

LIBERTY PLEDGE newsletter

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The Libertarian Party of Ohio Wins Victory for Ballot Access

The Libertarian Party is constantly fighting an uphill battle for ballot access. It is unjust in a democracy for any political party to have such expensive barriers to ballot access, but this is the reality of our political system: many citizens are denied the choice to vote Libertarian. The Ohio Libertarian Party has heroically fought its state's notoriously difficult ballot access regulations, to become the only minor party in Ohio to gain ballot access in the last thirty years.

Ohio election law had required that minor parties submit petitions totaling one percent of the votes for governor or president in the previous election 120 days before the primary. This meant that to be on the ballot the LPO had to submit 32,290 valid signatures by November 3rd, 2003, a whole year before the election! The Ohio Libertarian Party vigorously utilized every resource it could muster and collected over 60,000 raw petitions (to account for invalid signatures) a truly amazing feat. Yet the former Secretary of State, Kenneth Blackwell rejected the petitions (after the due date had already passed) because they did not include the correct election falsification notice; apparently the LPO had not been using the newest petition form. This resulted in the Libertarian state and local candidates being prohibited from appearing on the ballot for the 2004 general election.

This nullification of their tedious efforts was simply too much for the LPO to accept, so they turned to the courts for justice. The LPO raised funds from its supporters and filed a law suit against Sec. Kenneth Blackwell. Initially, their cries of constitutional infringement were rejected, but they persevered. With the invaluable guidance of

ballot access guru, Richard Winger, the LPO won its case in the sixth circuit court of appeals, thus transferring the LPO's legal expenses to the State of Ohio. The LPO's adamant persistence paid off!

The Court decided that the exorbitant petition requirement and early due date were unconstitutional, saying in the court's opinion that such a requirement, "imposes an unconstitutional burden on its [LPO's] First and Fourteenth Amendment Rights of Free Association, by effectively preventing it from gaining access to the general election ballot in the twelve months preceding a presidential election." Thus the unjust ballot access law was declared void and the Libertarian Party of Ohio got the chance it deserves.

To address this void in election law, during the interim of the state assembly making a new law, the new Secretary of State, Jennifer Brunner created a new directive. The directive requires the LPO to collect signatures totaling 0.5% of the votes cast for governor in 2006, which is 20,114 signatures, by 100 days before the primary. The result is the LPO must collect 35,000 signatures (to account for invalid ones) by November 26, 2007. The LPO plans to collect half of the signatures with volunteers, but must raise about \$35,000 for professional petition circulators to get the other half.

The LPO is very excited about this new opportunity for ballot access. They have about a dozen candidates running in winnable races. If you want to support the LPO in their efforts call Mike Johnson at (614) 804-8644 or mail: 2586 Tiller Lane, 2K, Columbus, OH 43231. We thank the LPO for its dedicated efforts; they have truly made a difference for the Libertarian Party and Ohio voters.

Dick Cheney: Disregarding the Constitution

In conflict with the original intent of our founding fathers, politicians have been expanding government for centuries. The executive branch is especially notorious for claiming unprecedented powers and privileges, but no vice president has extended his authority to the overbearing extent that Dick Cheney has. The audacity of Cheney's recent claim that his office is exempt from disclosure requirements because it is not part of the executive branch is insulting to the concept of checks and balances, the great American protection of the people from their government.

The founders intended the vice president to hold a ceremonial position, serving as substitute in case of presidential absence and tie-vote in the senate. Cheney has made it his mission to expand this role to become top advisor to the president, always present at President Bush's daily briefings. Cheney has especially great influence on energy policy, the war on terror, and appointments. He is also the man responsible for the secretive creation and signing of the executive order that allows the unlimited detainment of suspected terrorists without any kind of trial. Cheney has shamelessly fought to increase executive power.

Transparency of government is essential to enable the people to monitor politicians and make educated votes. Dick Cheney is famous for his extreme secrecy. According to the Washington Post, "Cheney declines to disclose the names or even the size of his staff, generally releases no public calendar and ordered the Secret Service to destroy his visitor logs." Cheney even created his own classification for his office's documents, "Treated As: Top Secret/SCI" implying that documents do not actually need to be Top Secret/SCI for Cheney to treat them as such. In 2001 Cheney, who was chairman of Halliburton, used his executive privilege to deny congress information about the activities of his energy task force. Apparently it was convenient for Cheney to belong to the executive branch at that time.

By executive order, the Information Security Oversight Office of the National Archives collects classified documents from executive agencies

and then classifies or declassifies them. Cheney has refused to comply with the executive order and disclose his office's documents for the last four years. Even more tyrannical, according to Rep. Henry Waxman, Cheney unsuccessfully attempted to close the office of the National Archives that requested his documents.

Cheney claimed that because he is President of the Senate, he is not a member of the executive branch and is thus exempt from the executive order. However, Cheney's office is funded as part of the executive branch and does not undergo the regulations of legislative offices. Certainly the Vice President is not in a branch of his own, after all, the Constitution only mentions three branches of government.



At a time when the President refuses to disclose information requested by Congress about his warrantless wiretapping program or the political firings of federal prosecutors and the Vice President openly claims exemption from the law, one is reminded of the Nixon era. An era the American people thought was in the past, corrected by limits on executive power like the War Powers Act and increased legislative oversight. Has the lesson been forgotten? It is important to remember that even in times of heightened national security, unrestrained government threatens everything America fights to defend.

Transparency of government must be enforced so that the people can check their government. It is a fundamental requirement of democracy that no person be above the law. We are disappointed by the flagrant arrogance of Vice President Cheney for disregarding these principles. The Libertarian Party opposes the Bush administration's encroachment on constitutional rights. We ask that you, as a true American patriot, express your disapproval of such acts at the ballot, because they are a disgrace to that which makes America the great country it is: liberty.

Party Influence Starts at the Local Level

Ideas on How You Can Help

Often Libertarians think the only way they can further the Libertarian Party is by donating money. Though donating money is an essential and effective way to help the LP, there are many other ways to promote Libertarianism in your community. In fact, Libertarians around the country are using innovative techniques to promote the party's mission of smaller government, lower taxes and more freedom.

Mark Augustyn and Mark Solomon, owners of the Web site thinkLibertarian.com, were active this past May with a fundraiser for the Libertarian Party of Georgia. These two Libertarians sponsored a five-band concert with all proceeds going towards the LPGA. The concert had over 100 attendees and raised \$1,000, while spreading the message of Libertarianism in an entertaining way. "Music is a great vehicle for raising awareness about social and political issues," says Augustyn. "We've tapped into that. [We] have learned how to organize such events, and are looking forward to doing more events to raise money for freedom-related causes and organizations."

Hosting rock and roll fundraisers isn't the only way you can increase awareness for your party. The Libertarian Party of Texas has decided that in order to be influential and united in a state as large as Texas, it will be going on the road for two months holding events and giving speeches to try to enliven support for the party.

Attending state legislative hearings and city council meetings is a democratic way for Libertarians to directly influence government, as shown by the following interview about the Libertarian Party of Montana's lobbying efforts.

Welcome to the Liberty Pledge Club!

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| Melvin Aber | Michelle Goheen | Jeremy Nikel |
| Daniel Adams | William Grisham | Ville Peltonen |
| Troy Adcox | Michelle Gurecki | Carter Pennington |
| Dennis Ahmer | Owen Handle | William Pilgrim |
| Cherie Bennett | David Harvard | John Ratti |
| Pete Bowen | John Hermansen | Robert Ryan |
| Robert Ciccone | Benjamin Jasper | Christopher Sargent |
| Martin Coalson | David Klein | Wallace Sneddon |
| Michael Couture | Grant Kuphall | Christopher Speaker |
| Frank Davis | Geoffrey Latulippe | Diana Stinnett |
| Karl Dickey | Stuart Light | Kevin Takenaga |
| Anne Engelhardt | Robert McBrady | Terrence Thomas |
| Craig Engstrom | Randy McDonald | Trent Turner |
| Cory Frenkel | Robert McDonnell | James Vogel |
| June Genis | Bradley McGaughey | Randy Vulcan |
| Anthony Glenn | Jeffery Moon | Stephen Worden |

Thank you for your generous support!

Interview with Mike Fellows, Chairman of the MTLP

The following is an interview by Andrew Davis with Mike Fellows, chairman of the Montana Libertarian Party. This past legislative year, the MTLP was active in vocalizing their opinion on several pieces of legislation that passed through the Montana congress. The MTLP's work in creating a Libertarian influence in the legislative process should serve as a template for other state parties to follow.

Pledge News: Why do you feel it is important to voice your opinions?

Mike Fellows: There are plenty of committee hearings in which people don't show up to give a pro or con speech on certain legislation. Change comes from people who show up. Home-schoolers showed up on a bill that would have brought more regulations from the state. That legislation was tabled the same day.

We gave our support for not implementing the REAL ID ACT. There was no opposition to that bill. Legislatures need to hear from people back home, and it's better to be there in person, with letters and phone calls second, and e-mails third.

People don't always know when legislation gets passed before it's too late. That's why it's important to voice your opinion.

PN: Do you think you had an impact?

MF: I do think on certain issues we had an impact. We spoke against one of three 'local options tax' bills in the Senate Taxation Committee. All three bills failed to make it out of committee. It was the working folks against the Mayors and Cities. The make-up of committees also helps, when legislators learn your way on the issues.

The budget starts in the House and usually it's House Bill 2. This legislative session, the Republican led House, broke up House Bill 2 into separate bills. This led to individual appropriations being looked at by the House Appropriations Committee.

I heard from many on the committee who were going to vote against most of these spend-

ing measures, but appreciated folks like us speaking against increased spending. It seems a bit harder when only supporters show up.

PN: Is this something all state parties should be doing?

MF: There are other state parties that do this, and I think others should be looking at this as well.

PN: Do you feel this is an effective measure at expanding the Libertarian voice in state politics, even where Libertarian candidates are not elected?

MF: This approach allows us to get our views out to those in the legislature. If we do our homework and present a good argument, we may get some good public relations from the media. It also shows that we are getting involved in the process, and we can hope that when some legislatures get frustrated with their own party, they may look at the LP in a more serious light.

PN: What is some advice for other parties that may want to start this?

MF: Colorado has a person who keeps track of legislation. Our bylaws have the chair as spokesperson, so I always feel I need to drop in on Helena as much as I can. Election issues are always important, as changes may affect the MTLP. Montana also has open hearings, so people wanting to comment can sign in and speak before the committee. Most bill drafts and legislation are On-line so we can see what kinds of bills we support or oppose; other states have this as well.

It's probably best to have a small committee looking at bills and deciding which to support or defeat. It's also important to get the word out to members and the public. As chief cook and bottle washer, I can always do better at communication. I'm sure other state parties have some good suggestions. A media coordinator may be a good place to start. Small states like ours usually have a few people doing the work of many.