

LIBERTY PLEDGE

newsletter

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Welcome to the Fabulous 2008 Leadership Conference

During Presidents' Day Weekend in February, Libertarian activists, candidates, and donors will meet in Las Vegas, Nevada, for the 2008 Leadership Conference. While many refer to this event as the "State Chairs' Conference," Jim Duensing, the organizer of the Libertarian State Leadership Alliance, finds that reference limiting. The event's Web site, www.statechairs.org, stresses that the event is open to all Libertarians interested in learning ways to effectively advance the ideas of smaller government, lower taxes, and more freedom.

The long weekend promises to continue the Libertarian Party's tradition of mixing business with pleasure when it comes to big events. Along with multiple seminars addressing topics from fundraising to political communication, there will be a debate between LP activists concerned with the future of the Libertarian Party's official platform. Mixed with these entertainingly informative events will be a lunch banquet featuring a state chairs' debate and a dinner featuring a debate between the candidates currently seeking the Libertarian Party's presidential nomination.

In addition to these candidates, the list of speakers includes Robert Stuber, who will be speaking about fundraising through monthly pledge programs and writing effective fundraising letters. Also speaking will be LNC Board members Bob Sullenstrup, who will advise activists on "How to be an effective county secretary" and "Conventioneering," M Carling, who will discuss Robert's Rules of Order, and Dr. James Lark, who will address campus organizing. Region 4 Alternate Stewart Flood will explain Ballot Base and the powerful effect this tool can have on campaigning. BetteRose Ryan will talk about planning a well-attended and well-organized state convention.

Adding to the mix will be Jim Duensing, who will teach attendees how to communicate political

messages in a way that will resonate with voters and libertarians looking for a home in the LP. Allen Hacker will share his knowledge of organizing political volunteers, and Paula Edwards will impart her expertise on FEC filing. As the Web site promises, there will be more exciting sessions than anyone could attend in one weekend!

With eight hours of seminars concentrated on training candidates, activists, and staff, the 2008 Leadership Conference will focus on expanding the internal abilities of the Libertarian Party. The end goal of the Conference will be a Libertarian Party that both remains competitive with the Republican and Democratic Parties, and one which propagates a philosophy of freedom through a cohesive and competent structure.



The Libertarian Party in the New Year

As the Libertarian Party storms into the New Year and is gearing up for an exciting 2008 election season, it's worth taking a look back at the accomplishments of 2007. The Libertarian Party saw tremendous growth last year, which gives it a solid foundation in the upcoming elections. From huge membership gains to substantial fundraising increases, the Libertarian Party will be a significant factor in November.

Beginning in 1993 with an aggressive buildup starting two years later, the Libertarian Party's membership soared to more than 33,000 active, dues-paying members. But for the past few years, the Libertarian Party has been fighting off membership declines after peaking in 1999. Party disunity and many other factors contributed to the unfortunate decline to a low of just more than 11,000 active members.

"At the time, membership numbers were the least of our worries," said Robert Kraus, operations manager of the Libertarian Party, earlier this year. "We were fighting each day to keep the doors open. It was a very tough time."

However, the Libertarian Party prevailed and began to rebuild.

2007 fundraising efforts in member reacquisition saw tremendous success and brought back more than 1,000 members to the Party. A substantial prospecting campaign began in June, which planned to reach more than 230,000 people registered as a Libertarian, but who had never joined the party. This past year, the Libertarian Party reported a membership increase of 29 percent.

One interesting figure to arise out of the new membership numbers are those new members who report the U.S. military as their employer. When the numbers were totaled in July of 2007, seven percent of new members claimed the Armed Forces as their employer. In fact, at that time, the LP was attracting more than 14 times the national average of active duty service members.

"It's great to see our service men and women coming out in support for the Libertarian Party," says Shane Cory, executive director of the LP. "Our message of peace and nonintervention resonates with the men and women it directly impacts, and that is a good sign."

There are many factors for the rise in Libertar-

ian ranks in addition to the hard work that has been done through prospecting and member reacquisition. A big reason for the success of the Libertarian Party is the failures of the Democrats and Republicans. Dissatisfaction with the two major parties is at a record, and voters are seeking a viable alternative to their former political home.

"The rise in membership directly correlates with the loss in numbers for the major two parties," says Cory. "People are unhappy with the Republicans and Democrats, and they want another option. They see the Libertarian Party as the best option, and we're happy they looked to us as an alternative."

The success of the Libertarian Party in the media as a result of the growing presence of Libertarians and politics, and the unexpected surge of support for libertarian Republican Ron Paul, has exposed people to the Libertarian Party that otherwise would not have heard of it. Funding is also up for the Libertarian Party. According to the most current Federal Election Commission reports, the Libertarian Party out-raised all other national third parties combined.

In addition to the 2007 successes, the Libertarian Party is opening 2008 with a bang.

The Libertarian Party of Texas, in the first state to file in the nation for its elections, reported filing 210 candidates for the 2008 election. For the first time, Libertarian candidates filed for every statewide race. Libertarians filed for 30 of the 32 U.S. House seats, 12 of the 15 Texas Senate seats (a record 80 percent), 102 of the 150 Texas House seats (a record 68 percent), and five of the seven State Board of Education seats (a record 71 percent).

"In 2006, 218 candidates filed with the Libertarian Party of Texas," says Libertarian Party of Texas Executive Director Wes Benedict. "I think we had to work harder to get 210 candidates for the 2008 elections. Many Texas Libertarians are focused on Ron Paul's campaign for president."

"What's remarkable about the slate of candidates in Texas is that they all come during the time that Ron Paul, a libertarian Congressman from Texas, is running for President as a Republican," says Sean Haugh, the Libertarian Party political director. "All the libertarians who switched their voter registration to Republican in order to vote for Paul in the primary made themselves ineligible to run as a Libertarian in

Kate O'Brien: Political Orphan to Political Leader

Kate O'Brien is a woman in the libertarian movement who likes to keep it moving. Since being introduced to the Libertarian Party in college, Kate has grown with the Party. As the LP developed from a philosophical protest to the third largest political party in the nation, Kate grew from a campaign volunteer to a successful Libertarian candidate.

During college, Kate had a circle of Objectivist friends, one of which was a member of the fledgling Libertarian Party. After going to coffee with her friend and a few fellow freedom lovers, Kate realized that the Libertarian Party was her political home. "There was no decision," Kate recalls. "I was just happy to meet people who thought like I did." She was thrilled to see the real desire to effect change through fielding candidates, as she believes "talking to yourselves is not going to effect change." Soon after becoming a member of the LP, Kate worked to help other Libertarian candidates get elected to local office. She knew that in order to see the Party become successful, candidates needed to start "getting elected locally and move up."

Her experience with campaign work served her well in the races she entered as a candidate herself. Inspired by now-LNC Treasurer Aaron Starr's "Operation Breakthrough," Kate figured she'd "throw her hat in the ring." Her eyes were really opened to the big issues in local politics—and the attainability of victory—when she was elected to the Park Board in Simi Valley, California, by three votes. In 2000, she was eligible to run for both the Park and Water Boards in her district, and won a spot on the Park Board. She is now on the Board of Directors for her Park District.

Kate credits much of her success to her community involvement. A civil engineer by trade, she worked in Menlo Park and the San Francisco Bay Area for a decade, serving on art committees and remaining active with her political organizations. She was on the Board that converted Menlo Park's voting machines. Her hobbies, which include making jewelry, antiques, and attending musical performances (especially opera) have also helped her network with voters.

Kate sees a lot of exciting potential for the Libertarian Party. She thinks candidates need to keep getting their feet in the door at the local level while

keeping their eyes on federal elections. She also hopes that, in some sense, history will repeat itself.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the American Socialist Party advocated the economic and social policies of Karl Marx and others, ideas then popular in Europe. Gradually, the Democratic Party began to adopt the ideas of the socialists as public policy.

Kate hopes that Americans will begin to adopt Libertarian ideas as public policy in the same way, and thinks this will happen by cooperation between branches of the freedom movement as a whole—from the pro-freedom, pro-small government Ron Paul supporters to executives at the CATO Institute. Whether by producing electable candidates or by having "libertarian ideas implemented as platform-adopted public policy," Kate wants to see a freer America.

In a matter of years, Kate went from a political orphan to a political activist. She loves the action she finds in the Libertarian Party. She thinks getting involved in the political process is the greatest way for her to promote liberty. And while she's given a great deal to the Libertarian Party and her community, both have given back: her calico cat, Patches, adopted her at one of the Park Board meetings over which she presided as an elected Libertarian.

Welcome to the Liberty Pledge Club!

James Blacic
Chris Chomo
John Combs
Keith Finlayson
Mike Gregory
Aaron Hunter
Cody Kingham
Brian Luke
Jeremy Oehlert
Jason Peterson
Shawn Wiegel

Thank you for your generous support!

Getting Real With the Real ID

Starting in 2011, the federal government will require that states implement licensing procedures that include biometric data collection and tamper-proof traits on the actual ID. After 2011, "a Federal agency may not accept, for any official purpose, a driver's license or identification card issued by a state to any person unless the state is meeting the requirements," according to the new regulations.

The new plan, called the Real ID, essentially accomplishes the same objectives as a national ID card through federal mandates to the states on the way they issue licenses. While the license is not directly coming from the federal government, civil libertarians still reject the Real ID because of privacy and states' rights concerns. And even though the implementation date of all the new procedures has just recently been pushed back, the action of Libertarians is necessary to scrap the program in full.

The Real ID Act was a part of the 2005 legislation called the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief. The 9-11 Commission's calls for reforms and standards of state-issued licenses supposedly are the base for the Real ID Act legislation. The government argues that uniformity among state-issued driver's licenses are necessary towards keeping fake documentation out of the hands of terrorists and illegal immigrants.

Backlash from Libertarians against the Real ID has been felt across the United States. Libertarians at the local, state and national levels have all come out strongly against the Real ID, calling it a backdoor national ID card. "If you're of a certain age, you were taught in school that one of the bad things about Soviets were that they had national IDs you had to show before you could travel," says Anthony Trauring, operations director for the Libertarian Party of Georgia. "Now all of a sudden, this is coming in on us in the United States."

Trauring penned an opinion piece regarding the Real ID Act for the Web site of the LPGA. Although Georgia was one of the first states in the nation to protest to the Real ID Act--responding to the Act by repealing a biometric requirement passed in the 1990s, intentionally making their ID non-compliant--the LPGA is still hard at work fighting the mandates. "We in Georgia are fortunate that our leg-

islators have opted out," says Trauring. "But, the LPGA urges our citizens to contact our national legislators to ask them to repeal the Real ID Act."

So far, 17 states have passed laws or resolutions rejecting the Real ID Act mandates imposed by DHS. These states include Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Washington. Twenty other states have either introduced legislation or had legislation pass in one chamber opposing the Real ID Act.

Not on the list is Alabama, but Libertarian Party of Alabama State Chairman Stephen Gordon is intent on changing that. Gordon and fellow Alabama Libertarian Mike Rster have worked diligently in their state to block the Real ID Act's implementation. "We formed a new organization, 'No to Real ID,' and we're pushing state legislature in an attempt to stop it in the state," says Gordon.

"Alabama is prime territory for a repeal of any state funding or involvement in a federally mandated invasive program such as Real ID," says Gordon. "We value our privacy and don't mind telling Uncle Sam to get off our backs."

And so far, Gordon has found legislative success. After finding a legislative sponsor within the Alabama legislature, they were able to draft a bill and have it submitted. The bill would block Real ID Act regulations in the state.

Gordon says their plan to sponsor legislation blocking the Real ID Act in Alabama can be easily replicated in other states, and encourages the remaining 12 states who have not had this legislation come up before to do the same. Those states are California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Dakota and Virginia.

Without state participation, full implementation of the Real ID Act would inevitably fail. "It's a disaster in the making," says Shane Cory, executive director of the Libertarian Party. "If only a few states participate, the federal government would ultimately have to abandon the program altogether. The two-year delay shows the pressure states have put on the government already. The only acceptable solution to the Real ID is scrapping it completely."