

LIBERTY PLEDGE

newsletter

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LP hires recent college grad as Pledge Coordinator

JESSICA WILSON WILL SERVE AS LIAISON TO MONTHLY PLEDGERS

The national Libertarian Party has hired a Liberty Pledge Coordinator to oversee the pledge program, edit Liberty Pledge News, and serve as a liaison to the party's 2,000 monthly pledgers.

The new coordinator is Jessica Neno Wilson, 22, a native of Mobile, Ala. She has previous experience running a pledge program at her alma mater, the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. Executive Director Joe Seehusen said he was highly impressed by Wilson's organizational skills, which became evident immediately after she was hired in February.



Neno Wilson

"If we had 10 just like Jessica, we could take over the country," Seehusen said. "We needed someone who could coordinate special projects such as the pledge program, and she has taken that ball and run with it. She will be a tremendous asset to this organization."

Wilson's duties as Pledge Coordinator will include serving as pledgers' main point of contact inside the national headquarters, producing Liberty Pledge News and coordinating special events for pledgers.

Wilson will also assist with other projects inside LP headquarters, such as helping plan the upcoming national convention and assisting with youth outreach.

"My mission as the coordinator of the pledge program is to serve the pledging members and recruit new pledgers as well," she said. "I am eager to get to know as many of you as possible and to learn from your feedback."

Currently there are exactly 2,000 monthly pledgers, and their contributions account for 22 percent of the LP's annual budget. Pledge revenue is used to help fund basic operations as well as political activities, media outreach, campus recruitment, membership growth projects and other pressing needs.

One immediate change planned for Liberty Pledge News: regular features on donors, in which they will get to share their stories. Anyone interested in being featured in a future issue,

Wilson says, should send in 250 to 500 words, "explaining why you are a member of the Libertarian Party, why you pledge monthly to the LP, or why you recently increased your pledge amount."

Any other ideas for improving Liberty Pledge News are also welcome.

"I want to make this publication as informative and useful as possible, and the best way to do that is to solicit ideas directly from our readers," she said.

In her new capacity Wilson intends to draw on her previous nonprofit experience, which includes three-and-a-half years as manager of the annual fund program at the University of Southern Mississippi.

"Working for the annual fund gave me an appreciation for how important it is both to connect and build rapport with existing donors and also to use innovative techniques to bring new donors into the community," she said. "I believe we can increase the number of pledgers by 50 percent over two years with an aggressive recruitment effort."

Wilson earned her degree in American Studies in May, 2003, and is working part-time on a master's degree -- also in American Studies -- at George Washington University.

To contact Wilson, e-mail JessicaWilson@HQ.LP.ORG or call (202) 333-0008 ext. 235.

Pledgers-Only Convention Event

The LP's national office will host an invitation-only event at the upcoming national convention to honor all Liberty Pledge donors. The party, which will feature drinks, dancing, and hors d'oeuvres, will take place on Saturday, May 29, at 6:00pm in Imperial Ballroom A in the Atlanta Marriott Marquis.

"This reception was arranged exclusively for Liberty Pledgers as a way to recognize them for being the financial backbone of the party," said Jessica Neno Wilson, the new coordinator of the pledge program. "This is our opportunity to thank them in person."

Pledgers should expect to receive their invitation by mail in April. More information on the 2004 Libertarian Party National Convention in Atlanta can be found at www.lpconvention.org.

Former police chief does things his own way

By Michael Reed

Jerry Cameron has always taken his own path.

In Fernandina Beach as police chief, he used western-style "wanted" posters to catch criminals. In St. Johns County, he supported a Democrat even though he was a Republican to spoil County Commissioner Mary Kohnke's re-election in 2002.

Disenchanted, he recently left the Republican Party to become a **Libertarian** because he said his former party is shifting from its principles of limited government and fiscal conservatism. The Republican establishment thinks he's a renegade, he said.

So far, Cameron will face Republican Wiley Deck, U.S. Rep. John Mica's district representative, for state Rep. Doug Wiles' seat in the Florida House. Other candidates may still file. Wiles can't seek re-election because of term limits.

Cameron said he looks forward to the challenge, and his campaign will be aggressive.

He resigned from the St. Johns County Republican Executive Committee in October because, he said, he was exposed to the inner workings of local party officials. He said he mentioned his potential bid for the Florida Legislature and didn't like the response.

"They are only interested in my ability to get elected, and not what I would do if I am elected," Cameron said.

But Marty Robinson, chairwoman of the Executive Committee, said Cameron got a fair shake.

She and Cameron discussed issues, such as legalizing drugs, which are not supported by the Republican Party, she said. Robinson suggested that Cameron's political views had shifted from the traditional Republican platform but said the party has not shifted from its traditional values.

His "common-sense government" perspective of the War on Drugs is part of the principles he developed as a student of moral and political philosophy. When issues are based in principle, the outcomes are generally positive, he said.

Cameron sells himself as someone who worked inside government for 17 years. Other than police chief, he served as an interim city manager and a public works director.

He said he has seen what works and what doesn't. Government fails when it tries to do too much, he said.

In St. Johns County, Cameron influenced a County Commission election because he felt the incumbent Republican candidate, Mary Kohnke, was too Democratic. He supported his friend Doug Laidlaw by raising money and encouraging him to run.

Laidlaw, running as a Democrat, closed the primaries by entering the race. Kohnke faced Republicans Judy Ham and Bruce Maguire. Maguire ultimately won.

"I didn't feel like this country needed another four years of her (Mary Kohnke)," Cameron said.

Kohke said Cameron disenfranchised Democratic voters because Laidlaw was not a viable candidate. She said it was a dirty trick and Democrats should remember that on Election

Day.

"I think it was a terrible disservice to the Democrats in St. Johns County," Kohnke said.

Laidlaw is now a Libertarian, too, and says Cameron's integrity goes unmatched.

"I just think Jerry would be a great elected official," Laidlaw said.

Cameron originally thought about running for the St. Johns Board of County Commissioners. Commissioner Marc Jacalone had been contemplating a run for Wiles' District 20 House seat.

Jacalone, a Republican, said he looked at the job requirements of a state representative and decided he couldn't

The St. Augustine Record, St. Augustine, Florida
-- March 1, 2004

be as effective as he wanted. He's running for re-election to his county seat.

He said Cameron would be a great representative, but is disappointed he switched parties.

"He's disenchanted for some reason with the Republican Party," Jacalone said.

Cameron characterizes Jacalone as a good friend who has done his best to control the growth of government.

They also have business dealings: Cameron traded four lots on State Road A1A for a service station Jacalone owned. Cameron said it allowed him to defer capital gains taxes until the station is sold, and he said he'll probably sell it to one of the employees and get out of the business.

Camerson's busy as the new chairman of the Libertarian Party of St. Johns County and as the at-large district representative of the party's state executive committee. He said he may be asked to speak at the party's national convention in Atlanta in May.

St. Johns County has 220 registered Libertarians. Cameron said the goal is 400 by the end of the summer and believes he'll bring more people to the party.

"The candidacy is definitely energizing people, particularly disaffected Republicans," Cameron said.

Historically, the Libertarian Party has struggled in elections -- always battling uphill and winning only a fraction of the votes.

They ran a candidate in every state House race in 2002, but none were elected. Cameron knows this but said the party's chances are better now.

Cameron said he will present the truth in his campaign -- an effort that he said will be energetic and aggressive. He said he wants to move power away from Tallahassee and closer to residents.

"I am determined to make a difference, be it elected or in the capacity of a citizen, which in our country is the highest office," Cameron said.

Hagerstown, Indiana judge forges her own path

By Rebecca Helmes

Just over three months into her new position in public office, town judge Susan Bell downplays her job.

Serving without a law degree in Hagerstown -- it's not required in this town court position -- Bell said she began reading up on statutes and laws as soon as she found out she won in November.

"It's not as difficult as it sounds," Bell said about the judge position. "The law is cut and dried in most cases."

"I'm really enjoying this," Bell said. "You never know what's going to come up."

But the importance of her as judge lies just as much in who and what she represents as the people she serves in her job.

Bell is the only **Libertarian**-elected judge in Indiana and one of a mere three Libertarian judges in the country. That makes her an ambassador for her party in a state where 13 other Libertarians hold elected positions.

Bell said her political affiliation does not carry over much into her role as judge because judges are supposed to uphold the law, not pursue a political agenda. Even though she may not agree with some of the laws, she upholds them.

"A judge's job is to enforce the law fairly," Bell said. "I believe any judge should be non-partisan. I feel like I'm open-minded and neutral."

Bell does, however, like being a Libertarian in public office. She said it's good to have a Libertarian in a position that deals with the public so they can learn more about the party.

Her contact with the people of Hagerstown is what helped her win the election, she says. She knocked on every door in town and spent Election Day at the polls. This could have made up for the low-budget approach Libertarians took to the election, spending \$1,200 total on their five town candidates.

Bell ran for judge because she thinks all candidates should have some form of competition. It gives voters a chance to ask themselves whether their candidates will do the jobs they're elected to do.

She also believes in what Libertarians stand for: smaller, less-involved government and fiscal responsibility.

"The Republicans and Democrats have kind of merged," Bell said. "The Libertarians have the same views as the old Republicans."

Mark Rutherford, state chairman of the Indiana Libertarian Party, said when people from his party run for election, they affect the debates.

"It forces the other two parties to address our issues," Rutherford said. "In many, many counties we play a significant role in the election. We at least force the incumbents to talk to the community and justify their existence."

To prepare for her job as judge, Bell studies laws for each case to familiarize herself with them.

Initial hearings are held twice a month and trials are scheduled for the first Saturday of every month.

Bell stops by her office each day to check messages, meet with anyone who needs to see her and to read up on cases. Being judge is not a full-time job. She and her husband Rex also own a furniture shop, reupholstery business and a contracting business.

"We encourage people to get involved in voting, their government, whatever party they're in," said Gayle Bond, vice chairman of the Wayne County Libertarian Party. By having Bell in office, Bond said she serves as a reminder to the other parties that the Libertarians exist and will continue being politically involved.

"It's to wake up the other two parties," Bond said. "We tried to run somebody for every office that was open."

In 2002, the Libertarians had 16 people run on their ticket in Wayne County.

"We don't expect to have a full slate," Bell said about this year's election. Wayne County Libertarians will nominate people to run for county offices at a convention April 19.

"We're gearing up for this fall's election," Bell said. "We want to give people options."

(Left) *The Palladium-Item*, Richmond, Indiana -- March 5, 2004

(Below) *The Mercury News*, San Jose, California -- March 3, 2004

Fate of library tax uncertain

By Putsata Reang

A proposed measure that would have renewed and increased a 10-year-old library tax struggled Tuesday night to win the necessary votes to pass.

The failure of Measure B would mean libraries would be forced to reduce hours and cut services and new books.

"We were concerned all along because it requires a two-thirds majority vote," said Melinda Cervantes, county librarian. "It's pretty challenging in these times."

Opponents of the measure were satisfied with the results.

"It's just generally a bad time to pass any type of tax increase," said Ray Strong, former chair of the **Libertarian Party** of Santa Clara County. "People who are putting these things on the ballot should be cutting back."

If Measure B passes, homeowners in nine cities and in unincorporated areas of the county would see their property taxes increase by \$8.34, from \$33.66 to \$42 annually. Retail businesses, which now pay \$84.15 an acre annually, would pay \$20.85 more a year for a total of \$105 annually an acre.

The tax would affect residents in Campbell, Cupertino, Gilroy, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Milpitas, Morgan Hill, Monte Sereno and Saratoga, and the unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County.

Georgia Libertarians are ready for their breakout

By Bob Barr

Almost every Republican meeting I have attended in Georgia in the past two decades included at least one speaker who established his GOP bona fides by proclaiming, "When I first started in the Republican Party in Georgia, you could fit the entire party in a phone booth."

Cheers and applause inevitably ensue. I have to tell you, however, that at some point soon, I hope our leaders recognize it's been a really long time -- beyond the lifetimes of 95 percent of Georgia Republicans -- since the party could have met in a phone booth. At that point, perhaps, they'll stop using this silly anecdote. Besides, it won't be long before most people won't even know what a phone booth is.

This past weekend in Douglasville, I spoke at a political convention that, while perhaps only a bit bigger than being able to fit in a phone booth, was longer on substance and shorter on trite sound bites than the vast majority of political events I've attended in recent years. I spoke to the convention of the **Libertarian Party** of Georgia.

While I am not a card-carrying member of the Libertarian Party, I must say that, after speaking to its members and listening to many of their concerns, I've decided that Libertarians have much to offer Georgians of all political stripes. I hope the media wakes up and pays more heed to the Libertarian candidates and the substance of their positions. On many of the issues comprising its platform, the Libertarian Party of Georgia has staked out a position strikingly in accord with what I perceive to be positions favored by mainstream Georgians. For example:

- The party understands the Second Amendment, follows legislation affecting firearms rights, and intelligently articulates a reasonable position.

- Strong families, with a minimum of government interference, are favored by their platform.

- Libertarians don't like the government collecting fingerprints and other personally identifying data; neither do most Georgians.

- Libertarians share the growing concerns of many Georgians of all political persuasions that in its zeal to fight terrorism, the government is showing dangerous disdain for citizens' civil liberties, including our right to privacy.

- Like most Georgians, Libertarians understand that public expressions of religious beliefs, so long as not forced on others, do not constitute a threat to the Republic.

- The Libertarian Party of Georgia champions clear criminal laws, and consistent application and objective judicial review of them. If that's not mainstream, we're in deep trouble.

- Bedrock protection of property rights, something we need more rather than less of these days, remains a vital tenet of the Georgia's Libertarian Party platform.

To be sure, the Libertarian Party adheres to some policies that are not shared by most Georgians. Notable among those are its advocacy of loosened anti-drug and anti-obscenity laws, and its pro-choice stance.

To those Georgians -- Republican and Democrat -- who may be considering the Libertarian Party but do not share its views on all issues, the relevant question is: Do you agree with every element of every part of your *current* party's platform? Probably not.

The flip side of that coin is whether Libertarians recognize that their party can grow and strengthen its ability to accomplish its goals if it doesn't insist on a litmus test of 100 percent adherence to its platform.

My experience last weekend indicates that Georgia Libertarians may be ready for prime time. First, the party invited a nonmember, someone with whom the party has had serious disagreements, to address its state convention: yours truly. (Nationally, many Libertarians worked actively to defeat me in the 2002 election.) Second, while some questions indicated pronounced disagreement on the drug issue, the majority of questions and concerns were decidedly mainstream concerns about the growing power of government and the threat to liberty it poses to all Georgians.

This is a good sign. Georgia needs a strong, mature and well-organized Libertarian Party. America does, too.

(Left) *Creative Loafing*, Atlanta, Georgia -- March 4, 2004

(Below) *Associated Press*, Madison, Wisconsin - March 6, 2004

Photo finish in Wisconsin Libertarian primary

Associated Press

The state Elections Board has certified the results of a close contest in Wisconsin's **Libertarian** presidential primary last month and found a different winner than the votes initially showed.

Unofficial results after the Feb. 17 primary showed Michael Badnarik defeated Gary Nolan by just nine votes, but the official count put Nolan as the winner by 76 votes, according to the Elections Board.

The official results showed Nolan had 43 percent of the vote, compared with 41 percent for Badnarik. Another 12 percent of voters who cast Libertarian ballots were undecided.

Libertarian Party candidates for president appeared on the ballot thanks to Tomah, Wis., bar owner Ed Thompson's showing in the 2002 gubernatorial election.

Ed Thompson collected slightly more than ten percent of the vote, the threshold required for the party to gain greater ballot access.

The party will pick a presidential nominee in May at its national convention in Atlanta.