

LIBERTY PLEDGE

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newsletter

In '97, record number of Libertarians seek office

Election '97 is shaping up as the busiest off-year election ever in Libertarian Party history — with 158 candidates seeking office this November.

“Our records are a little sketchy, but this [appears to be] a record number of candidates running in an off-election year for us,” said Ron Crickenberger, LP National Director.

Libertarian candidates are running in 19 states, and are seeking a wide variety of offices — from minor local government positions, to state representative, all the way to Murray Sabrin’s campaign for governor in New Jersey.

Winning the gold medal for the most candidates is Pennsylvania, which has 53 Libertarians seeking office.

“By getting on the ballot in our cities, counties, and townships, we *earn* our place in the public debate,” said Tim Moir, State Chair of the Pennsylvania LP, explaining the state party’s strategy of focusing on local races.

Connecticut earned a silver medal for most candidates, with 32 Libertarians on the ballot.

Other states with large numbers of candidates include New Jersey (19), New York (10), Virginia (9), and Michigan (7).

Crickenberger said the party owes a big “thank you” to LP candidates, who he called “the true heroes” of the party.

And he had special thanks for two states: “Thank you to Pennsylvania and Connecticut . . . and in particular to Windham, Connecticut, which may be running the largest slate of candidates in *any* town in our history”— a whopping 21 candidates, he noted.

Sabrin qualifies for debate in NJ

It’s official: LP gubernatorial candidate Murray Sabrin has qualified to participate in the televised debates with his Republican and Democratic opponents.

On September 26th, Sabrin was notified by the Election Law Enforcement Commission that he had raised enough money to qualify for inclusion in the debates. He also received a check for \$322,791 in state matching funds. Sabrin will now participate in televised debates with incumbent Christie Todd Whitman and Democrat Jim McGreevey on October 21st and 24th. (C-SPAN coverage of at least one debate is expected, but not confirmed.)

“We’ve got tremendous momentum — and it’s continuing to build,” said Sabrin.

Pennsylvania LP fights back with ballot access reform bill

After a “near-death experience” with ballot access earlier this year — thanks to an almost-passed bill that would have *tripled* the state’s already restrictive election laws — the Libertarian Party of Pennsylvania decided to fight back.

So they formed an alliance of third parties, got a Republican State Representative to sponsor a new bill that rolls back ballot access barriers, and are mounting a lobbying offensive to try to get it passed.

The state LP organized a press conference in the state Capitol Rotunda in Harrisburg on September 23rd to introduce the “Voters Choice Act,” which would lower petition requirements for statewide ballot to one-tenth of one percent, down from the current 2%.

Libertarians stood side by side with representatives of five other parties — Green, Constitution, Reform, Prohibition, and No Pay Raise — to urge state legislators to reform restrictive election laws, which encourage “mistrust and apathy,” according to LP candidate Ken Krawchuk.

State Representative Todd Platts (R-York), who sponsored the legislation, said, “In the private sector, what do we do when we want a good product? We promote competition. Why should it be different in the electoral process?”

Platts filed his legislation in late September.

Pennsylvania LP State Chair Tim Moir acknowledged that it will be an uphill fight to pass the bill, but said, “When we win, the new ballot access requirements will allow us to spend less time collecting signatures, and more of our resources promoting our candidates and ideas.”

One advantage the legislation has, he said, is widespread media support for fair elections.

“While the media are not always friendly to the message of the Libertarian Party, on the issue of ballot access, they are unanimously on our side,” he said.

Political reporters who covered the press conference agreed that the Libertarian Party and its allies will need help: It was just four months ago that the state legislature voted to triple ballot access requirements. Thanks to an intense lobbying effort, Governor Tom Ridge vetoed the bill.

Now, having dodged that bullet, Moir is encouraging all state LP members to mount an all-out lobbying effort.

“The harder we work now, the sooner the members of the legislature and the governor will be willing to make Voter’s Choice a part of the law in Pennsylvania,” he said. “It’s a good fight for us to wage.”

Measure aids third-party candidates

By Frank Reeves

Post-Gazette Harrisburg Correspondent

HARRISBURG — Their ideologies range from free-market conservatism to a sort of benevolent socialism. But representatives of the Green, Libertarian, Reform, Constitutional and No Pay Raise parties put aside their differences yesterday to clamor for legislation that would make it easier for independent or third-party candidates to get on the ballot.

"Pennsylvania has one of the most restrictive election laws as far as ballot access. It's healthy to have third parties on the ballot. It brings new people and new ideas to the political process," said Peg Luksik, one of most successful third-party candidate ever for a statewide office in Pennsylvania. In 1994, she ran for governor on the Constitutional Party ticket and polled 460,269 votes, 13 percent of the total.

The Libertarians' Ken Krawchuk denounced current election laws,

saying they imposed onerous and unfair burdens on minor-party candidates.

"If a member of one of the two old parties wanted to run for, say, president or governor, they would need to collect 2,000 signatures, Krawchuk said. "But guess how many signatures the Libertarians would need to collect? Last year, we Libertarians had to collect not 2,000 signatures, but 24,000 signatures — over 12 times the number of signatures the two old parties required of themselves."

Such disparities "encourage the very real impression that the game is fixed, that the regular person stands no chance to end the nonsense," he said. "It encourages mistrust, apathy. It encourages politics as usual."

Independent parties are supporting the Voters' Choice Act, a measure that state Rep. Todd Platts, R-York, is sponsoring to make it easier for a group to qualify as a minor political party in Pennsylvania.

Under current law, a group wishing to qualify as a political party must register a number of voters equal to 15 percent of the combined statewide voter registration of all parties. But under Platts' proposal, they would need to register 1 percent of the total. Proponents said it would mean that a new party could be qualified with as few as 60,000 people registered, not the current 900,000.

To get on the ballot under current law, an independent statewide candidate would need nominating petitions signed by registered voters equivalent to 2 percent of the vote for the highest voter-getter in the previous statewide election.

But Platts' proposal would let statewide candidates obtain signatures of one-tenth of 1 percent of the total ballots cast in the prior statewide election. The bill also would mandate that a statewide candidate obtain at least 100 signatures in each of 100 counties.

Proponents said the signatures required on a third-party candidate's nominating petition would fall to 4,200 from about 24,800.

Platts acknowledged that he expected an uphill fight for his measure, which he hasn't introduced. It will require "educating" legislators of both major parties, who suspect that granting more ballot access to third-party candidates will jeopardize their own political careers.

Stephen Drachler, spokesman for House Majority Leader John Perzel, R-Philadelphia, said his boss opposed lowering the threshold for statewide candidates. "If you are on the ballot across the state, [Perzel] believes you should have minimal support all throughout Pennsylvania," Drachler said.

▲ *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, September 24, 1997

▼ *The Bennington Banner*, Bennington, Vermont, September 18, 1997

Bennington Libertarians hold first caucus

BENNINGTON — Local Libertarians caucused Tuesday night and for the first time in Bennington's history organized a Libertarian Town Committee.

"This is yet another sign of the explosive growth of America's most exciting political party," said newly elected Chair Anne Allen, a former three-term state legislator.

"When a majority of American voters stay home on election day, it is a sign that the old parties are no longer responding to the needs and desires of the people," she said in a prepared statement.

"The Libertarian Party offers a new hope to these disaffected voters. We are the party of liberty and freedom. The other par-

ties have nothing to offer but more peeking, poking and prying into every aspect of peoples' private lives and purses," she said.

"We have a short message: 'So long as we hurt no one else, leave us alone to get on with our lives as we see fit.' This is what we have repeatedly heard from people working in the mills, and walking down the streets, and from people everywhere in Bennington. And we have listened," said Allen.

During the two-hour meeting, the party members agreed that the committee would begin to watch the actions of local government and offer Libertarian solutions to governmental problems as they arise, Allen said.

Members felt that the process of building strength from the bottom up was the correct procedure for the party, she said. Members agreed that Bennington Libertarians should also concentrate on expanding the party base, not only in Bennington, but in adjoining towns and communities.

The question of Libertarian candidates for local office was also discussed, she said. The committee decided to look seriously at finding engaging and qualified Libertarians who would be willing to run in future elections.

THIS WEEK'S POLL

Libertarianism: An idea whose time has come?

New Jersey experienced a historical moment last week: For the first time in state history a third-party candidate qualified for matching campaign funds.

The candidate is Murray Sabrin, a 50-year-old Ramapo College finance professor who authored a book called "Tax Free 2000." Sabrin will get at least \$306,000 in matching state funds because he's raised and agreed to spend more than the required \$210,000 that makes a candidate "official" in the eyes of New Jersey's campaign finance law. The money will help Sabrin take to the airwaves in the race with Republican Gov. Christie Whitman and Democrat Jim McGreevey. And he gets a spot in two televised gubernatorial debates.

"We're going to run a very positive campaign on the issues, based upon our Libertarian solution to every single issue facing the people of New Jersey," said Sabrin.

Sabrin's success in raising the money shows the emergence of libertarianism as a political philosophy in America. It is a philosophy that has caught on with many Internet users and with young people all over America. But it challenges the principles espoused by both the Democratic and Republican parties.

Stripped to its basics, libertarianism calls for the absolute minimum amount of government. Sabrin last week took aim at Whitman on affirmative action — which is also supported by her Democratic opponent, Jim McGreevey — charging she is "trying to buy this election by spending millions upon millions of taxpayer dollars on affirmative action programs that hire unqualified or overpriced individuals and companies."

Sabrin calls for budget cuts of perhaps \$2 billion in his first year. Libertarians oppose income and sales taxes. He wants to deregulate the insurance industry, end gun laws, and eventually shift child protection agencies from

the state to nonprofit agencies.

Libertarians also call for an end to such programs as Social Security and Medicare.

"We will show the people of New Jersey that a Libertarian government is a government that will benefit them with low auto insurance rates, lower taxes, lower government spending, less regulation, a better life for all the people of the state of New Jersey, and the opportunity to implement what the Founding Fathers envisioned for this country," Sabrin said.

To find out more about Sabrin's positions, check out the web site of the New Jersey Libertarian Party at [http://www.eclipse.net/\(tilde\)dimona/index.html](http://www.eclipse.net/(tilde)dimona/index.html). Also, check out the national Libertarian Party's web site at <http://www.rahul.net/lp/>.

www.rahul.net/lp/.

Then let us know what you think. Are the Libertarians the wave of the future? Or are they just fringe idealists with ideas that would plunge New Jersey into another Stone Age?

To take part in the Interact poll, access New Jersey Online at <http://www.nj.com> and click on "Forums." Or access Interact directly at <http://www.nj.com/interact>. If you don't have an online connection, you can also respond by regular mail. Please send to Reader Forum, The Star-Ledger, 1 Star-Ledger Plaza, Newark, N.J. 07102.

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► *The Star-Ledger*
Newark, NJ
Sept. 28, 1997

▼ *The Asbury Park Press*
Neptune, NJ Sept.
24, 1997



PHOTO BY JACK S. KANTHAL

Murray Sabrin speaks last week at a Trenton rally of classic car owners opposing the state's new program for auto emissions testing.

When Murray Sabrin, the Libertarian candidate for governor, won state matching funds for his campaign, plus the right to debate the two major-party candidates on television, he said it was a great day for democracy in New Jersey.

This was one time that a political candidate spoke simple truth.

The outcome last week was not fore-ordained, nor did it happen by chance.

It is a little-appreciated virtue of the politics and government of New Jersey that the system

works to encourage participation and inclusion. It differs from New York, where ancient, punctiliously implemented laws are used to squelch challenges.

Getting Sabrin qualified took some doing. State election laws required gubernatorial candidates to raise and spend at least \$210,000 by Sept. 2 to qualify for matching funds. There was no question he had raised that much, and more. But there was a question as to whether he had spent it.

He said he had. He had not actually handed out the money. Nor had he signed contracts with television stations to broadcast commer-



JAMES AHEARN

An outsider comes in

Matching funds for Libertarian show system is inclusive

cial, nor made other firm commitments, as the Election Law Enforcement Commission had required of candidates in years gone by. Sabrin contended that he had met the requirement with a verbal commitment to buy television and radio time through a media consultant.

I will lay you odds that if this little drama had played out on the other side of the Hudson, it would have been a farce. The reviewing authorities would have concluded, with regret of course, that their hands were tied, the law was specific, the candidate had not met the requirement, there was no two ways about it, bang, end of case.

No third-party candidate had ever qualified in New Jersey for state matching funds for a gubernatorial election. No matter. As soon as it became clear that someone had finally raised enough money to satisfy that part of the law, the state system was just not going to deny him his day in the sun.

If necessary, the state Supreme Court would see to that. It may have its faults, but our Supreme Court is not one to let niggling

legal verbiage thwart democratic principles. As things turned out, the court did not have to get involved.

Beatrice S. Tylutki got the first crack at the issue. She is an old Trenton hand. Brendan Byrne named her an administrative law judge, and she was reappointed by successive governors, most recently by Whitman.

Tylutki has intestinal fortitude. In 1993 she ruled that Jim Florio's re-election campaign should pay a fine of \$10,500 for spending money on the general election earlier than allowed by law. The Election Law Enforcement Commission reduced the fine to \$2,500.

When the Sabrin case reached her, it was accompanied by a staff recommendation that she rule against the candidate. The staff said the spending requirement was clear and inflexible. Tylutki made short work of that. The law gives the commission the power to relax requirements "in the interests of justice," she said, and this was such a matter.

The broad purpose of the law is to enable persons with limited funds to run for office,

she noted. If the Libertarian candidate had not complied with the strict letter of the law, it was partly due to lack of experience. She held that Sabrin was entitled to state matching funds, about \$306,000.

Next up was the four-member commission, chaired by Ralph V. Martin, a Republican and formerly a Superior Court judge in Passaic County. The commission had a little trouble with Tylutki's airy dismissal of the statutory detail, although it agreed with her conclusion. The panel devised a somewhat different solution. It said that Sabrin had actually complied, in substance, with the law.

So, on with the election campaign, and with the debates.

Just what effect Sabrin, a Ramapo college professor, is going to have on the election, nobody really knows. Democratic spinmeisters contend publicly that he will hurt Whitman. Republicans say he will hurt Jim McGreevey. Voters who take the time to really look at the Libertarian candidate are going to scratch their heads.

He favors things that the right wing of the

Republican party can only dream of — abolishing welfare and food stamps and housing subsidies for the poor, repealing the state income tax and the sales tax, ending all affirmative action programs and letting people own assault rifles and carry concealed weapons.

But there's more. He wants to legalize drugs. He would deregulate the automobile insurance industry. Insurers could charge whatever they wanted, in a competitive free market in which motorists would also pick and choose. He would abolish the state Department of Education. He favors vouchers to let parents send children to private schools at public expense.

Taken all in all, it is pretty wild. He has no chance of winning the election, although he puts up a brave front. But he can accomplish something, if there is more to him than a name and a cause. He can initiate dialogues on some of these matters, on which discussion is now frozen within politically correct limits.

Hey, he can say, if prohibition is such a great way to deal with crack and heroin, how come it isn't working? If insurance companies are making a killing on New Jersey motorists, how come more companies aren't pushing to get into the business? It might be instructive. It might even be fun.

□ James Ahearn is a veteran observer of the New Jersey and national political scenes and a former newspaper executive.

For the books

"Please take me off your e-mail list immediately," Doris Quinn writes in a letter to the Libertarian Party in Washington. "As far as I can tell, I think I got onto your e-mail list because of a computer error. I'm a *librarian*, not a Libertarian."

▲ *The Washington Times*
Washington DC, September 18, 1997

► *The Rutland Herald*
Rutland, Vermont, August 14, 1997

▼ *The Blade*
Toledo, Ohio, September 3, 1997

Vermont Libertarian Party: Our candidates will not be bound by Vermont's campaign finance act

The Vermont Libertarian Party's State Committee resolved on August 8, 1997, that the limitations on campaign expenditures in Vermont's new campaign finance act (Act 64) are "egregiously unconstitutional," and that the Party will not consider its candidates to be bound by them.

The act establishes strict limits on campaign expenditures, even on those who do not accept government funding for their campaigns. In direct violation of U.S. court decisions, the Vermont act explicitly limits the expenditures of even those who use their own personal funds for their campaigns.

What this means is that a free Vermont citizen will be breaking the law and will be liable for stiff penalties if, in seeking election as (for example) a state representative,

he takes out an ad that costs over \$2000 (the maximum campaign expenditure allowed to candidates for state representative), or if he spends over \$2000 in gasoline or telephone bills in contacting voters. The law also lowers total allowable donations to a candidate from any single source. (In the case of state representative it is lowered from \$1000 to \$200). But donations to political parties are not limited, and large parties which run more than six candidates are not limited in the expenditures they make in the general support of their party. However, small parties that run six or fewer candidates will be deemed to have spent such funds specifically for their candidates and will be subject to the new law's limitations on campaign expenditures.

"The law is a blatant attack on a citizen's freedom to speak out on his or her own behalf in seeking the support of fellow citizens in the political arena," said Vermont Libertarian Party state Chairman Christopher Costanzo. "It is also an obvious attempt to stifle independent candidates and small parties under the hypocritical guise of reform and political openness," Costanzo added.

A number of Vermont legislators have admitted that the new law goes against federal court rulings. Even Governor Dean, upon signing the bill into law, said as much, but expressed his hope that the U.S. Supreme Court would "change its mind." Party Chair Costanzo commented that he is "shocked that legislators who have taken an oath to support and defend the Constitution would so ruthlessly and openly ignore it in the pursuit of political expediency and self interest."

Costanzo has discussed the new law with Ms. Leslie Williamson, head of the Vermont Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). According to Ms. Williamson, the ACLU also considers the law unconstitutional, and is studying the best way to proceed against it. "We wish the ACLU success in its effort and we are confident that this law will be overturned," Costanzo said. "At the same time," he added, "we are saddened that the dominant elements of the Vermont legislature will be held up to national scorn for their unconscionable and self-serving attack on liberty and democracy."

candidates and passage of the .75 per cent city income tax renewal that will appear on the Sept. 9 primary election ballot.

The biggest offender by far, they said, was Louis Escobar, an endorsed Democratic at-large council candidate. The Libertarians confiscated 118 of his signs.

They collected 17 signs from the campaign of unendorsed Democrat Fred Kutz, 16 signs from the campaign of endorsed Republican at-large candidate George Sarantou, and 12 signs from endorsed Democratic at-large candidate Polly Taylor.

On the Campaign
Trail

Taking their credo to heart that government should do less and private citizens should do more to make society work, a group of local Libertarians canvassed the city Monday, collecting what they said were illegally placed campaign signs.

That evening, they dropped off 246 signs of varying sizes at Toledo police headquarters downtown.

"These were all on public property, and there are a lot more," said Tom Berkebile, Libertarian candidate for council District 6.

Thad Wineinger, Libertarian candidate for an at-large seat on council, said they decided to collect the signs after requests that the city do it were rebuffed.

"We called them and told them we wanted them to come out and clean 'em up, but they said they wouldn't," he said. "We wanted to show Toledo all the candidates who want to make laws but [who] are breaking laws all the time."

Stephen Herwat, commissioner of building inspection, said he "did not have a conversation with the Libertarians" last week, but he said he was happy to hear of their sign collection efforts.

"Whatever assistance we can get to remove illegal signs is appreciated," he said.

City ordinance prohibits political candidates from placing signs on or above public rights of way. Mr. Herwat is charged with enforcing the ordinance.

The Libertarians collected signs promoting 19