

LIBERTY PLEDGE

newsletter

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California pledger energized by national convention

'I see the potential of the party and want to help it along' --- Rodney Austin

Like many LP members, California Pledger Rodney Austin didn't start out as a Libertarian: He was initially a "disaffected Democrat," then voted as an independent until the mid-1980s, when he heard Marshall Fritz, director of the Separation of School and State Alliance, speak at a meeting.

Austin's unlikely list of Libertarian heroes includes Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Frederick Douglas. From Gandhi he learned that "if you want the power structure to be overturned you have to struggle" -- it will not simply self-destruct. Both King and Douglas, of course, struggled under the lash of two of the most reprehensible government programs ever: slavery and Jim Crow laws.

He also reports being particularly affected by Rose Wilder Lane's *Discovery of Freedom*, which describes how earlier freedom fighters persevered. All of these heroes are "libertarian in spirit," Austin says.

For his part of the struggle, Austin ran for a Fresno city council position in 1996, placing sixth out of 10 candidates and taking 4 percent of the vote in the non-partisan race. He encourages other Libertarians to pursue non-partisan posts "wholeheartedly," because there's a stronger chance they can do well in those races.

That said, he also notes the need to run in high-profile, partisan races and to "advertise the Libertarian label and to keep the two major parties on notice" -- aware of the LP's presence.

That Libertarian label was on display at the party's national convention in Atlanta over Memorial Day weekend, which Austin attended as an enthusiastic delegate from California. Austin found the presidential nomination voting on Sunday to be the most exciting part of the weekend.

The three leading candidates -- Michael Badnarik, Gary Nolan and Aaron Russo -- were in very close rank as the votes were tallied, surprising everyone. Austin said he was trying to keep a running total, and he saw the difference between the contenders drop to about seven votes on several occasions.

"I've never seen a convention like that before, and probably won't again for a while," he noted.

An analytical chemist for 24 years, now retired, Austin has been a member of the LP since 1985 and began pledging to the party in 1999.

He contributes monthly to the LP because he feels the national Libertarian Party "is the leader of the Libertarian movement. In order for the Libertarian movement to stay strong, the party needs to stay strong. From time to time, I find myself -- like everyone -- disagreeing with the party. But for the most part, I see the potential of the party and want to help it along."

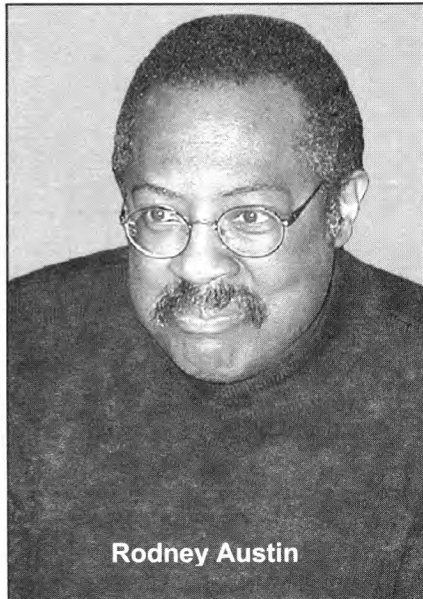
And the required \$25 in membership dues is "simply not enough to get the job done, to advance the party beyond subsistence, survivalist mode," he says.

Asked about the dearth of blacks in the Libertarian Party, Austin said he believes the LP needs to reach out to that community as a whole, to make it clear how the party can address some of their concerns.

Many in the black community are becoming systematically more frustrated by educational issues, he says, and have begun to see the War on Drugs for what it really is -- "an excuse for the police to target young African American males in our inner cities."

However, he said, many blacks see a lack of power in general as their primary issue, rather than the abuse of power by government.

The party needs to continue reaching out to other to groups that are unlikely to feel at home in either of the two larger parties, Austin says. Similar feelings of disenfranchisement exist among gays and feminists, he believes -- and the LP needs to reach out to them as well.



Rodney Austin

Convention Brings New Pledgers

More than 60 new pledgers were brought into the Liberty Pledge program at the national convention in Atlanta, Ga., swelling the ranks to nearly 2,100 monthly pledgers.

Approximately 120 pledging members -- including a number of the new recruits -- joined representatives of the national office and LNC at the Liberty Pledge Celebration to recognize the contributions of pledgers to the Party.

Look for the names of these new pledgers in the July issue of *Liberty Pledge News*.

Indiana gubernatorial candidate firm on stances

By Jason Hancock

No matter what the outcome of November's gubernatorial election, **Libertarian Party** candidate Kenn Gividen wants to make sure one issue cannot be ignored by any candidate.

"I am a strong advocate of single-class basketball in Indiana," Gividen said. "I plan to make that such an important issue that even if I don't win something will be done about it."

Kenn Gividen, 51, an author and self-employed direct marketer, won the nomination Saturday during the party's state convention in Indianapolis. He was in Clarksville Tuesday night speaking with the Floyd, Clark and Harrison County Libertarian Parties.

Gividen plans a low-budget campaign that could include Internet advertising as well as travel around the state to promote his ideas for changing Indiana's tax system and getting rid of the class-basketball system that was created by the Indiana High School Athletic Association several years ago.

Gividen said Indiana's unique, one-class basketball system was not just a cultural treasure but also an economic driver.

"Florida has beaches and sunshine, Vegas has casinos," he said. "Hoosier Hysteria is not just part of our heritage, it is part of our economy. It is our claim to fame.

Today, Indiana's schools play basketball in four classes, depending on their size, and produce four champions.

"The IHSAA is under the control of the state government," he said. "Because of this, the legislature can and should do something about it. It is what the people want."

Gividen also favors the elimination of property and individual income taxes, which combined produce some \$10 billion annually for state and local government. In their place, he said, government should rely on use taxes, including the sales tax.

But Gividen acknowledged that eliminating such taxes -- especially as Indiana struggles with a \$1 billion budget deficit -- would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve quickly.

So he proposes instead to eliminate property and income taxes for all residents 65 years and older, a move he said would make Indiana a destination for senior citizens.

"Those are the people with the most disposable income," he said.

He also said the state should consider other property tax controls that would help all payers. He pointed to a law in New Hampshire, which he said limits the size of school buildings.

"We could put that on all projects," he said. "You can have state money, but you have to limit your spending. If you go over, then you have to fund it."

In a divergence from his user fee philosophy, Gividen said he wants the state to pay for textbooks in Indiana schools rather than the parents of the children using the books. He points out Indiana is one of only a handful of states still employing the practice.

Gividen described himself as a conservative Christian,

most closely aligned in the governor's race with Eric Miller, a conservative activist who is seeking the Republican nomination. Miller has focused his campaign on his opposition to same-sex marriage and abortion and on his support for balancing the state budget.

"Eric is 50 percent Libertarian," he said. "Mitch Daniels is zero percent."

Gividen said if the Republicans don't nominate Miller, he and Daniels, the former White House Budget Director also seeking the G.O.P. nomination, will split the Republican vote, giving Kernan the win. Gividen said that, while he's most closely aligned with Republicans, he could accept that outcome because it would ensure that both parties have some power in state government.

"I'm running to win," he said. "The only wasted vote people make is voting for Democrats and Republicans every year while they are wasting your tax money. If we can put a stop to Mitch Daniels, we want to do that."

(Left) *Tribune County Reporter*, Jeffersonville, Indiana -- May 1, 2004

(Below) *The Advertiser*, Lafayette, Louisiana -- May 14, 2004

House bill would aid minor political parties

(AP) Candidates of minor political parties would be able to more easily get listed with their party affiliation on state ballots, under a measure backed by a House committee.

Under existing law, candidates who are neither Democrats nor Republicans cannot have any party designation after their names on the ballots.

On a 6-1 vote Wednesday, the House and Governmental Affairs Committee approved a bill (House Bill 1605) by Rep. William Daniel, D-Baton Rouge, to change the hurdles for a political party to be recognized.

The bill was promoted in committee by **Libertarian Party** activists who have been trying since 1991 to get such legislation passed.

State law allows voters to register with a specific minor political party when they visit local registrars. But candidates can't list the minor party beside their names on a ballot unless either 5 percent of registered voters in the state are party members, or if their party's candidate for president won at least 5 percent of the vote in the last election.

Under Daniel's bill, a political party would be recognized if it has at least 1,000 registered voters, files papers with the secretary of state's office and pays a one-time \$1,000 fee; or if its gubernatorial candidate received 5 percent of the vote in the last election.

Libertarians will drain votes from Bush

By Susan Jones

The **Libertarian Party** nominated a presidential candidate on Sunday, and party officials said he “could attract enough votes from angry conservatives to cost President Bush his job.”

The nominee is 49-year-old Michael Badnarik, a computer programmer from Austin, Tex., who has worked on defense-related projects.

Badnarik won the Libertarian Party’s presidential nomination with 54 percent of the vote at the Party’s national convention in Atlanta over the holiday weekend.

A Libertarian Party press release said Badnarik’s victory was considered a shock because he had been beaten in the polls and primaries by two other candidates -- movie producer Aaron Russo and radio talk show host Gary Nolan.

“According to many undecided delegates, Badnarik’s superior performance in the Saturday debates propelled him ahead of the other candidates,” the press release said.

Badnarik, in his acceptance speech, said he would keep his campaign focused on the Constitution and forcing the government to abide by it.

According to the Libertarian Party, various political analysts say that frustrated conservatives may swing their votes away from President Bush to the Libertarian Party in 2004.

The Libertarians quote David Paul Kuhn, the chief political writer for CBSNews.com, who wrote in a May 21 article, “While Democrats fret over the possibility of Ralph Nader causing them to lose another election by stealing votes on the left, President Bush may face an even greater third-party threat from the right wing. The Libertarian nominee could cost Mr. Bush his job in 2004.”

Kuhn reportedly said Libertarian nominee Badnarik “could be the Ralph Nader of 2004.” He said Badnarik could attract enough conservative votes in Wisconsin, Oregon, and Nevada to affect the outcome of the presidential race.

The Libertarian Party says its presidential ticket received 382,892 popular votes in 2000. It also notes it ran 1,430 candidates in 2000 -- more than twice as many as all the other third parties combined.

“We fielded candidates for 255 of the 435 seats in the U.S. House, as well as 25 of the 33 Senate seats up for election, making the Libertarian Party the first third party in 80 years to contest a majority of the seats in Congress,” the Libertarians’ website says.

The Libertarians say they believe in a “free-market economy and the abundance and prosperity it brings; a dedication to civil liberties and personal freedom that marks this country above all others; and a foreign policy of non-intervention, peace, and free trade as prescribed by America’s founders.”

(Left) *CNSnews.com*, Alexandria, Virginia -- June 1, 2004

(Below) *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Atlanta, Georgia -- May 25, 2004

Candidate Gary Nolan snagged by no-fly list

By Tom Baxter

A candidate for the **Libertarian** presidential nomination, traveling to Atlanta for the party’s national convention, was briefly barred from his flight at Denver International Airport on Monday when a name similar to his showed up on an airline no-fly list.

Gary Nolan, a radio talk show host based in Cleveland who has suspended his show while campaigning, said an AirTran ticket agent told him he could not get on a flight to Atlanta because his name was on the list used by the airlines to screen suspected terrorists.

Airport police cleared him to make the flight to Atlanta after determining the name on the restricted list was that of a Gary Nolan Craig, Nolan said.

Nolan said, however, that he could not be sure his ancestry and political views weren’t also factors. Nolan is of Lebanese descent and has been an outspoken opponent of the Patriot Act.

He said he was told he would continue to have a problem flying if he didn’t get the matter cleared up.

“Obviously, it’s a flawed system and this is just another example of what could go wrong,” Nolan said after arriving in Atlanta on Monday afternoon.

Mike Fierberg, the Denver regional public affairs officer for the Transportation Security Administration, acknowledged there are flaws in the system, but said they aren’t the government agency’s fault.

Fierberg said Nolan was flagged by CAPPs — Computer-Assisted Passenger Pre-Screening — a system run by the airlines. TSA and the Department of Homeland Security advocate replacing CAPPs, which was put in place by the airlines in the mid-1990s, with a government-operated system, CAPPs II, which would require more detailed information about airline passengers.

The current system is so broad it produces many “false positives” like Nolan’s, Fierberg said.

Nolan is one of three candidates actively campaigning for the Libertarian nomination, which will be decided at the convention Sunday.

Nolan’s opponents are Aaron Russo, a California film producer, and Michael Badnarik, a gun rights activist from Texas.

Libertarian Party: Bush's third-party threat

By David Paul Kuhn

While Democrats fret over the possibility of Ralph Nader causing them to lose another election by stealing votes on the left, President Bush may face an even greater third-party threat from the right wing. The **Libertarian Party** nominee could cost Mr. Bush his job in 2004.

With conservatives upset over the ballooning size of the federal government under a Republican White House and Congress – and a portion of the political right having opposed the war in Iraq from the outset or else dismayed at how it's being handled – the Libertarian nominee may do for Democrats in 2004 what Nader did for Republicans in 2000.

It is a hypothesis not yet made in the mainstream media. But interviews with third-party experts and activists across the country, as well as recent political patterns, illustrate that there could be a conservative rear-guard political attack against President Bush.

Libertarians will be on at least 49 state ballots, several more than the most optimistic expectations of Nader. While Democrats rally around their nominee, the base of the Republican Party is showing some signs of fragmentation.

"I think [the Bush campaign] should be concerned. I don't know how concerned," said Don Devine, vice chairman of the American Conservative Union and a longtime GOP insider.

But so far, indications are that the Bush-Cheney campaign is not keeping it in mind. A senior adviser to the campaign, who did not want his name used so he could speak more frankly, said there was no concern in the campaign.

"None, none," the adviser emphasized. "[Mr. Bush is] as strong as Ronald Reagan was in 1984."

However, historians point out that Mr. Bush is no Mr. Reagan. The Cold War had the effect of unifying the Republicans like little else. Even the dramatic deficit increases of the time, largely due to defense spending, were seen as necessary in the fight to end communism.

And President Reagan did not have an unstable occupation on his hands. Nor did he face nearly as united a Democratic Party as exists today. The result: some conservatives are questioning the voluminous spending for the war in Iraq.

"The Libertarians will impact Republicans more than Nader will impact Democrats," said Lawrence Jacobs, the director of the 2004 Elections Project for the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota and possibly the nation's preeminent expert on third-party politics.

In the key battleground state of Wisconsin, the 2002 Libertarian gubernatorial candidate Ed Thompson garnered about 185,000 votes, a startling 10.5 percent. The new governor, Democrat Jim Doyle, won by about 75,000 votes.

"I had the best showing of any Libertarian ever, except one candidate in Alaska," said a proud Thompson, who is the maverick brother of former Wisconsin governor and now Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson.

"The [Libertarian nominee] could be every bit as

threatening to the Republicans as Nader is to the Democrats in Wisconsin," Thompson said. "But I think to do that it is personality based."

Senate and gubernatorial races from 1998 to 2002 indicate that Libertarians have repeatedly swung elections in the Democrats' favor.

For example, in the 2002 governor's race in the swing state of Oregon, Libertarian Tom Cox pulled in 57,760 votes to help Democrat Theodore Kulongoski eke out a 35,000 vote win over Republican Kevin Mannix.

In the 1998 Nevada U.S. Senate race, Democrat Harry Reid won by 401 votes over Republican John Ensign. Libertarian Michael Cloud earned 8,129 votes.

The question in this year's presidential race, where the country appears to be split right down the middle between Democrats and Republicans, is: Can any third-party candidate make a difference?

Exit polling and ballot totals show that if Ralph Nader had not been on the ballot in 2000 in either New Hampshire or Florida, former Vice President Al Gore would have won the election over Mr. Bush.

"I believe many fewer will vote for Nader this time, though it still could be enough to make the difference," said Charles Cook, editor of the nonpartisan Cook Political Report.

Nader's endorsement this year by the Reform Party and his efforts to work with presumptive Democratic nominee

CBS News.com, New York, New York -- May 21, 2004

John Kerry has some political analysts convinced that his support may be more equally distributed between the right and left than in 2000.

"I may be very wrong but I would be absolutely stunned if [the Libertarians] turned into anything of any consequence," said Cook.

Cook said this is because "the American people overwhelmingly believe that there are big differences" between the major parties this year. But he also pointed out "the race will be close."

In a close race, Libertarians have learned from Nader, it only takes one state to change the course of the nation. Such influence translates to political weight in Washington.

"I think there is no question the Bush campaign should be concerned," said Libertarian candidate Russo, who placed a surprising second in 1998 in the four-way Republican gubernatorial primary in Nevada.

In 2004, Nevada is considered one of 17 to 19 swing states. Russo thinks he can overcome Nolan's veteran's advantage with delegates during the Libertarian convention because of his political success and charisma. He added that the bulk of support is "defiantly on the right" because of "overspending and the war in Iraq."