

Democratic Primary Candidate Sam Johnson

<http://www.votesamjohnson.com>

The Red Ledger: President Trump has proposed building a wall on the U.S.- Mexican Border. What are your thoughts on this?

Sam Johnson: I don't think the wall is an effective tool. The problem with the wall has several parts. The first thing is no one I know of has said it will actually work, so when you're talking about spending that level of money on something generally not expected to even serve its purpose, that's fiscally irresponsible, not to mention the fact that Mexico is our largest trade partner. We should be working with them to increase that relationship for the benefit of Texans and for America, too. So it's harmful in that respect on a diplomatic level. And finally, the research I've read indicates that we can use technology for a lot less money and get a lot more bang for our buck, and so we should really be focusing on how else we can work to secure the border without having to build a monstrosity through people's property and spending billions of dollars in the process.

TRL: Regarding DACA, what is the scenario you would most like to win out?

SJ: For DACA, in particular, it would be immediate protection for anyone who comes forward as a Dreamer, because there are people who are already in the system, but there are a lot of Dreamers who are not. So what I would like to see is a system established where they're immediately protected from deportation, and then once they have that protection, we can start working through an expedited path to citizenship. A lot of Dreamers are the primary breadwinners in their household. They're dutiful residents who just want to support their families. My brother-in-law, for example, is a Dreamer. He was brought here from Honduras as a baby, and he's got a bachelor's degree, he's got a master's [degree] from TCU, he's taught at TCU, he's a brilliant artist, and he's the father of two of my nephews. He's a great guy. He's not someone who anybody benefits from sending him back to Honduras, which he doesn't even know. He has no memory of that country.

TRL: President Trump has threatened to cut federal funding from "sanctuary cities." What is your opinion of this, and of "sanctuary cities" in general?

SJ: I don't think that cutting funding from cities that are making local decisions is how they want to interact with their immigrant community. I don't think that's an appropriate tool. The fact of the matter is, a lot of the GOP leadership right now want to claim states' rights and local control until it doesn't benefit whatever discrimination it is that they're throwing around at the moment. So, I think it should be left up to the localities. Some communities, especially here in Texas, we know immigrants aren't a danger to our society as a group, so we can use our law enforcement resources elsewhere to stop people who actually are committing crimes and harming people, so I don't think that's a good idea.

TRL: What is your general stance on healthcare?

SJ: I think we need to get into a Medicare-for-all system. I think it's a matter of dignity and respect for our citizens, but that's something that's got to be deliberate and done over time and well-thought out and planned out. So for me, I think there are certain things that we need to do in the meantime, like making sure pharmaceutical companies are giving Americans the best price on medicine that they give other countries. We need to rein in health insurance contracts so that people who are paying their health insurance premiums are having their claims covered. What you'll see right now is, a lot of times, someone will have health insurance, but the insurance company will decide, "Oh, that procedure's not really necessary," or, "You don't really need that device," and so they won't cover it. For me, that's not appropriate, and it's a consumer protection. And then like I said, we need to get a Medicare-for-all system, but we've got to work with healthcare providers and hospital systems to get there because we have to make sure that that aspect of our economy is preserved. So many people are employed by the healthcare industry, and we can't ignore the economic impact of a fundamental change.

TRL: What is your general stance on abortion?

SJ: Honestly, I don't get into that topic because I don't think it's the place of anyone other than the patient and her doctor and her family that she chooses to bring into the situation to get into that. It's certainly not the place of the government to go into the exam room and start making medical decisions for people.

TRL: Texas has recently passed laws permitting the open carrying of firearms in public. What is your opinion of open carry?

SJ: I don't like open carry, and if you've read my website, I have a license to carry, and I do usually, but I always conceal carry. I don't think we need people walking around with guns on their hips. I have three young sons, and I don't like the idea of having to explain to them why someone is not a police officer but they're walking around with a gun on their belt. Even Justice Scalia, one of the most conservative Supreme Court justices in recent history, said in an opinion that the second amendment doesn't guarantee every American the right to carry whatever weapon they want wherever they want to, and I agree with him on that. As someone who has concealed carried for several years now, I've never once had to use it, so in my own personal experience, I think it very unlikely that that's going to be the one difference in if someone attacks you or not.

TRL: What is your general stance on student loans?

SJ: I worked full-time through college, and I worked through law school, too, and I still have six figure student debt that I'm carrying. So it's very personal to me, and to a lot of my friends, also. There's a couple of things I think we need to be doing. First off, I'm a big believer in free

community college for everybody in the community that wants to go get an associate's degree. I think we need to expand vocational training in our high schools so that people that don't want to go to college can enter the workforce with skills ready to go, without having to feel like they have to take on student debt just to be able to get a job that pays a decent wage. For people who are already in the repayment stage of their loan, like myself for example, and for future borrowers, I think we need a cap on the interest rate that borrowers can [be] charged, and I think we need to have it where at least half of every [payment that's made has to go toward the principal balance and not have most of each payment going towards interest. I read a study this week that indicates forgiving student debt would actually make an increase to the national GDP by over \$800 billion, and it's over a 10 year period, but that was the low end of the estimate. So that's something I think we need to look deeper into because it has a huge financial impact on people's personal lives, which leads to a huge impact on our economy as a whole.

TRL: What do you think are the most pressing issues regarding first-time voters?

SJ: Healthcare is a big one pretty much with every age group I talk to. Education and student debt is a big one, as well. Net neutrality is another one that seems to come up a lot, and the recent decision to undo the rules that were put in place under the Obama administration I personally don't think was a good move. I think the internet is an important source of knowledge for everybody, and it's a way to even the playing field in a way, and I think by allowing ISPs (Internet Service Providers) to commercialize what can be accessed is another way that we're perpetuating institutionalized racism and institutionalized classism, and I'm not a fan of those things.

TRL: What could draw Republicans to your campaign?

SJ: I'll start out by saying we've been out knocking on doors and making calls, and I've talked to Republicans. A lot of them feel abandoned by the GOP right now. They feel like it's not what they signed up for, and the party's abandoned a lot of their principles in favor of partisanship, and they're not a fan of that. I think they also see a lot of the GOP's policies right now are not good for business, and they're not good for our economy. So where I think my campaign is different is that I try to bring a common sense approach to everything, and that means coming up with policy ideas that everybody can get behind regardless of your party affiliation, and also being able to explain to Republicans from a tax perspective or an economic perspective why these policies are beneficial because usually that's terms that Republicans are thinking. They're thinking with their pocketbook, usually. And beyond that, I'm the candidate that carries a gun, and here in Texas, I think that's something a lot of Republicans can relate to that my opponents don't do.

TRL: What sets you apart from the other primary candidates?

SJ: A couple of things. We're all somewhat similar on the issues, we're all in the same party, so there's a base level of agreement. For me, it's a matter of experience. In my day job, I'm the only one who works regularly with federal law, reading federal statutes, and dealing with federal regulations and also using that aspect and just my general demeanor and personality to help people reach a resolution whether they're in a lawsuit against each other or whether I'm working on a business deal and you have people who are seeing things from different perspectives. Even though they're still trying to reach the same goal, they may have very different ideas of how to get there. So that's something I have done literally on a daily basis for 10 years now. The other thing is my advocacy is much more than my opponents'. I'm very active with the Anti-Defamation League, which is a civil rights organization, and I've been down in Austin the last three sessions lobbying my legislators and trying to make sure we don't pass laws that allow discrimination and unfair treatment of people, and lobbying for laws that are more inclusive and more respectful of other people. And I've done the same in Washington, and as far as I know, I'm the only one [who's] done those things. I've really been out in my community working for groups. Not only the demographic groups that I belong to, but also to fight for groups that I don't belong to— my neighbors, my friends, and even strangers here, and so I'm fighting for them too.

TRL: Do you think the November election will act as a sort of referendum on the current administration?

SJ: I think if Democrats win, especially here in our district, I think that will show a referendum on the current administration. If Senator Taylor, assuming that he's the Republican candidate, if he gets through, I think it's the opposite. I think it shows an approval by the citizens of the 3rd Congressional District, that they're OK with what they see in Washington right now. Mr. Taylor served our country, he's a veteran, he's fought for us, and I would never say anything disrespectful about him, but his policies and viewpoints, if you look at his voting history, line up a lot with what we see in Washington. So if he gets in office, I feel that's everybody approving of more of the same.