

Party Line, Nudge Nudge

August 30, 2018

I'm all for government transparency. But transparent *politicians*?

The office of New Mexico's Secretary of State sent out a press release, yesterday, announcing that Secretary Toulouse Oliver "is formatting the 2018 general election ballot to once again include the option for 'straight party' voting."

"The more options people have," Oliver is quoted for explanation, "the easier it is for more eligible voters to participate — and participation is the key to our democratic process."

This sounds all very nice and good. More options!

But hers was not a conscientious and noble adoption of a choice-promoting democratic notion.

"Pushing voters toward straight ticket voting is a worn-out staple of major party incumbents," says the candidate. . .

The whole point is to nudge voters to not consider a non-R/non-D alternative — perhaps especially in the state's contest for the U.S. Senate.

In which former New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson is making a not-longshot run.



As a Libertarian.

Though the Secretary of State's office pretends to be for democracy, I have trouble buying that Ms. Oliver's motives are non-partisan. Ditto Gary Johnson.

"Pushing voters toward straight ticket voting is a worn-out staple of major party incumbents," says the candidate, "and flies in the face of the reality that the great majority of voters are independent-minded and don't need or appreciate a ballot that provides a short-cut to partisanship."

It's a standard way to gain, as one Democratic State Senator put it, "partisan advantage in low-information elections."*

Matt Welch at *Reason* quotes ballot access expert Richard Winger to show how old a gimmick it is. It's been on its way out, actually (only nine states sport the "feature"), probably because . . . it's just so obvious a ploy.

Transparent.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

* *The partisanship is also not appreciated by the Republican Party of New Mexico, which is suing the Secretary of State.*