

Messaging Guidance on No Labels' Third-Party Threat



Main Argument: No Labels is offering an illusion, not a choice, because they cannot win.

- The map of their supposed path to victory is not credible. They are claiming they can win in places like Massachusetts, Vermont, Maryland – states Joe Biden won by 30 points or more. They say they can win Biden’s home state of Delaware. They won’t – their map is a fantasy.
- No one has ever come close to winning as a third party, including a guy carved into Mt. Rushmore. But you know what they can do – what Teddy Roosevelt did do when he ran on the Bull Moose ticket? They can be a spoiler.
- Their own poll shows a third-party candidate turns a virtual tie in a Biden-Trump head-to-head into a 5-point Trump victory in a three-way race. The No Labels ticket is a distant third place.

- So, no matter their intentions, it is clear that this campaign will be a spoiler. They will hurt an accomplished moderate, Joe Biden, and re-elect Donald Trump. And they may not care, because they've already said they're going to nominate a Republican at the top of their ticket.

Key Tactic: Insist that NL is not on the level

- They are drawing a false equivalency between Trump and Biden. Biden is a moderate who's signed 7 bipartisan bills. No Labels says he has "done nothing for moderates" – that is absurd.
- No Labels' plan is anti-democratic. They are playing by a different set of rules than the two political parties, using hypocrisy and deception to avoid disclosing their donors. Unlike the major parties, No Labels won't have primaries or caucuses. An unknown group of elites will choose their ticket in a secretive backroom deal.
- Why did No Labels give Trump the Problem Solvers Seal of Approval in 2016? Why won't they admit that was a mistake.

Claims and Rebuttals

If they mention No Labels' December 2022 poll saying a majority of voters want another option...

- Their own poll shows that the No Labels ticket hands Trump a five-point advantage. Their candidate comes in third in a three-way race, with Trump beating Biden. That is the definition of a spoiler.
- And more recent polling shows that when an actual candidate with positions and history is named, their ceiling is much lower – a third-party candidate barely gets beyond the single digits.

If they say that their ticket will draw equally from both sides...

- If that's true, why is there no concern from Republicans? There's no handwringing at the RNC or in MAGA world because they know that this hurts Biden more than Trump.
- No Labels wants to imagine that it's still 1992. Moderate voters are a vital part of today's winning Democratic coalition and no one knows that better than Joe Biden. Democrats now need a larger share of the pool of moderate voters because conservatives outnumber liberals by 14 points.
- Biden won double haters, who don't like either candidate, by 15 points in 2020. Trump's voters are more dogmatic and less likely to peel away.

- And with a decline in third-party voting from 2016 to 2020, Johnson/Stein voters broke for Biden by more than 30 points, helping Biden win the blue wall states even though Trump's vote share actually increased.
- Again, No Labels' own polling showed that it was Democrats, liberals, and urban voters who were more open to an independent candidate than Republican voters.

If they say they haven't decided on running a candidate...

- They may not want to talk about it now, but Chris Christie said that No Labels approached him. And Fred Upton, who joined Sen. Lieberman in New Hampshire, told *CBS News* they want to nominate a Republican president for the top of the ticket. Bob Corker suggested the same thing to the *Washington Post*.
- And No Labels has said that they would stand down if Ron DeSantis is the Republican nominee. So it's pretty clear, this is about attacking Biden and helping Republicans.
- That's why Republicans are either quiet or supportive of this third-party bid and Democrats are alarmed. This is an openly partisan, right-leaning group.
- They ran ads attacking Brad Schneider, a moderate Democratic Problem Solver, for saying this is a dangerous plan. The only Democrats who support this idea are being paid by No Labels.

If they say they have off ramps to avoid being a spoiler...

- *Based on March 2024 polling...* Spring polls are massively unreliable predictors of election results. To use No Labels' favorite example, Ross Perot polled at 24% in the spring but lost ground by the election and won zero electoral votes. No Labels wants to risk the republic on a predictor less reliable than a Magic 8 ball.
- *That they can pull the plug as late as the summer 2024...* This makes absolutely no sense. They are planning to nominate a ticket in April, and after they put them on the ballot in dozens of states they can't stop them from running.

If they say they are fighting for democracy and choice and that their opponents are anti-democratic...

No Labels' third-party plan relies on a number of anti-democratic plans and tactics:

- First, they are running a presidential campaign using a legal loophole to keep their donors secret and allow them to give unlimited amounts of money. We all know that's not how campaigns are supposed to work.

- Second, they're going to select their nominee in a backroom deal. There will be no caucuses or primaries. They're planning a convention, but that will be a coronation, not a decision-making process.
- Third, they are credibly accused of misleading voters into changing their party registration in Maine, potentially depriving hundreds of voters the opportunity to vote in primaries.
- They openly admit they are preparing for a contingent election if no candidate gets to 270 electoral votes, where they would negotiate with House Republicans to try to change the electoral votes of unbound electors. That is profoundly destabilizing and deeply anti-democratic.
- And they would help re-elect Donald Trump, who has made clear his intent to destroy the very pillars of our democracy.

If they say that they have a path to win...

- Independent analysts *all* conclude they can't win and would hurt Biden.
 - **Amy Walter (Cook Report):** [How Seriously Should We Take a Potential No Labels Candidate?](#) (The effort is not serious.)
 - **FiveThirtyEight:** [No Labels Is Chasing A Fantasy](#) and [Why A Third-Party Candidate Might Help Trump – And Spoil The Election For Biden](#) (Support No Labels has now is a ceiling, not a floor.)
 - **Harry Enten (CNN):** [Why Biden worries about a third-party rival in 2024](#) (Biden loses ground to Trump when a third-party is available.)
 - **Mark Murray (NBC News):** [The stark numbers driving Democratic panic about a third-party 2024 bid](#) (Biden won because there weren't serious third-party candidates in 2020.)
 - **Sabato's Crystal Ball:** [Electoral College Ratings: Expect Another Highly Competitive Election](#) (“A No Labels could provide an outlet for moderate/conservative voters.”)

If they say we need an agenda and leader that is focused on bipartisan results...

- Even David Brooks has changed his mind on this effort, noting that there's *already* a moderate in the White House.
- How do they go around claiming the president has done “nothing for moderates” when he delivered a bipartisan deal to prevent default, he passed a major infrastructure bill supported by both Problem Solvers and Mitch McConnell, a bipartisan CHIPS bill, the first bipartisan gun safety legislation in decades, and an Inflation Reduction Act bill negotiated by their co-chair Joe Manchin?

- The agenda No Labels released dodges taking a position on abortion, revenues, and continues their bogus both-sidesism on election security. They also blatantly omit Biden's successes on issues they mention, like a 70% reduction in border crossings, IRA funding to strengthen supply chains for critical minerals, setting an ambitious civilian nuclear agenda, and rebuilding our global leadership to outfox Putin and rebuild and expand NATO.
- No Labels should have the guts to stick to their principles and back the obvious moderate in the race: Joe Biden.

If they argue that they're doing this because Biden can't beat Trump...

- No Labels is asking us to believe that an incumbent president with 7 bipartisan bills to his name can't win, but their candidate can do what no one has ever come close to doing. That's a very, very bad bet.

Additional Resources

Third Way's overview on why No Labels is a spoiler that helps Trump:

<https://www.thirdway.org/memo/the-no-labels-third-party-bid-a-plan-that-will-re-elect-trump>

Third Way memo on their fantasy electoral map:

<https://www.thirdway.org/memo/the-no-labels-third-party-bid-a-plan-that-will-re-elect-trump>

Third Way critique of No Labels' "Common Sense" agenda:

<https://www.thirdway.org/memo/dodgeball-analyzing-the-no-labels-common-sense-agenda>

Third Way memo on what Biden and Democrats have accomplished for moderates:

<https://www.thirdway.org/memo/what-joe-biden-has-done-for-moderates>