
Historical Preservation Committee Report

Report Date: 6 August 2019 (for EC meeting of 10 August 2019)

Appointed by: LPC Chair

Chair: Joe Dehn

Other Members: Gail Lightfoot, Jon Prosser, Kevin Shaw

Executive Overview

Information about HPC projects is recorded and made available to all LPC members and the general public via our page on LPedia:

https://lpedia.org/Libertarian_Party_of_California_Historical_Preservation_Committee

In addition, committee members communicate via e-mail. We have not had any in-person or phone meetings since our last report.

One member, Bill Hajdu, has resigned, citing lack of time due to work he is doing on a book. This leaves one vacancy, which the LPC Chair tells me she is working to fill.

State Newsletter Project

We have made significant progress on this project. Of the hardcopy issues we currently have available to scan, all remaining issues in 8.5x11 format have now been scanned and uploaded to LPedia.

As previously reported, a significant obstacle to scanning several of the newsletters has been the fact that they were published in tabloid format. Fortunately, the national HPC has a large scanning job about to be done by a commercial scanning service that is able to handle such material. So we shipped a good-sized stack of issues that we had in that format to Colorado to be included in that job, and I expect that some time in the next month or so we will be receiving PDFs of all those issues, which we will then upload.

There remain a few missing issues for several of the newsletters (some of which may not have ever actually been published, but others we know were published and we just don't have a copy). If and when we run across copies of these, we will add them to the collection. But once the tabloids and a few other issues that were printed in 8.5x14 format have been uploaded the result will be an online collection that includes about 95% of all the issues of state newsletters published by the LPC between 1982 and 2009 (when it appears that publication of hardcopy newsletters at the state level ended).

The biggest remaining component of this project is locating copies that can be easily scanned of the newsletters prior to 1982 – primarily “Caliber”. We know of copies of most issues located in at least one library, but it would be much better to have our own copies to work from, and we would be happy to hear from anybody who has a set they would be willing to donate.

Local Volunteers/Sources

We continue to be on the lookout for people who can help us collect and organize material relating to county/region/local organizations and activities. The county/region organizations have always been an integral part of the LPC and they are where most of the interesting activity, including political organizing for campaigns and other projects, has taken place.

We could use help from local people in two ways: (1) as volunteers willing to work on organizing and uploading material and information relating to their own area, and (2) as sources of material that they may personally have kept or that they can help us locate. Ideally, for every local area there would be somebody enthusiastically working on these sorts of things, in the same way that we are working on California generally and that the national HPC is working on things nationwide. Unfortunately, reality is nothing like that.

Meanwhile, with much of the work we can do on uploading state newsletters having been done, we are now considering how we can approach the newsletters that were published by county/region organizations. We have started to construct a list of them, and if we can find reasonably complete sets we will go ahead and start scanning them even if no local volunteer can be found to work on anything else relating to that area.

Extracting Information From Newsletters

While having both state and local newsletters available for everyone to see and read is of value for its own sake, we also intend to make use of them as a source of data to be presented in other forms. We have already done a bit of that as we happen to run across things, but now that we have a mostly complete collection of state newsletters spanning almost 30 years we plan to start being more systematic about it. Kinds of information we will be gathering include: county/region officers/contacts, candidates for local offices, Libertarians in public office (elected or appointed), and LP positions on ballot measures.

Any information we can gather in this way about people who were active in the past may also help us find additional sources of local material. Even if somebody is no longer active, they may have kept material relating to a local organization or campaign, and if we can find contact information for them some other way we may be able to reach them.

Membership Data

As noted in previous reports, our records of the number of central committee members (or dues-paying members) over time are very incomplete. Hopefully this won't be a problem going forward, since the most recent three LPC Secretaries have been generating and distributing reports regularly. And for some past periods it is likely that the numbers were reported at the time, and we just haven't come across those reports yet. We have, however, been able to update the graph we had on display at the state convention with a *few* more data points, gathered from newsletters and other sources. Also, for a few periods where we have a separate series of counts for both central committee members and total donors, the graph has been updated to show both values. The updated version can be found in the LPedia article "Libertarian Party of California Membership History".

Other Sources of Records

There are *many* other kinds of records that would be useful for creating a more complete history of the LP in California. An outline of the sorts of things we would find of interest is included on our committee page, and members of the committee continue to be on the lookout for people willing to share them with us.

A notable example of this is a set of material contributed by long-time activist Bill White. While the total amount of material he was able provide was small, it included some interesting documents relating to early state conventions, including a copy of the registration list for the very first state convention! We have also been able to make use of this material to fill in basic information about a number of conventions. As a result, LPedia now includes information about the specific weekend and location (hotel or other venue) for all of our past state conventions.

In addition to continuing to remind current members that we are interested in this sort of material, it is also possible that there are people no longer active with the party – or relatives of people who were active in the party – who have material in their possession that would be of interest to us but who cannot be reached through any regular communication channel operated by the party. The national HPC is experimenting with putting advertisements on craigslist; if that works we may find that or some other advertising channel which reaches the general public at zero or very low cost useful for our efforts here in California as well.
