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On the Issues: Comparing the Presidential Candidates

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With just a few more days to the election, it seems appropriate to look at what the two main candidates’ opinions are. I will also, for the sake of completeness, review the opinions of the two third-party challengers, Jill Stein and Gary Johnson.

## Net Neutrality

Of course, my personal area of focus will always be technology, so it makes sense to look first at one of 2012’s big technology battles, “net neutrality,” or the idea that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) like Comcast should be unable to speed-up websites that pay them, and slow-down websites that don’t.

**Clinton:** She seems inclined to follow Obama’s lead in favoring strong net neutrality protections, writing in an op-ed for Quartz that she would work to protect net neutrality and to preempt “state laws that unfairly protect incumbent businesses.” The FCC has tried to overrule state laws protecting incumbent ISPs like Comcast, but the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in August that it does not have the federal authority to do so. Clinton would need congress to draft new legislation in order to effect this.

**Johnson**: In line with libertarians in general, he opposes net neutrality, although he has not spoken in depth on the issue. In a Reddit AMA, he wrote that he “abhor[s] legislation that would regulate the Internet. It doesn’t appear to me to be broken; I don’t want to fix it.”

**Stein:** She has not made a clear statement on net neutrality, but has argued against the “privatization of the internet.” The Green party as a whole tends to support net neutrality, so it is reasonably fair to say that she would as well.

**Trump:** He has not spoken extensively on net neutrality, but seems to believe (wrongly, I must insist on adding) that it would be a form of censorship, a way to “target conservative media.” To be clear, net neutrality would, if anything, protect conservative (and liberal) media from extortionist ISPs.

## College Funding

**Clinton**: Her college plan—molded, in many ways, by the plan advocated by Bernie Sanders—entails offering free college tuition at public state colleges for all students from families making less than $125,000.

**Johnson:** Advocates eliminating government student loans entirely, as he believes they are part of the reason for the rise in tuition. He has not indicated if he would support financial assistance for students who are then unable to attend college.

**Stein**: Like Clinton, would make public college education free. She has also promised to cancel existing college debt.

**Trump:** He has not released any college plan, nor can I find any concrete statements about college funding. His closest statement was in favor of abolishing the Department of Education, which seems to imply he would not favor federal funding of *any* form of education, preferring to privatize it entirely.

## Path to Citizenship

On immigration, three candidates are generally in alignment, favoring more lenient enforcement and an easier path to citizenship than current policy.

**Clinton:** She supports a full path to citizenship, and would stop deporting all unauthorized immigrants *except* for those who have committed violent crimes. She favors opening the ACA markets to unauthorized immigrants as well. Relatedly, in recently leaked (and unverified) speech transcripts, she endorsed “open borders.”

**Johnson**: He seems to align almost completely with Clinton, and was quoted in one interview, arguing that “there should be a pathway to citizenship, and there should be an embrace of immigration as something really good.”

**Stein:** She has consistently favored easier immigration for refugees and a path to citizenship for current undocumented immigrants, but seemingly desires to create an economic and foreign policy that would end the demand for immigration outright. In one interview she said, “People ask me 'what are you going to do about immigration?' I say we're going to stop causing it.”

**Trump:** He has staked his campaign on reducing illegal immigration and erecting a border wall. He would, according to his website, deport all current unauthorized immigrants “day one, in joint operations with local, state, and federal law enforcement.” He would also place additional restrictions on immigration, vetting “applicants to ensure they support America’s values, institutions and people, and temporarily suspend immigration from regions that export terrorism and where safe vetting cannot presently be ensured.”

## Police & Criminal Justice Reform

**Clinton:** She has advocated a $1billion investment in supporting new research and training to combat “implicit bias,” as well as funding “to make body cameras available to every police department in America.” She additionally favors ending mandatory minimums and rehabilitation over incarceration, and is against private prisons. (Private prisons, arguably, create a financial incentive to put people in jail. 2008’s “kids for cash” scandal is an example.)

**Johnson:** He favors marijuana legalization and the end to mandatory minimums. I am unable to find his positions on police reform, but the Libertarian party supports mandatory body cams. He supports private prisons.

**Stein:** She opposes mandatory minimums and private prisons, but I am unable to find any clear statements regarding police reform.

**Trump:** He has positioned himself as the “law and order” candidate, opposing the Obama administration’s “rollback of criminal enforcement.” On the matter of police body cameras, he has indicated that he would support federal funding but would not mandate them.