



Perhaps some of those who believed America was headed toward a “libertarian moment” are surprised by the steady decline of Gary Johnson’s support, or blame his gaffes and general demeanor of a distracted stoner for ruining a huge opportunity. But minor-party candidacies usually lose ground the closer one gets to an election, especially a relatively competitive two-party election where a “protest vote” seems unwise.

The fade itself is hard to doubt. In the RealClearPolitics polling averages, the Johnson-Weld ticket peaked at 9.2 percent on September 13. Now they are at 5.6 percent. Given the current trajectory, and the intensification of major-party campaigning, it appears likely Johnson will wind up with less than half of his peak support. It is also possible, though not likely, that Clinton will blow out to so large a lead in the last week or so that “wasted vote” fears will abate and the libertarians will stabilize or even re-grow their vote.

Truth is, a lot of the people who registered support for Gary Johnson back when he was flirting with double digits in the polls did not know much about him or the hoary cause of libertarianism. So one way to look at his supporters (and Jill Stein’s much smaller following) is as a subset of undecided voters. They, too, seem to be fading as Election Day approaches.

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