absolutely nothing in the 72-page document on individual tax rates, top tax rates, corporate tax rates, carried interest tax rates,

capital gains tax rates, estate tax rates, closing tax loopholes, unrealized capital gains, tariffs, or carbon border tax adjustments. The entire revenue side is absent. They also call for increasing GDP growth to reduce the deficit—the GOP magic wand for so-called deficit reduction plans. So, either they are simply too afraid to lay out any specific revenue increases or they have simply adopted the longtime Republican position opposing all tax increases, thus making the No Label’s budget pledge a complete sham.

## **A Dodge on Spending**

On spending, there is a paucity of actual specific savings and spending cuts (courageously, they call for “zero corruption” in defense spending, tort reform for health care, and more drug price negotiations), but No Labels proposes billions of new spending increases in defense, border, police, education, small business, and hunger. It’s simply magic math—and it doesn’t add up to covering their new costs. Their signature discretionary spending reform idea is “no budget, no pay,” which is a meaningless jingle.

## **A Dodge on Culture Issues**

On social issues like abortion, their agenda is similarly lacking. They take no position on abortion, even though the rights and health of tens of millions of American women and girls have been put in jeopardy by the Dobbs decision. They vaguely call for “empathy” and “respect” on other culture war attacks, like the recent rise of vicious attacks on transgender youth, which is a nice platitude, but yet, again a dodge that is not remotely sufficient for the seriousness of the issues at hand. Their position on immigration seems identical to Joe Biden’s, without acknowledging a 70% reduction in border crossings based on his Administration’s executive actions in the face of continued intransigence in Congress. On crime, they ignore the \$10 billion in local crimefighting money Biden secured in the American Rescue Plan that included money to hire and train local police and clear court backlogs to better hold criminals accountable.

## **A Dodge on Climate**

For a document claiming to be bold and fresh, many of their ideas have already been done or are being spearheaded by the Biden Administration. They decry high gasoline prices, and note how much they’ve risen since the start of 2022; but since it doesn’t allow them to blame Biden they dodge the true reason for their rising costs: a major war in Europe. They fail to mention that under President Biden, permits for drilling on federal lands have been granted at a faster pace than during this point in the Trump Administration, or that US oil production is nearing record levels. They point to rising energy prices but ignore how the Inflation Reduction Act, which No Labels opposed, contains benefits for energy production and home energy efficiency that will save households hundreds of dollars per year on their energy bills. They conveniently sidestep the billions in investment from IRA that will strengthen America’s supply chain for critical minerals, which they note is a top priority while providing no additional solutions. They rightfully point to the need for

more investment in nuclear energy, yet fail to identify the billions in investments and tax incentives from IRA and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law chipping away at this deficit, nor do they acknowledge President Biden's ambitious civilian nuclear agenda. They also fail to point to the need for ongoing increases in RD&D across other high-priority clean energy technologies like batteries, clean hydrogen production, carbon management, geothermal, and more.

## **A Dodge on National Security**

On national security, we should be thankful that No Labels says America should be stronger than China and Russia. But we are alarmed there is no mention of the war in Ukraine or how Biden completely outfoxed Putin in the run-up to the invasion. This omission must be a conscious choice and can only be a cynical appeal to isolationists in the electorate No Labels is afraid to offend. No Labels calls for rebuilding alliances with our major foreign partners without ever mentioning that is exactly what President Biden has done after the calamitous foreign policy blunders of the Trump Administration. NATO is now not only stronger and more unified, but it is also larger with Finland and Sweden added to the alliance. Similarly, Biden has acted decisively and intelligently regarding China, and there can be no doubt that Xi Jinping knows that the West is strong, united, and determined to check aggression.

## **A Dodge on Elections**

And finally, and perhaps most importantly, on democracy and elections, No Labels once again resorts to a blatantly bogus both-sidesism on election security (“a growing share of Democrats don't trust our election system either.”) and refuses to castigate Donald Trump's criminal attempt to steal the election and thrust America into a Constitutional and existential crisis. This should come as no surprise, given that they condemned the January 6<sup>th</sup> committee as “compromised and divisive,” but nonetheless it should strike fear in the heart of anyone who cares about preserving American democracy moving forward.

At Third Way, we have spent our entire 18-year existence in or near the political and policy center. It is not a place for the faint of heart. It is where the rubber meets the road, where all the controversy and tension reside. In an attempt to maintain their essential fiction that both parties are equally controlled by the extremes and that Joe Biden hasn't governed mainly as a moderate seeking a bipartisan path forward, No Labels' agenda is simply another dodge. It enables them to continue advancing their third-party spoiler campaign and as a result, ease Donald Trump's route back to the presidency.

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