

Perspective

By Robert W. Peck

Blaming Third Parties for Major Party Losses Ignores the Elephant in the Room

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In the wake of Republican losses in the recent election, I ran across an article suggesting that third party candidates may have contributed to the defeat of some Republicans. Everyone's entitled to an opinion. However, to simply blame third parties and independents for major party losses is to miss a much bigger point.

First – third party and independent candidates very rarely take enough votes to be the deciding factor in an election. Even when a third party

candidate takes as many votes as the difference between the two major party candidates, the third party candidate's votes do not come exclusively from voters who would have all voted for the same major party candidate had the third party candidate not been in the race. Some who typically vote D will on occasion crossover to vote R, while an R might vote for a D under certain circumstances.

Then there's the 39 percent of the public who identify as independent (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/05/5-facts-about-americas-political-independents/>). Some of those people will vote for the D, some for the R, and some for a third party or independent candidate.

In a race where there is a third party candidate, if that candidate had not been in the race, most of the people voting for him probably would have voted for one major party candidate, with a smaller portion going to the other major party, and some simply would have chosen not to vote in that race, because neither of the major party candidates represented their values.

Therefore, for a third party or independent candidate to be the determining factor as to which major party candidate wins, the third party candidate would have to receive substantially more votes than the difference between the D and the R.

Secondly – on the extremely rare occasion that a third party candidate actually does receive enough of the votes that would have otherwise gone to a particular major party candidate so as to cause the major party candidate to lose, it proves that the major party candidate did not represent the values of a sufficient number of voters to deserve to win. Therefore, some of the voters chose instead to turn to a candidate who actually did represent their values and was deserving of their vote.

It should be remembered that votes belong to people, not parties. It is the job of parties and their candidates to earn the votes of the people. If they fail to do so, they deserve to lose. This is a fundamental principle of free-market economics

that conservatives profess to believe in, the idea that if a business does not produce the product that people want, it deserves to fail. That principle applies to political parties as well. Therefore, the defeat of a Republican candidate who did not faithfully represent the values of a sufficient number of their constituency should be lauded by conservatives as a victory for free-market ideals.

Finally – on the extraordinarily rare occasion when a major party does provide a candidate who represents the values of that party’s base, but a third party candidate with the same values runs anyway, and takes enough votes to cause the major party candidate to lose, it stands as proof that the major party has so betrayed their base for so long, that some of their base finally became alienated to the point they were unwilling to vote for an otherwise good candidate who was tarnished by the label of a party *that has earned their contempt!* With around two-thirds of all voters *disapproving* of both major parties (<https://www.newsmax.com/Politics/poll-voters-unhappy-democrats/2017/06/20/id/797081/>), it’s a wonder either of them wins any elections.

The elephant in the room that is ignored by blaming third parties for major party losses, is the fact that a third party representing the values of a constituency does not cause a major party to lose – a major party failing to represent the values of a constituency is what causes a major party to lose.

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