

# The No Labels Third-Party Bid: A Plan that Will Re-elect Trump



No Labels is planning to field a bipartisan “unity ticket” in 2024. They call it an “insurance policy,” claiming to fear “both major political parties could nominate divisive presidential candidates that a majority of the country finds unacceptable.” For No Labels, the moderate President Biden falls into this “unacceptable” category. They have written that nominating Biden would be a “moral failure” on the part of Democrats. But No Labels is offering an illusion, not a choice.

**The bottom line:** A No Labels ticket cannot win the presidency and will be a spoiler that re-elects Trump.

## The No Labels Third-Party Bid is Serious

- **Money:** No Labels told David Brooks for his NY Times column that this is a \$70 million project, and they had more than \$46 million pledged or raised as of September 2022.

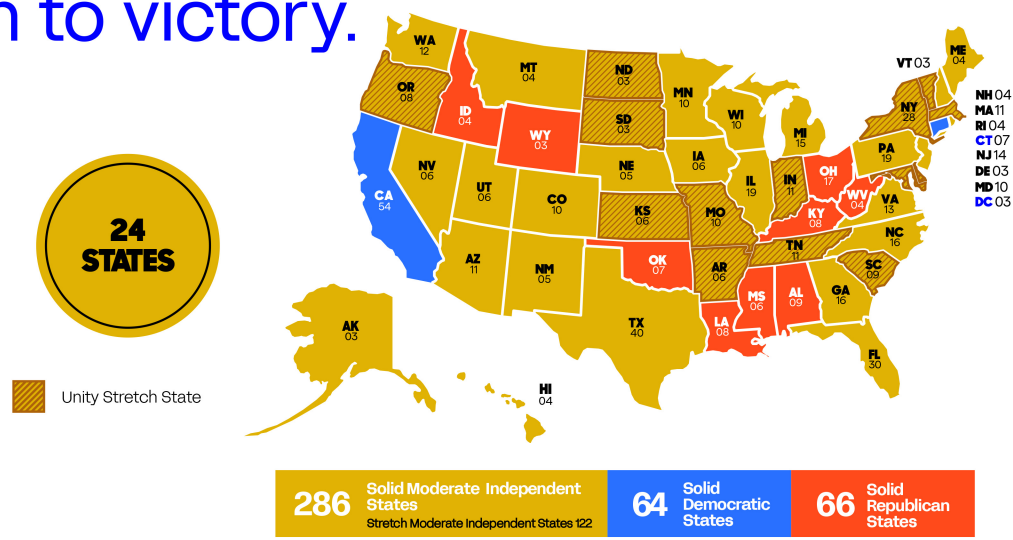
- **Personnel:** They have more than 400 circulators actively collecting signatures.
- **Ballot Access:** They are on the ground seeking spots on the ballot in a push that will be nationwide and currently includes battlegrounds like Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. They have already won ballot access in Alaska, Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, South Dakota, and Utah, and they have said they've gathered 600,000 signatures.
- **Plans:** A nominating convention is scheduled for April 14-15, 2024, in Dallas for 3,000 of their supporters.
- **Recruitment:** They haven't announced who they will propose to nominate, but press reports show they are courting political moderates in both parties. And they have enlisted former Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-CT), former Govs. Jon Huntsman (R-UT) and Pat McCrory (R-NC), Admiral Dennis Blair, and former Congressmen Joe Cunningham (D-SC) and Tom Reed (R-NY), among others, as spokespeople.

## The No Labels Third-Party Bid is a Loser

No Labels argues this is a unique historical moment that gives their “unity ticket” a real shot at winning the White House. But that is an illusion. The data and historical evidence are clear: no third-party candidate would come close to winning.

- **History of Failure:** Voters don't back third parties. Since 1900, third-party candidates didn't win enough electoral votes *in sum* to win one election.
- **The Polling Mirage:** Third-party candidates poll well at first before plummeting; Gary Johnson hit 10% in 2016, Ross Perot 36% in 1992, John Anderson 26% in 1980. But by Election Day they had cratered and failed to win a single electoral vote.
- **Base Illusion:** No Labels says a plurality of Americans identify as Independents. It's actually 9% when partisan leaners are taken into account. That is not a base that can win.
- **Fantasy Map:** No Labels' purported path to an Electoral College victory imagines their ticket could win states like Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Vermont, which Biden won by 30 or more points in 2020. For a detailed assessment of the No Labels map, see this analysis.

The moderate independent ticket has a **real and viable** path to victory.



Source: No Labels. "An Insurance Policy for America in 2024." Accessed on 2 April 2023, [https://roar-assets-auto.rbl.ms/files/52328/Final%20Deck%203.31.23%20\(2\).pdf](https://roar-assets-auto.rbl.ms/files/52328/Final%20Deck%203.31.23%20(2).pdf).

## The No Labels Third-Party Bid Would Re-elect Trump

Rather than producing a third-party ticket that would defy the overwhelming odds and win, No Labels is on track to field a spoiler who would re-elect Trump or a Trump-like Republican. Problem Solver Democrats, close allies of No Labels, are reported to be "in open revolt" over their 2024 plans, because it's so clear they would hurt Democrats and help Trump.

- **No Labels' Own Poll Shows They Help Trump Beat Biden:** No Labels touts a December 2022 HarrisX poll to justify their bid, but the Washington Post reports the poll reveals precisely what we have argued. In their data, the head-to-head matchup shows Biden and Trump tied, at 42 and 43 percent respectively. But in a three way, their "moderate independent" candidate polled at 20%, with Biden at 28% and Trump at 33%. So, they come in a distant third and throw the election to Trump.
- **No Labels' target voters would come out of the Biden coalition.** In a head-to-head, Biden carries voters on the fence. AP VoteCast found Biden won voters who had backed Jill Stein and Gary Johnson by 30 points. And Biden won "double haters," voters who did not like either major party candidate, by 15 points in 2020. An April 2023 poll found that Biden leads Trump by a whopping 39 points among voters who disapprove of both presidencies. Giving them a third-party choice clearly helps the GOP.

- **Biden is More Vulnerable in Close States:** In 2020, Biden won six of the seven states where the margin was three points or less. Even a paltry third-party performance would put 79 Biden electoral votes at risk (GA, AZ, WI, PA, NV, and MI). Trump's vote share in the Blue Wall states of MI, WI, and PA actually went *up* from 2016 to 2020. The difference that gave Biden the win those three states was the decline in third-party voting.
- **No Labels is hurting Democrats now.** Despite a series of big bipartisan wins, No Labels is arguing from their purported perch as centrists that Joe Biden is too radical and has done “nothing” to court moderates. This is preposterous, but it will damage Biden if it continues.
- **Assurances that No Labels has “off-ramps” don’t hold up.** No Labels says they will “stand down” if “this path outside the two major party candidates is not needed.” But they have not explained their criteria for that assessment. Nor have they explained how that would work, since the GOP nominee likely won’t be known until June, long after the No Labels ticket is nominated and on ballots.
- **If it isn’t Trump, No Labels is Helping Elect a Trump Clone:** Even if the GOP nominee isn’t Trump, it will almost certainly be a MAGA-aligned candidate. It’s preposterous to even imagine that a candidate like Larry Hogan or Liz Cheney could win that primary.

## Many of No Labels’ Closest Allies Hate this Plan

Members of the Problem Solver Caucus, close allies of No Labels, are reported to be “in open revolt” over their 2024 third-party ticket.

- Rep. Dean Phillips told the New York Times, “If No Labels runs a Joe Manchin against Donald Trump and Joe Biden, I think it will be a historic disaster. And I speak for just about every moderate Democrat and frankly most of my moderate Republican friends.”
- “I can think of nothing worse than another Trump presidency and no better way of helping him than running a third-party candidate,” said Representative Brad Schneider, Democrat of Illinois.
- Rep. David Trone told The Bulwark the plan for a unity candidate “could be a trainwreck.”
- “No Labels is wasting time, energy, and money on a bizarre effort that confuses and divides voters, and has one obvious outcome — reelecting Donald Trump as President,” Rep. Abigail Spanberger told Politico.
- Even the co-founder and co-chair of the Problem Solvers Caucus, Rep. Josh Gottheimer, told the New Jersey Star-Ledger, he is firmly opposed to the 2024 effort. “The worst thing that could happen is that we inadvertently elect an extremist like Donald Trump.”

No Labels' co-founder Bill Galston, a leading voice in the political center, resigned from the organization over the plan. In a column in the Wall Street Journal, Galston noted: "If a No Labels ticket receives even a tiny share of the vote in key states, Mr. Trump could end up back in the Oval Office. No Labels leaders have promised to end their campaign if it becomes clear that their ticket will be a spoiler. The sooner they reach this conclusion, the better."

Moreover, No Labels draws a profoundly false equivalence between Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Their founder claimed that "both presidents ended up caving largely to their supporters on the various extremes." No Labels once bestowed on Trump their "Problem Solver Seal of Approval." This "both sides" point of view means they have framed their ticket as an antidote to a rematch. But this is a smokescreen. Joe Biden has governed as a mainstream moderate, passing more bipartisan legislation than anyone dreamed possible, while Trump's extremism, which led to an attempted coup, is too extensive to be enumerated here.

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