

LIBERTY PLEDGE

newsletter

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LP HIRES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ...

Flurry of media interviews mark Seehusen's debut

Incoming Executive Director Joe Seehusen kicked off his tenure at the LP national office with a flurry of media interviews during June.

A June 3 press release in which Seehusen urged the American people to "help us fire the government" sparked over a dozen print and broadcast interviews over the next two weeks. Because several of the invitations came from radio networks, Seehusen's comments were aired in over 122 markets nationwide, including New Orleans, Columbus, Birmingham, and Salt Lake City.

The release used Seehusen's hiring as a "news hook" to tout the LP as the "largest and most successful alternative party in U.S. history." It cited a number of statistics to back up the claim, such as that the LP has more candidates and officeholders than all other third parties combined, and that 3.4 million Americans cast at least one vote for a Libertarian on Election Day 2002.

One media personality who picked up on the release is syndicated talkmeister and LP member Neal Boortz, who praised the party at length on his June 5 show.

"Joe's experience hosting a radio talk show in Iowa paid dividends," said LP Communications Director George Getz. "It's obvious that he's just as comfortable on the other end of the mike. His pleasant, upbeat personality comes across well on the air, and he answered questions accurately and even threw in a touch of humor."

Seehusen, 50, started work in the LP's Washington DC office on May 27, after being appointed by the Libertarian National Committee. He had previously worked as the director of an executive search and consulting firm, as the director of sales and marketing at a health care placement company, and as a radio talk show host in Iowa. He was an LP candidate for U.S. House in 2000.

"I'm going to try to grow the LP rapidly by emphasizing the three M's: Members, money, and message," Seehusen says.

A longtime Iowa resident, Seehusen now lives in Baltimore with his wife, Jan, and two daughters, Camille, 15, and Suzanne, 11.

TAX VICTORY IN CALIFORNIA...

Santa Clara LP helps defeat four school taxes

Libertarians in Santa Clara County, California, have played a key role in defeating four school-related taxes and saved taxpayers \$60 million in the process.

In the June 2 special elections, four school districts in the county tried to impose parcel taxes, which assess a flat fee on a piece of property for a fixed number of years. All four failed to get the required two-thirds majority.

School officials claim that in light of California's fiscal crisis, parcel taxes provide a more "reliable" source of funding than the state can offer, according to Mark Hinkle of the state's Executive Committee.

The Santa Clara LP responded by creating a coalition with the Silicon Valley Taxpayers Association and the local chapter of the Republican Assembly to endorse a "no" vote on the tax increases.

In addition, LP members Dennis Umphress and Allen Rice wrote the arguments against the tax increase measures.

"Oddly enough, the Franklin-McKinley School District proponents were so incompetent that they failed to submit an argument in favor of their tax increase, so our arguments were the only arguments submitted," Hinkle said. "Let's give them an 'F' and hope they do it again next time."

Ohio talk radio host joins LP

Libertarians in the Youngstown, Ohio, area used a Tax Day Protest dinner as a forum to add another talk radio host into the LP fold.

Robert Mangino, who broadcasts on WKBN AM 570 from 6:00 to 10:00am on weekdays, became a card-carrying Libertarian at the April 14 event.

"Mangino is well-known for his Libertarian sympathies in this area," said John Fockler, chair of the Mahoning Valley, Ohio LP. "Mangino has interviewed many LP spokespeople on the air and especially directed people to take the World's Smallest Political Quiz.

"When he accepted my offer to join, I was thrilled. He belongs with us, and I was pleased to make it official."

Law could keep Bush off ballot

By Rich Frederick

SPRINGFIELD -- In November 2004, millions of people will go to the polls to vote for the next U.S. president. But if the Libertarian Party has its way, President George W. Bush may not be a choice for Illinois voters.

The Libertarian Party is challenging an effort by the Republican National Committee to bend a state election law that requires presidential candidates to be certified as nominees more than 67 days before a general election.

The Republican Party will nominate their candidate during its national convention Sept. 3, 2004, 61 days before the Nov. 2 general election. That candidate most likely will be Bush, who filed re-election papers last week and is not expected to face any significant challengers.

The Republican National Committee has asked the State Board of Elections to grant an exception to the law to allow their candidate to be "recertified" on the 60th day before the general election.

The Libertarian Party believes that the State Board of Elections does not have the authority to grant an exception, only the power to recommend that the General Assembly change the law.

"Unless the General Assembly moves the deadline by changing the law, the Libertarian Party of Illinois will challenge this. It's not that we don't think President Bush should be on the ballot in Illinois; that couldn't be further from the truth. We just think they need to abide by the same rule of law as all the other political parties and everyone else," said Jeff Trigg, executive director of the Libertarian Party of Illinois.

The Board of Elections met Monday, but did not rule on the issue because it is awaiting an opinion from Attorney General Lisa Madigan, said executive director Ron Michaelson. Four states, including Indiana, have already passed legislation to rectify similar problems in their election laws.

Trigg said the situation further illustrates the lack of equity in state election laws. For example, Trigg said, the Libertarian Party must accumulate 25,000 valid petition signatures to get a presidential candidate on the ballot, whereas Republicans and Democrats need only to collect 5,000 signatures.

If the General Assembly does take up this issue, Trigg said he would like to see a provision added to lower petition signature requirements for third party candidates.

"We think it's only fair if they're going to change the laws to make it easier for (Bush) to be on the ballot when he obviously didn't follow the law, they should do the moral and correct thing and make it easier for third party candidates and independents to get on the ballot," Trigg said.

(Left) *Peoria Journal-Star*, Peoria, Illinois
-- May 20, 2003

(Below) *Reno Gazette-Journal*,
Reno, Nevada -- May 3, 2003

California judge blasts drug war

(AP) – A California Superior Court judge sharply criticized the drug war and renewed his call for the decriminalization of marijuana at a pro-marijuana rally in downtown Reno on Saturday.

Judge James Gray of Orange County, Calif., said the drug war has cost billions of dollars and resulted in the United States having the world's highest incarceration rate -- with no end in sight to rampant drug abuse.

The former federal prosecutor said he has never smoked marijuana, but supports the strictly controlled distribution of pot to adults.

"We have made an illness into a plague. (This is) a failed and hopeless system," Gray said. "I believe people should be entitled to do what they want to their bodies, but that they should be held accountable," he added.

Gray, 58, a lifelong Republican until he became a Libertarian earlier this year, has been a judge for 19 years. He's the author of "Why Our Drug Laws Have Failed and What We Can Do About It."

More than 60 people attended the "Rally for Cannabis Liberation" at Reno's Idlewild Park.

The rally was sponsored by Cures not Wars, a pro-marijuana group that was to hold similar rallies around the country this weekend.

Group spokeswoman Michelle Buck of Reno said the purpose of the rally was to raise awareness that tens of thousands of Americans are in prisons for non-violent drug crimes.

Of particular concern, she said, are thousands who have been arrested for legally or illegally supplying medical marijuana.

Some people held signs that read "Free Ed Rosenthal." The Oakland, Calif., man's arrest last year was among a string of federal raids of medical marijuana suppliers in California.

A 1970 federal law does not recognize any medical purposes for marijuana. A federal judge refused in January to allow Rosenthal to tell jurors he was operating under state law.

Jurors convicted Rosenthal. When they learned the details they were not told during the trial, several jurors said they regretted their verdict.

"We're here to show our support for people like Ed," Buck said. "Marijuana is not the evil drug the federal government has made it out to be."

Montrose council rejects tax plan on food

By Aaron Porter

MONTROSE -- The Montrose City Council rejected a proposed sales-tax exemption for food consumed at home. Instead, voters will decide the issue.

"I don't support this. While I think tax policy is a fascinating issue, I think the real issue is the removal of 17 percent of the general fund," said Noelle Hagan, mayor pro-tem, who noted the proposal offers no alternative source to replace the lost revenue.

Voters will decide the issue July 15.

"I wish the city had went ahead and done the right thing and enacted the ordinance, but I'm not surprised," said Mike Humbert, a member of the Western Slope Libertarian Party.

The local group submitted petitions asking the City Council to remove food purchased for home consumption from the sales-tax rolls.

It claims the tax is inequitable to low-income residents. Poor residents may purchase the same amount of food as higher-income residents, but sales tax will demand a higher ratio of their income at the check-out lane, the group said.

City officials have said the proposal will slash \$2.34 million from the city's budget.

The 3 percent sales tax generates about 80 percent of the revenue in the city's general fund, City Manager John Schneider has reported. The general fund pays for all services except water, sewer and sanitation. Montrose has not collected property taxes since 1986.

The ballot question, if passed, would immediately cut 17 percent from the city's \$13.5 million general fund budget this year, Schneider said.

The Libertarians contend the city should trim costs and waste. The proposal deliberately does not include an alternative source of cash, members have said.

The city budget increased from about \$20 million to about \$38 million in the last six years, Humbert said. Last year, its sales-tax revenue increased \$535,787, according to city records.

Humbert expects sales tax to continue to rise even if food purchased for home consumption is removed from it.

"As long as they're growing revenue, all this does is slow it down," he said.

The city is currently facing a shortfall of about \$260,000 in sales-tax revenue, city officials have said. The first-quarter shortfall ended more than a decade of increasing sales-tax revenue, officials said.

Sales tax provides "foundational funding" critical to the city's operations, Hagan said. It has also helped pay for the Montrose Pavilion, Montrose Regional Library and a current school construction project.

"The Pavilion would not have been possible without sales tax and tax on food," Hagan said.

(Left) *Daily Sentinel*, Grand Junction, Colorado -- May 20, 2003

(Below) *San Mateo County Times*, San Mateo, California -- May 23, 2003

Measure D proponents aim to save teachers

By Tim Hay, staff writer

SAN CARLOS -- Officials in the San Carlos School District hope voters will approve a new tax to help bail local schools out of an expected \$1.5 million budget deficit.

But the County's Libertarian Party -- which opposes nearly all new taxes on principle -- says school officials should scale back the profligate spending they got used to during the dot-com years, and that the district should make do with what it has.

Measure D, which will appear on the June 3 ballot, would levy a \$98-per-year fee on every property in town for eight years, with the option to raise it 3 percent a year for cost-of-living increases.

School officials hope it will raise between \$900,000 and \$1 million annually, enough to save many teaching jobs and threatened music and reading programs.

It would be the town's first parcel tax. School officials have kept an eye on neighboring districts, where only small, short-duration taxes have passed muster with the voters.

"We've clearly learned to keep it (tax) under a hundred bucks," said Eric Von der Porten, chair of the San Carlos school board. Belmont voters have shot down a \$184-per parcel tax and a \$126-per parcel fee.

Von der Porten said a survey completed by parents in the district showed that about two-thirds would support the tax. Two-thirds voter approval is necessary to make it official.

He said the district would be in dire straits without the additional revenue. Layoff notices went out recently to 32 teachers, Von der Porten said, and cutbacks are likely for library services, early-reading programs and music classes.

But according to Jack Hickey, chairman of the local Libertarian Party, the district should simply trim the fat it acquired in the flusher days of the mid-1990s, and not seek donations to keep up its spending habits.

"The dot-com boom is over," Hickey wrote in a formal opposition statement to the tax. "But school officials would like to keep increasing spending as though it never ended. A small rollback now would not be the end of the world."

But it will be up to the voters -- many of whom have already given liberal donations to the district -- to decide whether the district needs real help, or should just tighten its belt.

(Right) *Woburn Advocate*, Woburn, Massachusetts -- May 28, 2003

(Below) *The Oregonian*, Portland, Oregon -- May 5, 2003

One seat contested in Tualatin fire board race

By Holly Danks

When fire engines race down the street or paramedics save lives, no one thinks what it takes to get them there.

Or nearly no one.

Only a handful of volunteers who serve on local fire boards, setting budgets and buying equipment, know what it takes to keep the engines rolling.

In an era of tight budgets and busy schedules, few citizens want to spend their free time poring over fiscal reports and debating fire district dollars.

Of the 17 fire board positions up for election in Washington County on May 20, only four are contested -- in Banks, Cornelius, Forest Grove and for Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue.

"We've never had a problem with keeping our board full, but there's not as much interest in it as with governments that provide a full range of services rather than a specific service," said Tim Birr, division chief for TVF&R.

Here is a look at the election for TVF&R, which serves the southwest suburbs.

Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue, at 233 square miles, is the largest fire district in the state in area covered. It has about 300 paid firefighters and 100 volunteers in 24 stations.

Brian J. Clopton, 44, has been in Position 5 on the fire board since 1997. His grandfather was one of the first paid firefighters in the old Tualatin fire district in 1939, and he's been around heavy equipment all his life, first as a logger and then as owner of Brian Clopton Excavating in Wilsonville for the past 20 years.

"There are challenges we have to face because of budget cuts, and I think I bring a good view to that," he said. "I have to make payroll every week."

Running against Clopton is Mitch Shults, 41, the state chairman of the Libertarian Party and a storage marketing manager for Intel.

Shults, who lives in Tigard, grew up in Portland before attending college in Houston. While working as a systems-integration consultant, Shults built 9-1-1 switching systems for counties in Texas. "I understand how emergency medical services work, and I also ran a business, so I know auditing and accounting procedures," he said.

Incumbent Carol Gearin is running unopposed for the Position 4 seat on the Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue board.

State Rep. Kaufman dissects political parties at open house

By Bryan Kelly

At his monthly Open House, state Rep. Jay Kaufman explored the meanings of political parties in the year 2003.

To help voters determine what each party stands for and even if parties are necessary these days, Kaufman assembled a panel representing four political parties. The panel included Deputy Director of Massachusetts Democratic Party Natasha Perez, Republican Chris Quinn, a legislative assistant for Massachusetts State Senate minority leader Brian Lees, Lexington resident and former gubernatorial candidate Jill Stein of the Green Party, and Rich Aucoin, who ran for lieutenant governor as part of the Libertarian Party.

"Many of the young people who are registering to vote are not registering with one of the major political parties. In fact, the vast majority of new registrants are registering as independents or unenrolled," Kaufman said to the panel. "Is that a failure of the two party system we've known?"

Stein said the problem wasn't necessarily with the parties themselves, but more so with how the two major parties were being influenced.

"I don't think parties are the issue, actually I think the real issue is money. In fact the distinctions between our two political parties have really evaporated in most voters minds because both parties have really become held hostage by big money," said the Lexington resident.

Perez disagreed and said the Democrats are really out fighting for their constituents' needs and wants.

"I think parties do matter. Some people say, 'What do Democrats stand for?' That's because the party is so big and it takes in a lot of views and it does try to reach a multitude of people," she said. "I also think the Democratic Party is really the party out there fighting for working families and the poor."

Quinn's stance on his party was similar to that of the Democrats, noting he thought the Republican Party's efforts were in the best interests of a wide array of voters.

"I like to think we have a rather large umbrella as well," he said. "The typical view [of the Republican Party] is that we are exclusive, when in fact we are inclusive. We want to get as much feedback from the population as we possibly can."

Aucoin's party, the Libertarians, believe that government is not working the way it is and radical changes need to be made.

"The Libertarian Party is the only party that stands for small constitutionally limited government, individual liberty, personal responsibility, and the right of every individual to live his or her life without interference from the government provided they don't harm the person or property of others," he said.

"This is the principle that our country was founded on, and we're trying to return that principle to the United States of America."