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LIBERTY PLEDGE NEWSLETTER

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Remembering Libertarian Stu Seffern

by Rolf Lindgren
Former Vice-Chair, Libertarian Party of Wisconsin

Stu Seffern with LP Mayor Ed Thompson.

On January 1, 2009, Stu Seffern, a friend of all Libertarians in Wisconsin and his partner Debbie Loiselle tragically passed away from a plane crash in Joilet, Illinois.

Stu was a Libertarian Party member since the early 1980s. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the Libertarian Party of Wisconsin and the Chairman of the LP of Dane County. He was a successful owner of a carpet cleaning business for 29 years. My heart goes out to Stu and Debbie's families.

I've known Stu since 1995. In 1995, as a brand new member of the LP of Dane County, I was given a list of people to call and invite to the next local Libertarian meeting. One of those people I called was Stu Seffern.

I don't remember the first time I met Stu in person, but I do remember talking frequently on the phone about political topics with him. As a new and young Libertarian, Stu struck me as a very informed and articulate speaker, very thoughtful on issues and great at analysis. He was a pleasure to speak with. Stu's presence livened the atmosphere of LPDC meetings because when Stu spoke, he knew what he was talking about.

Over the years, I've worked with Stu on many projects. Among them, we worked in 2001 and 2002 on the Ed Thompson for Governor campaign. We worked on the Recall Governor Doyle project in 2003. We worked to oppose the Madison smoking ban in 2005. We worked together to raise awareness when the government was railroading innocent people.

In addition to these projects, Stu worked tirelessly for the Taxpayer Bill-of-Rights (TABOR). He almost single handedly stopped the proposed trolley-car system in Madison. Stu's greatest Libertarian passion was the opposition of wasteful government spending. Stu's nuts-N-bolts analysis of the trolley-car system, along with about 25 articulate radio and TV appearances, was crucial. Stu once quipped in a TV interview: "A 12 year old on the Internet could find out that this is not a good idea."

Stu also organized many neighborhood walks to deter crime. As Stu stated in another TV interview: "We found it was more effective than millions of dollars of investment." These greats acts nominate Stu to the ranks of the greatest defenders of the taxpayer in Madison history.

On the personal side, Stu was a great person to know, always happy, positive, interesting and helpful. He had a great sense of humor. We talked on the phone over a thousand times, and often the conversation started with jokes about the latest ridiculous actions taken by the government. Many times, I was a guest at Stu and Debbie's house. They were very hospitable people. Stu always threw in one of his John Stossel videos when I was over. Stu also took me out to Watertown a few years ago to show me his airplanes. We walked around the hanger and he showed me the airplanes from all angles. I could tell that Stu's airplanes meant very much to him.

When word of Stu's death reached Wisconsin on the morning of January 2, Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz, a frequent political opponent of Stu, said: "I was very sorry to learn of Stuart's untimely death in a plane crash. While we didn't always agree, Stuart was a tireless advocate for his south side community. He committed a tremendous amount of time and energy to the betterment of his neighborhood, and his strong voice will be missed."

The Wisconsin state legislature began its 2009 session on January 6 with a moment of silence dedicated to Stu and Debbie.

A Tag-Team Approach to Candidate Recruitment

by Austin Petersen
Volunteer Coordinator

As 2009 unfolds, Libertarians are faced with the future prospects of running for office in off-season years, or going for higher offices in even years. While there is much debate about whether it is better to run for higher office, or to win local elections, it stands to reason that we should recruit appropriate candidates for both.

In my personal opinion, I believe that our Federal candidates would better serve the Party's interests if they were directly recruited. Candidate recruitment is a task of critical importance to party leaders in their local affiliates. There are activists, business leaders, and celebrities who have come out in support of libertarian issues that have credibility we can tap into. These people should be sought out and contacted by state LP officials to urge them to run for office under our banner.

I have had good successes with potential candidates for office that would not have considered running as Libertarians had it not been for my direct personal requests. One example is a blue dog democrat, former police officer that supported Ron Paul during the Presidential campaign. His affiliation with LEAP (Law Enforcement Against Prohibition), credibility as a public servant, and sympathy for our principles made me believe he would be a good candidate for local office in Maryland. Teaming up with Bob Johnston, I made the call to the gentleman, and began to gently probe as to whether he would be interested to run as a Libertarian. After my initial contact, Johnston followed up with more information about local offices. The next day Bob emailed me to let me know that it was likely the man would run as a Libertarian.

This tag-team approach with national and states can be very effective in recruiting candidates and establishing credibility for the party as a whole. A candidate who is actively pursued by both the National and State parties will more likely be prone to run as a Libertarian. If you imagine that a person will likely be flattered if asked to run in general, they might also be very excited to receive a call from a party representative in DC that would make them feel welcome and invited into a national organization. If you are interested in working together to effectively recruit candidates as part of a team effort with National, I would be glad to work with any of you on this.

If there are liberty-minded people you know of that have credibility, and a generally higher profile than most, it would be wise to consider courting them soon for a possible run. Don't be nervous to approach someone because they have some sort of celebrity status and you think they might refuse or ignore you. You have nothing to lose from trying, only from not acting. It might also be wise to devote an intern or volunteer to the sole task of seeking out potential candidates for office that you can choose from for statewide office. If someone in your state would make a good Federal candidate, then I suggest we work together to bring them into the party.

Candidate recruitment is a very important part of activism within the LP. The better candidates we have, the more we raise our profile and our issues. It is in the Party's best interests to have a meaningful strategy that includes this tactic of increased State/National cooperation.

Welcome to the Liberty Pledge Club!

Thank you for your generous contributions

Henry Boschen
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Dave Flood
Len Hofferber
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John Kelley
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Will Obama Short-Change Americans?

by Andrew Davis
Director of Communications

Next week, we will inaugurate the 44th president of the United States. For many Americans, this ceremonial "changing of the guards" brings a much-needed physical and emotional change from the last eight years of the Bush administration. President-elect Barack Obama stands on the cusp of what could be one of the most transfiguring presidential administrations in American history.

But, are Americans about to be "short-changed"?

In the 2008 presidential race, American voters soundly rejected establishment candidates and flocked to those they saw as leaders from "outside the beltway." The obscure Sarah Palin quickly overshadowed GOP presidential candidate John McCain, and while Hillary Clinton put up a fight against Obama, Democrats decided to pass on a second-helping of Clintonian politics. In the end, voters decided the need for change was greater than the need for experience, and elected Obama to the nation's top office.

Since the election, Obama's fiery, leftist rhetoric has waned, replaced with signs of cooperation and bipartisanship. Normally this would not be considered a negative in a politician, especially after the polarizing politics of the Bush administration; however, Obama's newfound zest for partisanship leaves him agreeing with Bush on all the wrong issues, and likewise for their disagreements.

President Bush is leaving office with nearly every area of policy in worse shape than he found it. From curbing civil liberties while pursuing a "war on terror" to increasing the national debt more than any other president in American history, Bush will have a legacy of Constitution-treading and big spending.

Obama promised change, but as of yet, he has done little to separate himself from the path taken by the Bush administration. Obama confounded his supporters by supporting the amendments to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), which granted the federal government a license to spy on American citizens—a key objective touted by the Bush administration. He then refused to take a strong stance against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and has provided no plans after the election to bring the troops home any sooner than his Republican predecessor planned.

The abuses of civil liberties in the past eight years were some of the most egregious offenses of the Bush administration. Violations of the first, fourth and sixth amendments to the U.S. Constitution became synonymous with the calls for "sacrifice" in the pursuit of "terrorists who want to take away our freedoms." But Obama has yet to prove he plans to change this pattern of abuse, and his record thus far shows a reluctance to come down on the side of the Constitution.

There is also much to be worried about in Obama's economic policies, which include spending increases that will rival those of the Bush administration. Obama's current economic stimulus will cost at least $850 billion in federal spending, the majority of which will go to fund the largest public works project since the 1950s. These projects are costly and historically have been ineffective in stimulating economic growth. In the end, government will spend billions of taxpayer dollars for little or no effect.

Obama must avoid the mistakes of the Bush administration when it comes to economic policy, and reject pressure from his Democratic colleagues to avoid using free market solutions as alternatives to further government "tinkering" in the economy. Permanent, substantial tax cuts supplemented with equal (or preferably larger) cuts to government spending will help spur economic stimulation while also practicing a more sound fiscal policy.

The free market is the best tool for allocating resources, and tax cuts have a proven record of stimulating economic growth. Government spending in hopes of creating artificial demand to stimulate the economy has not worked, and its inclusion in Obama's stimulus plan is a sure bet for failure.

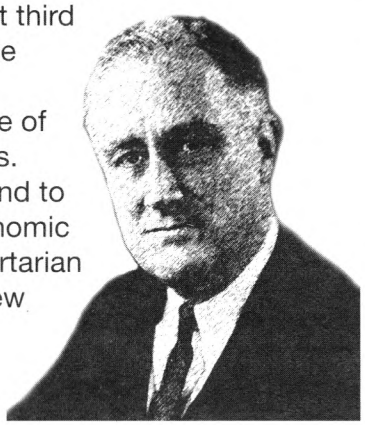
It's difficult to cast such dire predictions for a man not even in office; however, the nation is in serious need of real leadership—not just four more years of the same. Obama enters office under the most onerous of circumstances: war in two countries, economic uncertainty, extreme distrust in government and international turmoil. He assumes control of many problems that he had limited control over as a Senator, but now is forced to solve.

The path to success is clear because it consists mainly of avoiding the mistakes of the Bush administration. Avoid micromanaging the economy, reduce spending, decrease taxes, bring the troops home from overseas, restore civil liberties and maintain a high ethical standard throughout his administration—are all things Obama must do to repair the damage from the last eight years.

This Month in the Media

by Andrew Davis
Director of Communications

Government Programs Die Hard



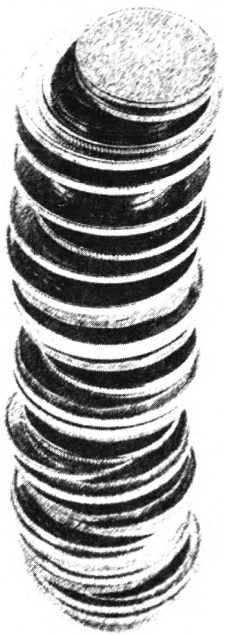
Dec. 19 - America's largest third party is warning against the institution of new government programs in the wake of the current economic crisis. "Government programs tend to linger with disastrous economic consequences," says Libertarian Party spokesperson Andrew Davis.

"Congress needs to exercise extreme caution when considering any new government programs that are intended to act as a remedy for economic decline," says Davis. "The New Deal taught us that government programs die hard, and we're still suffering from the leftovers of FDR's administration."

"Government got us here, and more government will not get us out," observes Davis.

The Libertarian Party blames the current economic crisis on government's intervention in the economy, and worries about the economic impact of exploding government expenditures.

"Out of every four dollars of economic activity, one of those is from federal government spending," Davis notes. "Not since World War II have we seen the federal share of the economy at this level. This will have severe economic consequences down the road if we don't look for options to this economic crisis other than more government spending."



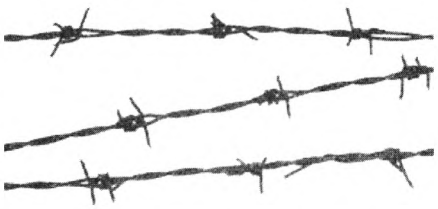
Obama's Economic Plans Don't Add Up

Jan. 13 - "If you think Obama's economic plans don't make sense, it's because they don't," says Libertarian Party National Chairman William Redpath.

"Americans are taking a look at Obama's economic plans and scratching their heads," says Redpath. "And, there is good reason to do so. The theory behind his plan, Keynesian economics, has been unsuccessfully tried by multiple presidential administrations in the past. It didn't work for President Hoover in the early 1930s. It didn't work for President Roosevelt in the Great Depression. It didn't work for President Ford in 1970s. Why does Obama think it will work for him now?"

"Keynesians believe that government can jump-start the economy by creating artificial demand through massive spending projects," says Redpath. "This debt is later repaid with magic money borrowed from foreign countries, printed out of thin air or from tax increases. But, unfortunately, government can't spend billions of dollars without incredible amounts of waste, through fraud or worthless projects. So, much of the money taken out of the economy, in order to jump-start the economy, is lost, leaving American taxpayers with a flat economy and even more debt to pay."

Barr Calls for Guantanamo Bay Closure



Jan. 14 - Former Congressman Bob Barr, the Libertarian Party's 2008 nominee for president, issued a statement Wednesday morning applauding President-elect Obama's reported plan to close the controversial military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where many suspected terrorists have been held, often without hearings, since shortly after 9/11.

"If there are detainees there as to whom the government has evidence they pose a serious danger to the United States, then house them at the Super Max federal prison in Florence, Colorado and prosecute them. If there is no such evidence as to other detainees, then they should be returned to the countries from which or in which they were picked up," Barr declared.

"Continuing to detain people indefinitely without affording them the most basic of due process, and fighting the courts endlessly on such matters, runs counter to our laws, our Constitution, and international law," noted Barr.

Barr also criticized Vice President Cheney's recent glib comments that unless a Member of Congress is willing to accept having the Guantanamo detainees deposited into their district or state, they have no business criticizing the Administration.