

LIBERTY PLEDGE

NEWSLETTER

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July 2013

Libertarians mount Independence Day protest against NSA, Prism surveillance

By Julie Ershadi

From The College Fix

Published on July 5, 2013

Disgruntled citizens from around the nation's capital gathered on Independence Day to rally against the U.S. government's domestic surveillance practices at a protest inspired by recent revelations of the breadth of these programs.

"The abuse of power isn't the problem," Carla Howell, executive director of the Libertarian Party, told a crowd in downtown Washington, D.C.'s McPherson Square. "The problem is the power to abuse."

The Libertarian Party was an official sponsor of Thursday's Restore The Fourth protests, Howell said. Besides the one in Washington, Restore The Fourth saw events take place in cities around the country, including New York, Denver, Los Angeles, and Chicago, according to the organizers' website.

Howell and a roster of other speakers decried the National Security Agency's now notorious PRISM program, the use of drones for domestic surveillance, and the FBI's warrantless searches and seizures, among other alleged abuses. By turns, they commended whistle-blowers, including Edward Snowden, who have revealed what Thursday's crowd viewed as violations of the Constitution's Bill of Rights.

CodePink co-founder Medea Benjamin, who was arrested last week at a White House protest against the Guantanamo Bay



detention camp, invited the crowd to send letters to Bradley Manning and attend his trial, in which he is being tried for multiple crimes after releasing government secrets to WikiLeaks in 2010.

She was seen later chatting with Thomas Drake, an earlier NSA whistle-blower who also spoke at the event.

"It's very encouraging to know that we're having rallies all over the country. It's about time — I mean, my gosh," Drake told The College Fix. "We have to shake the tree of liberty, and that's what's happening right now."

Protesters came from around the region to demonstrate on Thursday, some carrying signs and wearing Guy Fawkes masks. When helicopters flew overhead, eyes turned upwards, but police presence was low and no arrests were observed.

Snowden should be given the Medal of Freedom

Letter to the Editor,
Portsmouth Herald

Published on July 11, 2013

Despite ongoing efforts by the two major political parties and the mainstream media to paint whistleblower Edward Snowden as a traitor, a recent unscientific poll by Business Insider shows that 72 percent of respondents view him as a hero and 15 percent were undecided. A similar online poll hosted by the Libertarian Party

suggests that 54 percent of respondents would award Snowden the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Exposing the public to the already well-known fact that various federal agencies have been spying on us — reading our e-mails, listening in on personal phone calls — Snowden corroborates prior statements by other federal employees that the U.S. government is now routinely violating our Fourth Amendment privacy rights.

The Libertarian Party and other groups have also warned about the erosion of sacred constitutional rights under the

Patriot Act, National Defense Authorization Act, Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and the War on Drugs. There are now 40,000 SWAT raids into people's homes each year, which have resulted in thousands of deaths and enormous property damage. Federal power must be reined in, and whistleblowers like Snowden should be recognized for the risks that they've taken to make the public aware of overstepping by the feds.

— Albert "Max" Abramson, Seabrook

Libertarian Party in the News

Carla Howell: U.S. government too big to be transparent

From PressTV

Published on July 3, 2013

As Washington is grappling with the fallout of its recently-disclosed surveillance programs both inside and outside the United States, the executive director of the Libertarian Party says there will be no transparency and accountability unless the government is downsized.

“So long as the U.S. government remains grossly oversized the American people cannot trust it,” Carla Howell said in an interview with Press TV on Wednesday.

“We will never have transparency or justice unless and until we dramatically downsize government so it’s small and simple enough that voters can demand transparency and accountability.”

The administration of President Barack Obama has come under fire after disclosure last month that the National Security Agency (NSA) is sweeping up massive amounts of data on U.S. citizens via phone and Internet companies.

President Obama and senior administration officials have

defended the NSA’s surveillance programs as a necessary tool to avert terrorist activities.

On Tuesday, James Clapper, the U.S. top intelligence chief, apologized for giving a “clearly erroneous” testimony to Congress about the scope and nature of the surveillance programs leaked last month by former NSA contactor Edward Snowden.

A bipartisan group of 26 senators have written a letter to Clapper demanding transparency and accusing the administration of relying on “a secret body of laws” to implement and justify the surveillance programs.

Howell, however, said that laws and regulations in the U.S. are themselves “an abuse of power and highly subject to even more abuse by politicians and their appointees.”

The executive director of the Libertarian Party also criticized the two-party system in the United States.

“The solution is for voters to recognize this manipulation for what it is and to refuse to vote for big government Democrats and Republicans,” Howell said.

“The Libertarian Party is the only party in America that is committed to shrinking big government and making it transparent as well as accountable to the American people.”

There’s room for a third political choice

By Klark Byrd

From *The Dickinson Press*

Published on July 6, 2013

Last weekend while walking the Dickinson State University lawn taking in the Arts Roundup with my wife and son, we were approached by a gentleman asking for our signature on a petition to keep the Libertarian party on the state’s ballot. We joined the growing list of signatures, believing that North Dakota’s — and the nation’s — greatest chance for success will be a result of choice.

America is, for the most part, led by a two-party system. On the right, Republicans. On the left, Democrats. The nation’s political system is designed to keep these two parties at the top. The rest must fight tooth and nail just to get on a ballot only to then be excluded from the national debate scene.

That exclusion, coupled with a lack of

coverage from the national media, sets any other party up for failure, even in this day and age of widespread Internet use. But people are growing increasingly weary of the two-party system, primarily because it has brought Congress to a grinding halt and it has produced less-than-desirable candidates for the presidency.

As it pertains to Congress — which has an approval rating somewhere around 10 percent — Liz Fedor of MinnPost.com wrote in June 2012 that “Americans are losing faith in the two-party political system, because it is producing too many elected officials who make partisan speeches instead of leading. Congress is Exhibit A in showcasing this political malady.”

Eighty-nine percent of respondents in a Debate.org polling say that America’s two-party system is flawed. Respondent RC1201 wrote, “Who really falls 100 (percent) into one side of the two main parties? That’s what I thought. Politics now is focused on keeping people in power and not solving problems. Why can’t someone

be conservative on some issues and a little more liberal on other issues (or vice versa)?

“The two-party system creates hate and division in our country. We don’t get anything done because it has become a popularity contest of two extremes. They do not let moderates within their party have a chance. It’s all about winning and election, not working to help our country.”

On the other side of the argument, w00tboycomic writes, “I do not feel that America’s two-party system is flawed. I do not believe that it is the system that is flawed. I believe it is the people in the system themselves that are flawed. Politics in general has become a popularity contest instead of a government. When government first came about it America it was supposed to be for the people by the people. The problem now is that the government no longer works for the people, it is now the people that work for the government. More like a dictatorship than a democratic republic.”

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Room for a third political choice

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These respondents may have clicked a different answer, but they're arguments boiled down to the same point: Politics in America has become a popularity contest and all players in the two-party system are focused on one goal — getting elected.

Do we need any more proof other than to look to Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who when asked why Republicans were suddenly concerned with reforming the nation's immigration laws said it comes down to one thing — elections.

Republicans took a spanking on the national stage last year when Democrat Barack Obama was reelected over the GOP's candidate, Mitt Romney. Since then, all we hear about is the Republican party's attempt to dissect its mistakes and its need to revamp itself to seem more appealing to women, youth and minorities.

Ask some people and they might tell you Republicans are viewed as crusty old Bible-thumping fuddy-duddies stuck in their ways and leaning right so heavily they'll soon be perpendicular to the horizon. Ask others and they might say Democrats are viewed as flip-flop wearing "all we need is love" socialists so in love with saving the earth they're willing to tax you into the same poverty they're trying to save you from.

Why can't I be down the middle? Why can we not support a fiscally conservative attitude while not giving two sticks about what happens in our neighbors' bedroom? Or, on the flip side, why can we not care about who marries who while supporting a spend-it-like-there's-no-tomorrow attitude?

I believe there are more political views than what's offered by the Democrats or the Republicans. It's largely why I voted for Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson, a former Republican governor of New Mexico, in the last presidential election. I didn't agree 100 percent with what his party wants to accomplish if in control of our federal government, but I agreed with him much more than Obama or Romney. I can proudly say I cast a vote for a candidate whom I supported, not just cast a vote so I could take one from the other guy.

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New and renewing Liberty Pledgers

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Libertarian Party in the News

Sarah Palin's 'libertarian streak' doesn't impress Libertarian Party

By Steven Nelson

From *U.S. News & World Report*

Published on July 1, 2013

Former vice presidential candidate and Gov. Sarah Palin, R-Alaska, openly mulled leaving the Republican Party in a Saturday interview on Fox News, citing her "libertarian streak." The Libertarian Party, frequently a refuge for renegade Republicans, isn't sure that she would be a good fit — and the Reform Party, too, says it has "zero interest" in Palin.

"[W]hile a few of Sarah Palin's views are aligned with those of the Libertarian Party, her pro-interventionist foreign policy, her support of the 2008 Republican-led bailouts, her loyal support of Big Government Republicans, her social conservative agenda and her lack of concrete backing for any serious downsizing of Big Government runs afoul of the Libertarian Party's goals and most Libertarians' views," the Libertarian Party's executive director, Carla Howell, told U.S. News.

Palin could conceivably find a home in the Constitution or Reform parties — but the Reform Party, which had its heyday in the 1990s, is entirely uninterested.

"The Reform Party would probably have zero interest in Sarah Palin," Reform Party Chairman David Collison told U.S. News. "The primary reason is that we are not really as closely aligned with the tea party as people would think."

Collison said his party aspires to be viewed as centrist, and embraces activists affiliated with the Occupy Wall Street movement. "Palin would basically torpedo that," he said.

U.S. News was unable to reach a representative of the Constitution Party — a generally right-leaning party that in 2012 nominated former Virginia Rep. Virgil Goode, a Democratic-turned-Republican congressman, as its presidential candidate.

Over the weekend, Palin responded to a question about whether she would consider starting a new "Freedom Party" with radio host Mark Levin.

"I love the name of that party — the 'Freedom Party,'" she said. "And if the GOP continues to back away from the planks in our platform, from the principles that built this party of Lincoln and

"[W]hile a few of Sarah Palin's views are aligned with those of the Libertarian Party, her pro-interventionist foreign policy, her support of the 2008 Republican-led bailouts, her loyal support of Big Government Republicans, her social conservative agenda and her lack of concrete backing for any serious downsizing of Big Government runs afoul of the Libertarian Party's goals and most Libertarians' views."

— Libertarian Party Executive Director Carla Howell

Reagan, then, yeah, more and more of us are going to start saying, 'You know, what's wrong with being independent,' kind of with that libertarian streak that much of us have. In other words, we want government to back off and not infringe upon our rights."

She added: "I think there will be a lot of us who start saying 'GOP, if you abandon us, we have nowhere else to go except to become more independent and not enlisted in a one or the other private majority parties that rule in our nation, either a Democrat or a Republican.'"

It's probable that Palin — the 2008 Republican Party vice presidential candidate — won't actually leave the party. Ahead of the 2012 presidential election there was speculation that Palin might bolt the GOP to run as an independent, but that never happened. Instead, she offered GOP nominee Mitt Romney a tepid endorsement one day before the election.

"I wouldn't be surprised [if Palin left the Republican Party]," Collison said. "A lot of the tea party folks have obviously become disillusioned. The Republicans have shown some interest in swinging back toward a pragmatic center."

Third political choice

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Sometimes I wonder if there is a two-party system left. Can anyone spot the difference between the Obama administration and the Bush

administration? Is there really only one party with the national bickering meant to make us believe a two-party system still exists? Maybe that's why some of us think the two-party system is failing.

Either way, it's hard to argue against the fact that America's been brought to her knees by the current political system.

Everyone who signed the petition — regardless of whether you're a Republican, Democrat or any other party affiliate — offered their country a hand to help her stand upright, tall and proud.

As someone who is nonpartisan, I thank you for your support to offer choice in the state of North Dakota.