

7/26/2011 GOV. GARY JOHNSON FOR PRESIDENT, BLOGGER CONFERENCE CALL

TRANSCRIPT

Participants:

David Baucom, Charlatan Magazine

John Board, To The Drawing Board

Bob Clark, TheBobHatter.com

T.E. Finnigan, freelance blogger

Chris Frashure, United Liberty

Andrew Griffin, Red Dirt Report

Robert Gruver, Religion-Politics-Sex

Loren Heal, RedState

Grant Hewitt, Red Point Strategies

Bryan Hughs, freelance blogger

Zaid Jilani, Think Progress

Robin Jones, OnTilt Radio

John Vaught LaBeaume, The Washington Examiner

Evan Lind, The Claremont Independent/Anthems for the Earnest

Hardy Macia, Gary Johnson Grassroots Blog

Kendra Marr, Politico

Chris Moody, Yahoo! News

Skip Murphy, Granite Grok

Jay Selthofner, NORML

Steven Scotten, Monochromatic Outlook

Patrick O'Connor, Wall Street Journal

Caterina Platt, freelance blogger

Pradheep Shanker, NeoAvatara

Peter St. Cyr, Wordcab/New Mexico Independent

Scott Templeman, ScottTempleman.com

Kevin Thompson, Understanding Our Times

GARY JOHNSON: I think it's significant, for us anyway, that in the last couple weeks, this Family Pledge came out of Iowa. I issued a statement with regard to that, that I don't think Republicans should be concentrated on social issues, or I think Republicans are going to be relegated to a permanent "third party" status, if you will in this election and elections moving forward. Republicans really need to concentrate on the pocket book, and, in this case, the debt ceiling. I'm advocating not raising the debt ceiling. For all of the problems associated with that, for all of the catastrophe, if you will, that'll go along with that, short term, I think this is an opportunity to stop printing money. And being in control—being in control of the situation right now—beats what I think is going to be a monetary collapse in the future, due to the fact that there's just no repaying 14 trillion dollars in debt, given the deficit that we currently have, and have had for the last several years, and looking forward it looks like we will have. So, Republicans, let's get off the social issues, let's quit alienating everybody on the planet. When it comes to Republicans, let's see if we can't rally everybody around getting this country's fiscal house in order. I really do think that when it comes to perceptions, when it comes to the country not liking what Republicans have to say, that it has everything to do with this Family Values Pledge that did come out of Iowa and hence my rebuttal for Republicans signing up for that, or even giving it lip service. So, that might do for my opening statement.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Great. We're going to go in order of alphabetical order based on last name, and we'll start with David Baucom from *Charlatan Magazine*. And just a reminder here, you do have to press star six to unmute yourself when you want to ask a question. So, David Baucom? Do we have David on the line? We'll come back to him. How about Bob Clark? Bob still here? Just a reminder, you do have to press star six – the little asterisk symbol, and the number six – in order to unmute yourself.

BOB CLARK, THEBOBHATTER.COM: I believe you muted everyone.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: There we go.

BOB CLARK: I believe what you did was, you muted everyone, so even if you used your own mute button like I did, you still have to push star six in order to talk.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Right. Everybody's muted right now, so once it's your turn to ask a question, then you'll have to press star six.

BOB CLARK: Mr. Johnson, how are you doing, sir?

GARY JOHNSON: Good, thank you.

BOB CLARK: Excellent. Well, I personally think you're the best candidate on the field. My biggest concern though, however, is, I just wonder if Ron Paul's going to take so much out of your sails that come the next, or the first, votes, you're not going to get that much of a vote. What do you think about that?

GARY JOHNSON: Well, you know, as I've said from Day One, if Ron Paul and I end up splitting the vote that he got last cycle, this isn't going to go anywhere. This needs to grow significantly beyond the eight percent that he garnered last time, and that's why I'm in this: to grow that vote – to grow that liberty

vote. And we'll see how it turns out. If he and I are splitting up 35% of the vote – 35% of a liberty segment, then he and I need to sit down and talk.

BOB CLARK: Good answer, thank you.

GARY JOHNSON: Thanks.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Great. Is David Baucom still on the line? Okay, how about Chris Frashure with United Liberty?

CHRIS FRASHURE, UNITED LIBERTY: Good afternoon, Gary Johnson. How are you, Governor?

GARY JOHNSON: Yeah, good, thank you!

CHRIS FRASHURE: My question for you regarding social tolerance and the Tea Party: the Tea Party is sort of seen as a faction that is more liberty friendly than mainstream Republicans or mainstream conservatives, yet there's also a prevalence of social intolerance for homosexuality, somewhat for immigrants as well. But mostly for equality for gays. A lot of Tea Party folks preach that America is a Christian nation, and as such are less tolerant to homosexuality. How do you address the Tea Party people, who are vital to the liberty-minded campaigns, such as yours and Ron Paul's, with this sort of intolerance prevalent throughout the Tea Party?

GARY JOHNSON: Just that, if we don't – if we: Tea Partiers, Republicans – if those issues don't get put in the backseat, then we're not going to be in a position to drive this. That's my opinion, and I would also agree with your observation, that there's a lot of this thought that is very predominant, and if that's going to be the predominant thought then we're not going to be the party of the future.

CHRIS FRASHURE: Thank you, Governor.

GARY JOHNSON: Thank you.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Andrew Griffin, from Red Dirt Report? How about Mr. Jilani from Think Progress?

ZAID JILANI, THINK PROGRESS: Hi, can you guys hear me?

GARY JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah.

ZAID JILANI: Okay, great. Thanks so much for talking to us today, Governor. I wanted to ask you about sort of the way that the Right and a lot of pundits, and especially Republicans and conservatives, reacted to the terror attack in Oslo. You know, there was a lot of immediate reaction sort of blaming Muslims, saying that this was an act of Islamic terrorism, and not really taking a hard line against Islamophobia. And what I want to know is do you think that this general trend of Islamophobia on the Right's really dangerous for the movement for conservatives, and how would you respond to certain candidates like Herman Cain, who even suggested that they wouldn't appoint Muslims to presidential appointment slots?

GARY JOHNSON: Well, not to criticize Cain, but to criticize anybody who would say that they would not appoint Muslims, that's, in my opinion, in my opinion a qualified Muslim is as qualified as a qualified Christian, is as qualified as anyone who might seek that position or that appointment. That should not be a consideration. And yeah, when Norway happened, and everybody jumped to the conclusion that this had to be some act of terrorism as opposed to what appears to be a real bigotry toward immigration, wow. But this is the situation, this is the reality, and we seem to jump to conclusions when the reality is just the opposite. Still there?

ZAID JILANI: Yeah, thank you.

GARY JOHNSON: Josiah, are you there?

[SILENCE DUE TO TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES]

GARY JOHNSON: Anybody there?

BOB CLARK: I'm here.

CHRIS MOODY, YAHOO! NEWS: Hey Governor, this is Chris Moody with Yahoo! News, I guess I'll take the initiative.

GARY JOHNSON: Yeah, very good.

CHRIS MOODY: Tim Pawlenty and Newt Gingrich were recently questioned on this, on their timelines for perhaps dropping out of the race, so I feel like this question is fair. At what point, if polls don't increase, would you perhaps decide to exit the race?

GARY JOHNSON: Well, I'm not the "exit" guy. You know, if you're talking "exit," [chuckles] you're thinking of somebody else. For me, this is the only vantage point I've ever known, and statistically speaking, I'm the least – you know, I'm in last place – but I'm also the least known candidate by a long shot also, so, you know, when you're one hundred percent known by all of the Party – in this case, the Republican Party – and you're polling at one percent, I think you should consider getting out, but when your name is known by less than twenty percent of the Republican Party, and you're polling in that vicinity, I don't know. I think that suggests that you've got a ways to go. So, in my case, look, I'm in this for the whole haul. It is about the message, it's not about me. As there would be those that would drop out, as this gets further along, you know, having two candidates in the race – having three candidates in the race – me being one of them, talking to California, I think that'll be quite the audience.

CHRIS MOODY: Do you feel you've been treated unfairly by, perhaps, groups running the Ames Straw Poll, and the debates?

GARY JOHNSON: You know, the only group that I've felt unfairly treated by was CNN, and when it comes to Ames, I think that this is the political party, the Republican Party in Iowa, raising money, and we're not buying into the straw poll, so we're not on the straw poll. I think that it's that simple. It's a lot of money, and I don't know what it really shows. There are thirteen candidates now in the Republican

race. I think twelve of them are vying to split up the social conservative vote, and I'm not one of those. I think that's what's being contested in Iowa.

CHRIS MOODY: Just one final question: You mentioned Ron Paul, I was wondering if you could expand on that. You said you may need to have a conversation if you're splitting liberty votes. Have you reached out to the Paul campaign at all? And can you tell us a little bit about what that conversation you discussed would entail? What would you talk about, if that were the case?

GARY JOHNSON: Well, we would need to talk if we're splitting up thirty five percent of the Republican vote. If thirty five percent of Republicans are going to identify themselves in this "freedom" category, then he and I need to have a conversation. But if he's got his eight percent from last go-around, and he grows that by a few percentage points, and I'm in there also, you know, maybe that's – if it's not going to make a difference, we don't need to have a conversation. But we'll need to have a conversation if thirty five percent of the Party is finally woke up, and we realize that these are the issues facing this country, and here's how we address them. So, it's a theoretical conversation that would need to take place, growing his support from last cycle by a factor of plus four.

CHRIS MOODY: Thank you, Governor.

GARY JOHNSON: Thanks.

SKIP MURPHY: This is Skip Murphy with Granite Grok, how are you?

GARY JOHNSON: Great, how are you?

SKIP MURPHY: Good! Been a while since we last talked. I do have a question about your opening statement, on social conservatives. Certainly the Tea Party is focused on the fiscal issues, but as we all know, social issues often have a fiscal cost to them as well. If you look at Medicaid, Social Security, other entitlement programs, have an outsized cost to them. Is it really something that Republicans and conservative Republicans should do? To concede the social issues to the Democrats and step away from that arena? And thereby letting them raise the fiscal costs of their agenda, versus fighting for what we believe is our agenda, which is cutting the fiscal costs across the board?

GARY JOHNSON: Well, if you're talking about fiscal costs, I don't know where an intolerance to gays, I don't know where a woman – where decision making should be taken away from a woman, and I'm talking about abortion – and, that that should be the driving issues of the Republican Party. And I guess I could go to immigration, and to the xenophobia about immigrants, and there are costs associated with illegal immigration. I think they should be addressed, but they don't involve, in my opinion, building a fence, or putting the National Guard arm in arm across the border. There's some real, rational steps that can be taken, and really, a win-win situation: immigrants that want to come in to this country to work being allowed to work. And businesses that would like to take advantage of being able to get workers that they currently can't get, because of our immigration policies and our welfare policies in this country that have us sitting at home collecting welfare checks, that are just a little bit less money or the same amount of money for doing nothing, as opposed to getting out and getting an entry level job.

SKIP MURPHY: Well, I do notice that you brought up some hot button issues that are near and dear to a lot of Republicans. But I specifically asked about some of the other entitlements: certainly the ever growing welfare state is a social issue, and it certainly has a high fiscal cost. So, what is your strategy for bringing that down, and again I ask, is that something the Republicans should just forget about, because –

GARY JOHNSON: No, Skip, I didn't consider welfare as part of this Ames Pledge. If I missed that, I certainly apologize. I saw this Ames Pledge as, really, vilifying, or just saying "No" to tolerance. I saw it as a very intolerant document. And I am a firm believer that we need to reform welfare in this country, and at the base of reforming welfare is "If you can work, you should work."

SKIP MURPHY: Okay, and that's kind of where I was going, but I did not specifically ask about the Ames Pledge. It was more about your comment that the Republicans should forget about the social issues.

GARY JOHNSON: So, in the context of social issues: abortion, gays, and in this case, really, anyone of color.

SKIP MURPHY: Thank you for your answer.

GARY JOHNSON: Thank you.

PETER ST CYR, THE NEW MEXICO INDEPENDENT: Governor Johnson, this is Peter St. Cyr in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Good morning.

GARY JOHNSON: Good morning.

PETER ST CYR: How are you?

GARY JOHNSON: Good, thank you.

PETER ST CYR: Hey, you've been talking about going all the way to California because you have a message to deliver, and that you're not in it for yourself. You were probably known in New Mexico as "Governor 'No'", but it appears that campaign donors are saying "No" to your campaign, and Ron Paul's got \$4.5 million, and you, in your last report, only had six thousand dollars cash on hand. How do you make it all the way to California?

GARY JOHNSON: Well, our expenses are commensurate with the amount of money we've raised, and you raise a really – the big issue. You've got to have money, and we have enough money – we're raising enough money to where I'm in the race. I dare say we've got expenses to match our revenue, where I'll be in it through the whole thing.

PETER ST CYR: Are you prepared to make substantial donations to your own campaign out of your own check book?

GARY JOHNSON: No, I think this goes way beyond – at this level, that goes way beyond my means to be able to support the campaign.

PETER ST CYR: And you talked briefly this morning about immigration, and the costs associated with building fences, and paying for the National Guard to be at the border. In New Mexico, the state issues drivers' licenses to Mexican nationals that are here illegally, but that have established residency, and yet that's in conflict with some of the requirements now with the FAA and the federal government for REAL ID. What are some of the solutions that you propose to keep drivers that are here illegally insured, and for the state to be able to comply with REAL ID?

GARY JOHNSON: Well, I think New Mexico has taken realistic approaches to illegal immigration – the notion of documenting illegal immigrants. I'm under the notion that we should make it as easy as possible for an illegal immigration, or, I say "illegal immigrant," but for an immigrant who wants to come into this country and work, to get a work visa. A work visa would not be a green card, it wouldn't be citizenship, but it would be a work visa that would entail a background check and a Social Security card, so that applicable taxes would get paid. I think that's the way you secure the borders, is to have that documentation. And then, with regard to the eleven million right now that are here in this country illegally, I think we should recognize the main reason why they're here illegally, and that would be that when Reagan set up his grace period in the eighties, or, he set up his amnesty period in the eighties, he coupled that with putting the government in charge of quotas – matching up business with potential workers, and that was a break down from Day One. You can't get a work visa and come into the United States and work and yet, you know that if you can get over here, even illegally, that you'll get a job. Because you have dozens of friends and family that live over here. So, don't get the government in the quota business. Get the government out of the quota business. Get the government in the business of issuing a work visa in a situation where the line is moving. I believe that Mexicans would stand in line, if the line was moving, to get work visas.

PETER ST CYR: All right, thank you, sir.

GARY JOHNSON: Thank you.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Great question. How about Evan Lind, with the Claremont Independent?

EVAN LIND, CLAREMONT INDEPENDENT: Yes, hi, Governor Johnson. This is Evan Lind from the Claremont Independent.

GARY JOHNSON: Yes, thank you.

EVAN LIND: I just wanted to ask really quickly, obviously a champion of individual freedom and rights such as yourself would not stand for a piece of legislation such as the Defense of Marriage Act, as it is a huge infringement on our personal freedoms and rights. That being said, would you favor a constitutional amendment that would provide gays the right to marriage throughout the country, or would you leave it to be a state issue?

GARY JOHNSON: You know, I would leave it to be a states' issue. But I am open to the notion that this is, potentially, a federal issue along the lines of civil rights. "Civil rights" was not left to the states. It was considered to be a right granted under the Constitution, and so, I'm, really, open to that argument.

EVAN LIND: Okay great, thank you, sir.

ZAID JILANI: Hello?

GARY JOHNSON: Yes.

ZAID JILANI: Hi, this is Zaid Jilani from Think Progress again. Along the lines of the last question, would you support federal employment protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity? For example, ENDA-style legislation, or perhaps an executive order?

GARY JOHNSON: You know, I've had personal – in my business, which I started – and I apologize if I'm being redundant on anything it is that I say, but I started a one man handyman business in Albuquerque in 1974 and grew it to employ 1000 people in 1994. My experience with government and whistle blowing legislation was just the opposite of what whistle blower legislation was intended to be. It sounds terrific, you know, "make a protected class out of individuals that would speak up against work place atrocities, because it would be wrong to discriminate against them and have them lose jobs." In the name of that legislation, that whistle blower legislation, I really got tagged with something that was really unfair. And I found that to be extremely unfair. I found it extremely unfair to have a protected class at the work site that had nothing to do with whistle blowing. Nothing, but – so, I really look at "protected class" legislation through a jaundiced eye.

ZAID JILANI: All right, thank you.

GARY JOHNSON: Thank you.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Great question. How about Jay Selthofner, with NORML?

JAY SELTHOFNER, WISCONSIN NORML: Hi, good afternoon.

GARY JOHNSON: Good afternoon.

JAY SELTHOFNER: My question is a two part question on the same topic. And these – I guess I look at it as, in these trying times, the economic recovery, the alternate energy solutions, and really the overall increased public safety are vital to our country, we believe that we have a wrongfully forbidden alternative to petroleum, pharmaceuticals, alcohol, and it seems that hemp, cannabis, or marijuana is the solution, and possibly an alternate tax base that's growing right underneath our nose. With public support overwhelming, why are Republicans so intolerant to adjust the marijuana laws?

GARY JOHNSON: I, of course, Jay, that's one of my crusades here. I think it's indicative of dozens of other issues. I happen to think that our marijuana laws, though, affect more people, criminalize more behavior than any other law that we might cite. And I mean that from the standpoint that if taken to their extreme, why might have one hundred million people in this country behind bars. And, of course, we wouldn't have a hundred million people behind bars in this country because we realize we can't enforce these laws, and so, we can't enforce them, so that's what ends up making them so discriminatory. And the hypocrisy that goes along with laws, that those that, politicians that have done

the same, pass legislation that, under the wrong set of circumstances, they are behind bars. So, this is a – these are very hypocritical laws, that are also very, very discriminatory.

JAY SELTHOFNER: Discriminatory. You know, with – I guess, with – the current Republican Party, seems to still be about Cannabis Prohibition, continuing to fund the War on Drugs, continuing to spend taxpayer dollars on Prohibition. What three ways do you think you can change that agenda within the intolerant Republican Party?

GARY JOHNSON: Well, running for President of the United States. I think that a significant portion of the Republican vote would shout that Republicans are just as committed to drug reform as anyone else. And that's my experience, and I'm putting that to the test here, believing that I will have enough support to shout that, shout the notion that, "let's reform our drug laws."

JAY SELTHOFNER: Fair enough. Thank you very much for your time today.

GARY JOHNSON: Thank you.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Great. How about Steven Scotten, with Monochromatic Outlook? Steven there? How about Kevin Thompson, with Understanding Our Times?

KEVIN THOMPSON, UNDERSTANDING OUR TIMES: Hello, Governor?

GARY JOHNSON: Yes, yes.

KEVIN THOMPSON: Sorry, I was trying to figure out the "muting" situation. I apologize for that.

GARY JOHNSON: No problem.

KEVIN THOMPSON: Well, thank you Governor, for even just inviting me onto the conference call. You've mentioned the word "intolerance" quite a bit in connection with the Republican Party, or the social conservatives of the Republican Party who oppose homosexual marriage and, abortion, and other such things. My question is: What message do you have to those who – every time that homosexual marriage comes up for a vote, it has been rejected by the People. So there seems to be somewhat of a – not just a clique of social conservatism in the Republican Party – it seems to be an outspoken majority of the public who oppose this, and what do you say to those evangelicals, social conservatives, who hold to a religious doctrine that stands centuries of time? I guess, what is your message to them if it's just: "You're intolerant"? It seems like you're alienating a lot of people.

GARY JOHNSON: No, I don't want to alienate anybody here, I want – I'd like to see Republicans focus on what is doable, and what really needs to be done in this country, and that is – what I would be advocating is balancing the federal budget. I'm really in the camp that believes that if we don't fix our financial situation that we're all going to be left with nothing. That's my point. It would be a shame to see Republicans not be given a chance to fix this, believing that they're the Party that is going to fix this, it would be a shame if that were the case because Republicans led with a social agenda that a lot of Americans, a lot of the world, looks at Republicans negatively because they lead with that. I, as an

individual, as somebody who believes that the best thing that the government can do for you and I as individuals is to empower you and I as individuals to be that all that we can, I would say to the individual that espouses a social agenda to lead by example, as an individual, with that social agenda, and that's how you bring about change in your life and in your community, and leading by example is the best way to lead. So, as an individual, if that's your belief, then follow that belief as an individual, but to make that government policy, to pass laws that would tell me as an individual something adverse to what I otherwise might believe or espouse, that isn't the way to bring about change.

KEVIN THOMPSON: I've got a quick follow-up question. I've often thought that a decent compromise, and I want to get your thoughts on this, on this whole issue, would be to just to take government out of the equation completely when it comes to marriage. Why should government be in the marriage business in the first place?

GARY JOHNSON: That would be my position from Day One on this. That government should be in the civil union business regardless of whether it's heterosexual couple or gay couple, and leave marriage to the churches. That's always been my position.

KEVIN THOMPSON: Thank you, Governor.

GARY JOHNSON: Thank you.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Great, thanks Steven. How about Kevin Thompson, and then David Baucum, if he's here?

DAVID BAUCOM, CHARLATAN MAGAZINE: Yes, can you hear me?

GARY JOHNSON: Yes.

DAVID BAUCOM: Great. Hello, Governor Johnson. A lot of people like me believe government has a clearly definable purpose, such as protecting individual rights, and it seems to be where you're coming from. And that implementing it would solve our problems and lead to a lot of prosperity. It would surprise a lot of people that the Founding Fathers spoke negatively sometimes, seeing it as tyranny by the majority. While democracy is crucial to elect leaders, it's not to trump individual rights and liberty, which is really what it's all about. And the GOP's failure to stand up for the principle of individual rights, while really instead favoring policies of majoritarian collective sacrifice has led to a lot of erosions of liberty and the chaos we see right now. How would you stand for the protection of individual rights as the government's real and only purpose amidst all the pressure to compromise on that principle?

GARY JOHNSON: Well, first of all, I don't know how that whole issue could be articulated any better. You've done it. Ditto, ditto, ditto. Look, we don't live in a democracy, we live in a republic. We live in a country that's dictated by laws, because if we lived in a country of democracy, we could all vote ourselves a raise, and we wouldn't be able to afford that, and that's been the demise of democracies. We live in a republic, and I think that everybody loses sight of that. And we lose sight of that at the expense of individual freedom and liberty.

DAVID BAUCOM: Thank you. A follow up question: What are some comments from you on the concept of rights, as to what they really are, and the discrepancy between what they really are have become defined by the mainstream media and the opposite parties?

GARY JOHNSON: You know, I'm not sure if I'm following your question, but what is government's responsibility? Government does have a responsibility, in my opinion, to protect you and I against individuals or groups that would do us harm. As Governor of New Mexico, I really – there are bad actors out there. Without the Environmental Protection Agency, would there be the rules and regulations that would state what can and can't be done regarding the environment? And without those rules and regulations, would we have some real bad polluters out there? Yeah, we would, and we've got some bad polluters out there – there are bad actors that if the government's not around to enforce or take action against those bad actors, they just keep right on doing what they do. And I use the environment as an example of government's role. And, you know what? Who's going to protect you and I against individuals who would do us harm? And that's where government has a role, and that's important.

DAVID BAUCOM: Thank you. What I really meant was, like, a right to welfare or the right to be helped when you're in need, and the right to – things like that that may not, that I don't see as really right.

GARY JOHNSON: Yes, okay, all right. I am a Republican, I do have this sense that there are those that are truly in need, and that if it wasn't for the government, maybe they would receive no assistance whatsoever. I am in that camp. I just think that we've gone way overboard when it comes to this notion of need and entitlement, if you will. So I am promising to submit a balanced budget for the year 2013, which would cut 43% of government expenditures at existing levels. That means Medicaid, that means Medicare, that means military spending, for starters. So, in that context, 43% reduction with regard to everything it is that government does, I think that is a weeding out process that gets us closer to the notion of helping those that are truly in need as opposed to this notion of entitlement and really this give away that has us in the fiscal predicament that we are in. Really, we're broke, and we're on the verge of a monetary collapse because we print money to cover these obligations.

DAVID BAUCOM: Yes, thank you.

GARY JOHNSON: Thank you.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Good question, do we have David Baucom on the line?

DAVID BAUCOM: That was me.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Oh, you're David Baucom, okay. How about Andrew Griffin? Andrew Griffin, or Robin Jones, I don't think has asked a question yet. I'll just open up the floor then, is there anybody here who hasn't asked a question and who would like to, feel free to press star six, which will unmute yourself, and fire away.

SCOTT TEMPLEMAN, SCOTTTEMPLEMAN.COM: Hello? Hi, this is Scott Templeman.

GARY JOHNSON: Yes.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Go ahead.

SCOTT TEMPLEMAN: Good afternoon, everybody. I first became aware of your campaign last year. I think I saw you on the Colbert Report. I loved – I had an immediate good impression. And just right off the bat, just a quick first question. You're against raising the debt ceiling: what are three, no-brainer things we could cut from the budget?

GARY JOHNSON: Well, you know, by "no-brainer" things, I'd like – well, "no-brainer" things: abolish Housing and Urban Development, abolish the Federal Department of Education, and regarding the third – I think this is in the category of "no-brainer," look, we've got to address Medicaid, Medicare, and military spending. And that is a no-brainer. It is unavoidable.

SCOTT TEMPLEMAN: Okay, and then as my main question. Polls have been showing that over the years, the American majority is really quite centrist, with a lot more liberty ideals and being tolerant, and meanwhile a poll was just released I think showing disdain for both parties is at an all time high. What could you do as a leader to help mend the red/blue, he said/she said fiasco that just drags every simple vote out for weeks?

GARY JOHNSON: Well, I'm putting this to the test. This isn't a matter of sitting on the couch and theorizing this, so I really do believe that the things I'm saying are beliefs held by the majority of Americans, and I'm putting this to the test, and simplifying that notion, that's the notion that I think sixty percent of Americans describe themselves as fiscally conservative and socially liberal. Now, I would like to take the definition of "socially liberal" and just suggest that what that really means is that people want, as individuals, to be empowered to make choices that only you and I as individuals can really make. That government should not be in our lives, dictating very personal decisions that belong nowhere else.

ANDREW GRIFFIN, RED DIRT REPORT: Governor Johnson?

GARY JOHNSON: Yes.

ANDREW GRIFFIN: This is Andrew Griffin, I finally figured out the unmuting problem I was experiencing.

GARY JOHNSON: Great.

ANDREW GRIFFIN: The first question I had was about the federal government and the environment, and that brought to mind a recent situation in the home state of New Mexico with the terrible wildfires around Los Alamos. And that brought to mind concerns about radioactive waste possibly being burned and exposed to the environment, and this is a real problem out West and in other parts of the country. What would your administration do to start addressing these issues, and the sloppiness that the federal government has had relating to some serious DOE, Department of Energy, waste and so forth?

GARY JOHNSON: You hit on a couple things. There was a terrible fire in Los Alamos when I was Governor, and to the best of my ability, there was no radioactive materials subject to those fires. Yeah, there's been some real sloppiness, and I'd like to chalk up to just – a terrible excuse that we as

humankind just didn't know any better. We know better now, and I'd like to think that those practices are not being repeated and yet, for some of the things we're doing today, as humankind, I'm sure we'll look back and find actions today that qualify for that same "I can't believe this is what we did." You know, we do the best we can, and in that context Los Alamos has made some real mistakes, and of course we're paying the price now to clean that up, and we need to be cleaning that up. What I find interesting is that, I want to say that, when I took office there was an estimated cost for environmental clean up for all nuclear waste materials, and without any clean up taking place over the eight years that I was in office – without any clean up taking place – the estimates for clean up of those materials were reduced by almost two thirds because of new technologies and new ways to get it done. I always opted on the side of giving business that polluted, General Electric in Albuquerque one of those examples, the ability to embark on the clean up. And we dotted the i's, and crossed the t's, to an agreed-on plan with the state and General Electric down the road. But in the meantime, that they could actually go out and embark on cleaning it up, and of course the proof would be in the pudding: it's either clean or it's not clean. But let them embark on doing that, in an effort for them to save money and to fix the problem.

ANDREW GRIFFIN: Thank you, Governor.

GARY JOHNSON: Thank you.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Anyone else who hasn't had a chance to ask Governor Johnson a question, feel free to jump right in.

PETER ST CYR: Governor Johnson?

GARY JOHNSON: Yes.

PETER ST CYR: This is Peter St Cyr again, in New Mexico. Certainly, the labs in Los Alamos did not burn and although some of their land did, and what is being found is that uranium in the soil has now trickled into the water supply, and unfortunately the state's Environment and Health Department stopped voluntarily reporting those measurements to the CDC. Should there be required reporting from government agencies of what's really being found here?

GARY JOHNSON: I would think so. I'm not familiar with exactly what you're saying, Peter, I just know that in my administration, everything was transparent. There was nothing that – and by "everything was transparent," if we weren't providing transparency it was because we didn't have the data. But, yes, that data should be supplied, and in the case of Los Alamos, I hope what we're not talking about here, which I also saw oftentimes, was requests for data that was currently not being analyzed for release either. And yet, we do monitor groundwater around Los Alamos and the nuclear contaminants that do exist as a result of really slipshod disposal, decades and decades ago.

PETER ST CYR: I believe that you're in New York today, but along the border in Juarez, the drug cartels and violence there continues to escalate. Would changing drug laws affect the violence in some of those five Mexican states that are being rampaged by the drug cartels?

GARY JOHNSON: I am advocating – what I’m saying is – legalize marijuana and 75% of the border violence with Mexico goes away. I think we legalize marijuana, you might argue that 75% of the drug cartels activities are not engaged in the trade of marijuana, I think that we legalize marijuana and we just take giant steps toward this whole notion of looking at this drug problem first as a health issue rather than a criminal justice issue, and we really take giant steps with regard to the recognition that all of this border violence is Prohibition related. That’s the problem. These are disputes that are being played out with guns, rather than the courts. Twenty eight thousand deaths south of the border in the last four years. If we can’t connect the dots between prohibition and violence, I don’t know if we ever will.

PETER ST CYR: And prohibition seems to take shape by the federal government and local law enforcement agencies. I’m reading on a medical marijuana blog that eradication efforts, as always during the summer, are underway today across six California counties, and apparently they’ve seized 300,000 marijuana plants and it’s led to 77 arrests. Earlier this year, you’re aware, the US Attorneys in several states started sending out letters warning Governors and Attorney Generals that their states’ medical marijuana programs were in direct conflict with federal law. What are your predictions, and what are your feelings about what Obama had campaigned on during the 2008 election about, you know, maybe giving the states the right to have these kinds of medical marijuana laws?

GARY JOHNSON: I thought clearly that he stated that states would have the right to implement their own laws, so I see this as a direct conflict between his dialogue and the reality of drug policy in this country, which is as bad as it’s ever been

PETER ST CYR: Thank you.

GARY JOHNSON: Thanks.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: And, let’s get one more question, and then we’ll wrap up and let Governor Johnson get to his next appointment. And, if anyone on this call wanted to ask Governor Johnson a question and wasn’t able to, either because of time, or because of the weird “mute” thing, please send me an email at Blogs@GaryJohnson2012.com, and we’ll give you first priority on the next blogger conference call. So, anyone else who wants to jump right in and ask one more question?

KEVIN THOMPSON: I’ve got a question.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Okay.

KEVIN THOMPSON: Governor Johnson, this is Kevin Thompson again. I’ve got kind of a real soft ball question, but I think it’s an important question I try to ask every candidate I meet. Governor, in your view, explain to us what is the role of government in society, and where does government get its authority from?

GARY JOHNSON: Well, I think I touched on that – I hope I touched on that – earlier. Government has a role to protect you and I against individuals that would do us harm property harm or physical harm, and government has a role to protect you and I from – to protect our country from foreign aggression, from

military threats. Government has a role, in my opinion, to provide a level playing field that all of us can play in, that allows us to go from having nothing to having everything if we're willing to work hard and innovate. That's the problem today. I think government picks winners and losers, and we end up with corporatism that favors well connected individuals, groups, business, as opposed to affecting all of us equally.

KEVIN THOMPSON: Thank you, Governor.

GARY JOHNSON: Thanks.

JOSIAH SCHMIDT: Great questions, everybody. Like I said, if any of you did not get to ask Governor Johnson a question, just send me an email at Blogs@GaryJohnson2012.com, and we'll set up with first priority on the next blogger call, and if anybody wants a transcript, we will be making a transcript of the call available. I'll be sending a transcript out to everybody who RSVP'd, and if you don't get one, just send me an email at Blogs@GaryJohnson2012.com. I want to thank everybody for coming, and I hope you all have a great day. Thanks.

GARY JOHNSON: Great. Thank you all. Bye.

For any questions or issues, please email Josiah Schmidt at Blogs@GaryJohnson2012.com.

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