

Gray

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"Paul Ryan says that he presents the financial solution, but his proposal doesn't even balance the budget for 28 years," Gray said.

Libertarian proposals would stimulate the economy and create jobs, Gray said.

"You (students) have done everything right, and there are no jobs available (upon graduation). We need institutional change," he told the USD audience. "The major parties don't have a plan for the middle class. Obama hasn't instituted anything, and he's the president. Why not? Romney hasn't (offered anything) as well. They just nibble around the edges."

As part of their domestic policy, the Libertarians would also repeal federal health reform, end the war on drugs and allow states to decriminalize marijuana, he said. The party would greatly reduce the federal role in K-12 education — including No Child Left Behind, which Gray called "a boondoggle."

A Vietnam War veteran, Gray said he won the Combat Action Ribbon and is the only candidate on the three parties' presidential tickets with military experience. He said the U.S. has over-extended itself in military ventures around the world.

The Libertarians would withdraw immediately from Afghanistan.

"They say that we are withdrawing in 2014, but we need to get out now," he said. "I talked to a colonel who said, at this point, being over in Afghanistan is counter-productive. Afghans work together when foreigners try to come in and invade them from the outside. We have seen that before."

The Libertarians wouldn't launch U.S. military action as a first strike, Gray said.

"We wouldn't attack another country unless we were attacked first," he said. "Our military is put in harm's way around the world. We have to stop bringing our

troops home in a body bag or with limbs missing."

The Libertarians would close 80 percent of the overseas military bases, close the Guantanamo prison in Cuba and end drone surveillance over U.S. soil unless authorized with a warrant. They would also repeal the Patriot Act, which Gray described "as a direct frontal attack on our liberties."

To win the November election, the Libertarians must get out their message, Gray said. The key part is winning a spot in the upcoming presidential and vice-presidential debates, he said.

"You need to get us in the debates," he told the USD audience. "We can only do it with your support, with your emails and your tweets. Get us in the debates, and we will merit your vote."

With the Libertarians on stage, the debates will take on an entirely different character, Gray said.

"We will make the debates more interesting and more substantive," he said. "We will talk about issues that (the other parties) don't want to talk about."

If elected, Gray vowed to fight what he called a "dysfunctional Washington" with a "bipolar Congress."

"We will put in a coalition government for the good of the country and not their selfish interests," he said. "We would be Libertarian, but we would also have Republicans and Democrats."

During his talk, Gray outlined the details for other party proposals.

- For Social Security, recipients ages 50-70 would receive benefits under the current system, ages 35-50 would be allowed to opt out and use private investment, and those who are age 30 or less would be allowed to enter the private system immediately.

The Libertarians proposed selling much of the federal land — exempting national parks and forests — with the revenues put into a lock box to pay off Social Security obligations.

- Reform the Bureau of Indian Affairs and provide initiatives that would encourage self-sufficiency and break tribal dependency on the federal government. "The federal government should be a last resort, not the first resort," he said.

- Continue environmental protection laws.

Gray called the upcoming election a turning point in the nation's future.

"This battle is for the soul of the United States of America, for our freedoms and our liberties," he said. "If we continue with four more years forward from the past, I'm not sure it's salvageable financially, morally and from a (civil) rights standpoint."

A continuation of current policies for another four years "will push us over the cliff," Gray said.

"You students need to take it personally to protect your future," he said. "You are bankrupt as we

speak. Our generation made a mess of this, and your generation is paying for it. This affects you and your family for the rest of your life."

After Gray's speech, USD student Stephen Nielson of Pierre said he learned a great deal about the Libertarian philosophy.

"I came because I needed to hear a speaker for my speech class, but I was also interested in hearing what he had to say," Nielson said. "I found that I agreed with a number of the Libertarian

ideas. A lot of what he said makes sense."

Brad Omland, president of the USD College Libertarians, said Gray was anxious to visit the Vermillion campus. Omland hopes the appearance sparks a grass-roots interest in the party and its ideas.

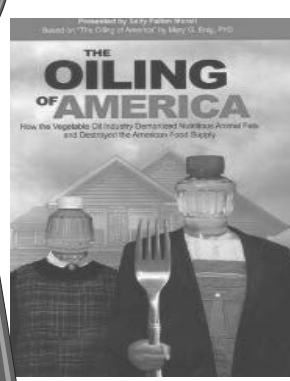
"I have identified myself as a Libertarian since 2007 when I campaigned for Ron Paul," Omland said. "I liked that (Gray) provided in-depth answers to major issues and didn't just give talking points." Omland remains optimistic

about the Libertarians' future.

"We are working to get in the (presidential) debates," he said. "We are also working to get our other candidates elected. We want to be part of the dialogue."

For more information on the Libertarian Party's presidential ticket, visit online at www.garyjohnson2012.com.


You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf



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