

Still #NeverTrump? Austin Petersen Wants You to Get to Know Him Better

If you're still determined that you cannot vote for Donald Trump as the Republican presidential nominee, there's a candidate who would like to have a conversation with you.

Austin Petersen, a candidate for the Libertarian Party presidential nomination, posted a video to his Facebook account Tuesday evening shortly after U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) announced he was suspending his campaign. In that video, the CEO of Stonegait LLC—a multimedia production and consulting firm—makes his pitch for disgruntled conservatives' votes.

He thanked Cruz and his supporters for “sticking up for constitutionalism.” Stating he believes the 2016 election is now a battle between libertarianism and authoritarianism, he said that if he wins the Libertarian Party nomination, he would be “the only pro-life, pro-Constitution candidate on the ballot in all 50 states” in November.

Petersen first must win his party's nomination, and to do that, he must unseat the 2012 nominee, former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson, and a host of other candidates, including McAfee Inc. founder and CEO John McAfee. A recent poll conducted by A Libertarian Future, however, has Johnson and Petersen neck-and-neck at 38 and 37 percent, respectively, with McAfee trailing at 25 percent.

His campaign website features a 10-point platform:

- Taxes & Spending—“Reduce economic inequality by lowering barriers to entry in the marketplace, licensing, taxation, and fees. Urge congress to adopt the “Penny

Plan,” across the board spending cuts of 1 percent per program. Abolish the existing, complicated tax code that discriminates against the most productive Americans, and replace it with a simple, flat tax at the lowest rate necessary to support the core functions of government. Seek voluntary ways to fund public services where possible, lotteries, tolls, etc.”

- National Defense & Military—“Strengthen national security by reducing/ending foreign aid to nations hostile to the USA. Reconsider overseas troop deployments in areas not important to U.S. national security, and audit the Pentagon. Reform the Veteran’s Affairs administration. The American people have sacrificed enough blood and treasure in the Middle East. No more nation building. Obey the Constitution, and only go to war if it’s declared by Congress. Consider constitutional Letters of Marque and Reprisal to deal with terrorists.”
- Trade—“Lower barriers to trade with foreign nations, and allow American companies the leeway they need to develop domestic energy production, in order to create good-paying jobs at home.”
- Monetary Policy—“Audit the Federal Reserve first. End it through competition last. Institute a Monetary Commission devoted to studying the implications of replacing central banking with “Free Banking,” and abolishing laws of legal tender. Allow gold and silver to circulate as a currency, removing them from the commodity list, and make precious metal coins free of taxation. Let digital currencies compete against Federal Reserve notes.”
- Immigration—“Streamline our immigration system by following updated Ellis Island-styled protocols. Security check. Disease check. Done.”
- Constitutional Priorities—“Work with Congress to institute new protocols that will protect national security while placing the balance of weight towards due

process and individual rights. Rein in the NSA, and demand accountability in our security agencies so as to protect our 4th Amendment rights.”

- Crime & Punishment—“Reclassify the war on drugs as a medical problem, not a criminal problem. Deschedule all drugs at the federal level and end the federal War on Drugs once and for all.”
- Entitlement Reform—“Allow young people to opt out of Social Security.”
- Health Care—“Overturn Obamacare. Seek out market alternatives to problems of health and wellness.”
- Protecting Life—“Encourage a culture of life, and adoption, and educate Americans about the ‘consistent pro-life ethic,’ which also means abolishing the death penalty.”

While he may be attractive from a pro-life perspective, Petersen’s views on drugs probably are not. And while his website is silent on the issue of biblical marriage—you’ll soon see why—he’s personally said a lot on the subject.

“There’s no right to gay marriage,” he said in a Facebook post in April of last year. “There’s no right to straight marriage either. Why should my tax dollars go to pay to recognize your sick, twisted, hetero or homo relationship? Polygamy is the most traditional form of marriage and it should stay that way!”

During the Libertarian presidential debate hosted by Fox Business Network last month, his response was a little more neutral on the issue of marriage:

“I am happy when anyone finds love. It’s a private contract. Get the government out of it completely.”