

Should We Care Who the #NeverTrumpers Vote For?

It's safe to say years from now when we look back on the incredible political culture-changing election of 2016, one of the major themes historians will re-examine is the grand battle between those conservatives and Republicans who supported Donald Trump versus those who didn't. The latter group has commonly become known as #NeverTrump.

There's no need to revisit the differences between the two sides today but the divide still runs deep and in many cases has gotten personal.

Two of #NeverTrump's leading figures revealed this week that they didn't vote for Trump in early absentee balloting. Up until now, it's been mere speculation as to whether the naysayers would actually go through with their pledges to ignore the names at the top of the ticket. Now that it's true (that they didn't support the party nominee), the question becomes, where do we go from here?

CNN reported that John Kasich's spokesman Chris Schrimpf said the Ohio governor penciled in John McCain's name at the top of his absentee ballot.

And on Wednesday morning leading #NeverTrumper Erick Erickson spilled the beans on his final choice. Writing in *The Resurgent*, Erickson said, "In addition to voting Johnny Isakson for the United States Senate, I voted Republican for president.

"Evan McMullin is the Republican in this race. He put his life at risk for his country in the CIA. He learned finance at Goldman Sachs. Then he worked for Republicans in the House of Representatives. Unlike either Hillary Clinton or her donor, Donald Trump, Evan McMullin is a real Republican and far more

conservative than either of the others.”

We don't really know anything about McMullin, of course, mostly because he didn't bother running in the party primaries where he would have been laughed off stage for his thin resume.

In the next section of his post Erickson once again labeled Trump an “immoral cretin.” The man just can't stop insulting Trump even though Erickson has admitted many times that he doesn't know the Republican nominee personally.

Erickson's made an awful lot of value judgments in the past six months that have been significantly off, often justifying them by bringing God into the conversation. I don't know whether it's sad or just strange. In any case, Erickson was wrong one more time in throwing away his vote on McMullin.

Not to toot my own horn, but I've been right in my elections forecasts a lot more than Erickson and the #NeverTrumpers this campaign season. While they said conservatives would reject Trump en masse after he won the nomination I predicted most Republicans and conservatives would eventually get on board with him out of practical necessity if for nothing else.

It's never made sense to not support Trump because that would mean the truly awful Hillary Clinton was one step closer to the White House and once there she'd do permanent damage that couldn't be undone even if Republicans managed to win in four years.

I also have been predicting for months that the polls would narrow as the election drew nearer and that late deciders, to the extent there are any, will go in favor of Trump.

That doesn't mean I'm forecasting a Trump victory next Tuesday. I'm now fairly confident the popular vote will go to Trump but the stubborn realities surrounding the Electoral College prevent me from guaranteeing he will prevail where it

counts.

Perhaps for this reason many of Trump's supporters are already declaring they've got long memories and will remember who was with us—and who wasn't.

Laura Ingraham wrote in Lifezette, "The Republican effort may or may not succeed. The good guys don't always win. Sometimes the odds are too great to overcome. But win or lose, everyone who has been a part of this cause—everyone who has spread the truth about the Clintons on social media, defended Trump against the attacks that were hideously unfair, knocked on doors, posted signs, prayed for the country or even just checked their favorite links day after day for the latest news—will remember who fought with them. Just as importantly, they'll remember who wanted them to lose.

"This experience, these battle scars, these 'war-time' memories, will have a major impact on the future of the Republican Party, and the history of the United States."

Yes indeed, these scars will have a major impact on the future. And people will remember influential Republicans like Kasich and Erickson wanting our side to lose. I'm guessing both of them would vehemently deny that a Trump "loss" is what they were hoping for, but the end result is the same.

When the rubber hit the road in 2016, these guys were off to the side somewhere complaining that the nominee chosen by Republican voters wasn't "fit" to lead the party. In Kasich's case, to do a write-in vote for amnesty-loving John McCain is just one more insult added to the pile.

All along Kasich disguised himself as the one who was "above the fray," the sane voice in a room filled with young Turks such as Marco Rubio and "wacko birds" (John McCain's term) like Ted Cruz. But now Kasich has been exposed as just another establishment hack who took his football and went home after the rest of the boys and girls wanted to play by different

rules.

And that's exactly how Kasich will be remembered. Even if Trump loses next week, there's no way Kasich would ever gain any traction in the 2020 Republican primary race. Too many people will remember his behavior from 2016. He's done. History. By voting for the 2008 Republican nominee, Kasich just cemented his name in the loser walk of fame—probably right next to McCain's boot prints.

As for Erickson, it's harder to tell what his future will look like. He's just a commentator and media personality so he's entitled to his opinions even if they're misguided. A lot will depend on how the #NeverTrumpers behave should Trump become president.

On the same day Erickson announced his vote for McMullin, fellow Resurgent writer Steve Berman provided a clue as to what #NeverTrump will do if Trump prevails. Berman wrote, "If Trump wins, we have a much larger opportunity for healing and unity within our party. It's better to have Trump in the White House with his wild-eyed, frothing cult members having to observe the decorum of the office than Clinton in the White House and Trump on the outside whipping up discontent in the media. How much better, we don't know, but it has to be better in some degree, nuclear war being the great equalizer (let's not go there). ... I think it's clear we have to move past that question and support him in office. If he wins, it was without us, but if he'll accept us, we should accept him as president."

It's probably the most reasonable thing I've ever seen Berman write. #NeverTrump *will* have to accept Trump as president—they don't really have a choice, after all. But people will still remember all the same.

Let's just hope the healing begins with Trump as president-elect on Nov. 9. The rest will come in due course.

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