

# LIBERTY PLEDGE

## newsletter

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### CRIMINAL PROBE IN ILLINOIS ...

## Ballot shenanigans boomerang on GOP

Libertarian Cal Skinner lost his race for Illinois governor in 2002, but now he's won a moral victory: A federal grand jury is weighing corruption charges against the Republican political machine that illegally tried to knock him off the ballot.

According to a report in the *Chicago Tribune*, a federal grand jury is looking into charges that Illinois Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka used state employees to challenge a slate of Libertarian candidates before the 2002 election. The employees were on the state clock at the time.

The investigation was reportedly triggered by an affidavit from Cathy Lynn Santos, a former contract employee who worked in the treasurer's office in 2002.

Santos said she went to work on June 28, 2002 and discovered that a majority of the treasurer's office staff was gone. According to a copy of the affidavit obtained by the *Illinois Leader*, Santos said she was told by a co-worker that the missing staff members were at the Illinois Board of Elections office, trying to find discrepancies in petitions filed by Skinner and other Libertarian candidates.

Weeks later Republican officials filed a challenge against Skinner in an effort to kick him off the ballot, even though the LP had filed over 52,000 signatures -- more than double the 25,000 required by law.

Later that month, Republicans withdrew the challenge after it became obvious that the LP had filed more than enough valid signatures.

Topinka, who was first elected state treasurer in 1994, is currently serving her third term in office. She also serves as the state chair of the Republican Party.

Illinois Libertarians -- who have charged that state employees illegally worked to keep LP candidates off the ballot in both 1998 and 2002 -- said they are not surprised at the new charges, only at the scope of the cover-up.

"Boy, if this is true, that evidence is horrendous for the entire Republican Party," said Illinois LP Executive Director Jeff Trigg. "To have the entire Republican state central committee possibly involved in covering up this information would make them a criminal enterprise the likes of which has never been seen in U.S. history."

### TAX FIGHT IN GEORGIA ...

## County LP kicks off battle against sales tax

Libertarians in Cobb County, Georgia, are leading a campaign to kill a SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) -- and save taxpayers \$240 million.

"The Libertarian Party of Clayton will launch a door-to-door, yard sign, e-mail, and web campaign to inform voters about the SPLOST," Cobb County LP Chair Philip Bradley announced on July 8. "It will also host public forums, inviting county commissioners to hear what taxpayers have to say about the massive tax increase being proposed."

Cobb County residents will vote in September on whether to reauthorize the tax, which was first approved in 1998. If passed, the SPLOST will keep the county sales tax at 5 percent, instead of allowing it to fall to 4 percent. The money would be used for school construction projects.

However, the tax is a big mistake, said Bradley.

"At a time when people are being laid off work and forced to endure financial belt-tightening at home, the board is asking the taxpayers of Clayton to give themselves a 17 percent tax increase this fall," he said.

"In this economy, local governments should be cutting costs and taxes, not introducing new taxes. Especially not when the proposed tax increase represents a quarter-billion dollars in new government spending and special projects."

## Seehusen salutes pledgers

Incoming Executive Director Joe Seehusen wants to say a couple of very important words to the Libertarian Party's monthly pledgers: Thank you.

"Your generous, steadfast support for the Libertarian Party is truly invaluable, and I want you to know how much you are appreciated," Seehusen said. "You are the financial backbone of this party, and it is not an exaggeration to say that without your consistent monthly gift we simply could not function. I salute your commitment to liberty."

Currently the party has 2,160 monthly givers, each of whom receives the *Liberty Pledge* newsletter, which contains an assortment of news articles about the accomplishments of Libertarians around the USA.

## Food sales-tax issue ballots in the mail

By Aaron Porter

MONTROSE -- Ballots are in the mail for a special election to determine if a tax will stand on food for home kitchens.

The city of Montrose mailed 6,228 ballots to active registered voters Thursday, reported City Clerk Mary Watt. The ballots should reach voters by today, she said.

The Western Slope **Libertarian Party**, a local political group, is challenging the city's sales tax on food groceries.

"The time is right, the revenues are growing quickly in this town and the city has plenty of revenue sources," said Mike Humbert, party chairman.

Opponents said the proposal is expected to cut city revenue about 17 percent. The exemption from sales tax would be immediate and offers no alternative source of revenue for city expenses in the second half of 2003, they said.

"Since there is no means of replacing the revenue, this is merely an attempt to cripple government. These are people who don't like government, that's my belief," said Noelle Hagan, mayor pro-tem.

The proposal would exempt from sales tax food that is purchased for consumption at home.

The Libertarians question the morality of charging sales tax on the basic staple of daily life. The group claims the tax is inequitable to poor and fixed-income residents, who pay a larger proportion of their income for groceries than residents in other income brackets.

"That was the driving force for doing this in the first place," Humbert said.

City revenue continues to increase, Humbert said. Its collections increased 18 percent in April over 2002, he claimed.

Douglas Bruce, the author of the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights amendment to the Colorado Constitution, is openly siding with the Libertarians. In a letter, Bruce urged residents to vote in favor of the sales-tax exemption, citing the city's overall budget has increased while exceeding its revenue every year since 1999.

The Libertarians expect economic stimulus if the ballot question passes, Humbert said.

"History shows that any time there's some tax relief, it actually stimulates the economy and increases revenue," he said.

Opponents fear it will immediately slash city revenue, leading to cutbacks in public services.

"Nobody likes to pay taxes, but in the real world, the services and quality of life we have come to expect are not free," wrote Allan Belt, president of the Montrose Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber voted May 12 to oppose the ballot question, citing conflict with its mission to "foster positive economic growth."

(Left) *The Daily Sentinel*, Grand Junction, Colorado -- June 30, 2003

(Below) *San Antonio Express-News*, San Antonio, Texas -- June 29, 2003

## Libertarian Party rails against status quo

By Rebeca Rodriguez

Voters disgusted with bloated government and virtually indistinguishable political parties could find an alternative in the **Libertarian Party**, leaders of the group said Saturday.

"Increasingly, Americans are getting frustrated and it's getting harder and harder to tell the difference between the Democrats and the Republicans," said Libertarian presidential hopeful and former radio talk show host Gary Nolan. "They have become a homogenous unit; they talk a lot and they spend a lot."

The Libertarian Party of Texas held its annual state conference Saturday in San Antonio, featuring a controversial former New Mexico governor and two Libertarian presidential hopefuls.

The party supports drastically cutting taxes, ending corporate welfare, slashing welfare programs and legalizing drugs.

About 60 people attended to hear a message that government must shrink and civil liberties must be allowed to flourish.

Although the party is small, at 23,000 members nationwide, leaders say dissatisfaction with the economy, the war in Iraq and perceived intrusion by the federal government into private matters could feed a growing interest in the Libertarian movement.

"People are libertarians for the most part, they just don't know it," said former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson. "People have been taught that this country became great because of government, but this country became great because of its people."

Johnson, a Republican who served as governor from 1994 to 2002, made headlines for his stance on legalizing drugs.

At a luncheon Saturday, Johnson said his position has often been misinterpreted to mean that he condones drug use, which he does not.

"Don't do drugs, don't smoke, don't drink; those are good ideas," he said. "But the war on drugs is a miserable failure. This is a war that can't be won. You have the right to be stupid in this country, and that includes the right to do things that might be harmful to you."

Another presidential hopeful, Austin computer consultant Michael Badnarik, said the U.S. Constitution should be the irrefutable basis for civil liberties in this country.

Badnarik said he has three goals in the near future: double the size of the party, get the Libertarian nomination in Atlanta, and get 2 million votes in the general election.

# Medicare bill may signal conservatives hitting bottom

By Christine Hall

When 19 House conservatives opposed the new Medicare prescription drug entitlement that passed the chamber last week, it either signaled that “conservatives are starting to wake up” or that, because of the small number of opponents, Republicans are “a lost party” when it comes to controlling government spending. It depends on whom you ask.

Texas Republican Ron Paul (R-Tex.), who voted against the White House-backed bill that has a 10-year cost estimate of \$400 billion, said despite being on the losing end, the Medicare vote may embolden conservatives.

“Conservatives are starting to wake up,” said Paul. “Up until now, it’s been very difficult for conservatives to say no to anything in the post-9/11 atmosphere and war conditions.

“If this had been a Clinton proposal, you wouldn’t have had five Republicans supporting it,” Paul added.

But many fiscal conservatives aren’t as optimistic about the outlook for shrinking government spending.

So far, a Republican president and Congress have been spending more than ever. Federal domestic spending rose 8 percent from 2001 to 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, compared to 4.8 percent from 1993 to 1994, when Democrats were in control.

Federal discretionary, non-defense spending rose 18 percent in the first three years of the Bush administration, according to the Cato Institute.

As Heritage Foundation President Ed Fuelleter has noted, about a quarter of the new spending goes to federal agriculture subsidies (the farm bill), federal health programs (other than Medicare and Medicaid), education (“The No Child Left Behind Act”) and unemployment compensation.

Another fifth of the new spending is on defense, though not necessarily on combating terrorism.

The **Libertarian Party** points to the fact that 92 percent of House Republicans voted for the Medicare bill.

“It’s pretty clear that anyone who wants smaller government is wasting their vote on Republicans, even those 19,” said George Getz, Libertarian Party spokesman. “These people are so badly outnumbered. There’s no cause [for] optimism here.

“When 92 percent of a party is voting for big government, that is a lost party,” said Getz.

“The actions of the Republicans on [the Medicare bill] were unconscionable,” said Steve Moore, president of the Club for Growth. “I don’t see how anyone can stand up and call themselves a fiscal conservative and vote for the biggest entitlement expansion since Lyndon Johnson was president.

“This is Bush’s party now, and the Republicans do follow Bush like sheep on some of these votes,” said Moore.

(Left) *Cybercast News Service* -- June 30, 2003

(Below) *Arizona Daily Sun*, Flagstaff, Arizona -- June 25, 2003

# Court: County must list Libertarians on ballot

By Howard Fischer

PHOENIX -- The Arizona Court of Appeals has slapped down efforts by two counties to avoid having to put precinct committeemen and committeewomen candidates for the **Libertarian Party** on primary election ballots.

In a newly issued decision, the judges acknowledged that the party does not qualify for continued ballot status at the local level in Cochise and Coconino counties. That is because its local candidates in those counties did not get at least 5 percent of the vote last time or come up with the necessary registration.

But the party did meet at least one of those tests on a statewide basis, largely because of its relative strength in Pima and Maricopa counties.

Based on that, the court said that county election officials statewide have to honor the party’s request to have its precinct workers candidates’ names on a separate primary ballot -- even if it is an additional burden.

The issue is significant because the precinct workers choose the county committeemen and committeewomen. And they, in turn, choose the state committee representatives, the people who govern the party and determine things like the party platform.

Judge Joseph Howard, writing for the unanimous appellate court, said that if some counties cannot elect local committee representatives, then the entire system does not work. He said the fact that the Libertarian Party is entitled to have its candidates for statewide office on the ballot, by extension, means it must be able to get its local precinct committee workers elected.

“It makes sense that a political party entitled to continued statewide representation for the election of state officers would be allowed to have a state committee drawn from the entire state,” Howard wrote.

The appellate court was undeterred by claims from both counties that creating special ballots for Libertarian candidates for precinct committeemen and committeewomen would create an additional burden.

Howard said it was the Legislature that created any additional burden. He suggested that if counties want relief they should ask state lawmakers to change the statute.



(Right) *Up & Coming Magazine*, Wilmington, North Carolina -- June 17, 2003

(Below) *San Jose Mercury News*, San Jose, California -- June 4, 2003

## NC speaker kills ballot access reform bill

By Pete Camp

A bill that would have reformed North Carolina's "worst-in-the-nation" ballot access laws was allowed to die in the General Assembly without a vote -- despite a feverish lobbying effort from the state **Libertarian Party**.

H867, the Electoral Fairness Act, failed on May 8 when North Carolina General Assembly co-Speakers Richard Morgan (R-Moore) and Jim Black (D-Mecklenburg) refused to bring the bill to the floor for a vote. May 8 was the "crossover deadline" for the General Assembly to pass bills and send them on to the State Senate.

"The bill had more than enough votes to pass," said Dave Goree, North Carolina LP ballot access director. "However, house rules allow the speaker to ignore bills on the calendar, not allowing them to come to a vote. Both chose to exercise that power against the Electoral Fairness Act."

Morgan said he wouldn't allow H867 to come to a vote because the 2 percent ballot access requirement "maintains stability within [the state's] political system." He also said the ballot access barriers kept "illegitimate" political parties "at bay."

North Carolina LP leaders blasted Morgan -- both for his comments and for the decision to squash any vote on H867.

"It should be up to the voters, not the speakers, to decide the legitimacy of political ideas," said Barbara Howe, state LP chair. "It's a tribute to our success, because it proves our competition is so afraid of us they'll go to extreme and unethical lengths to deny citizens the right to vote against them."

The bill was unanimously approved by the Election Law and Campaign Finance Reform Committee April 17 and placed on the General Assembly calendar on April 24. Had it passed, H867 would have reduced the number of signatures required for a third-party statewide candidate to qualify for the ballot from two percent of the current number of registered voters (about 58,842) to 0.5 percent of the last gubernatorial vote (about 14,711).

The criteria for independent candidates, who must now collect about 100,000 signatures for statewide races, would also have been lowered to 14,711 signatures.

H867 would also have reduced the number of votes required for a party to stay ballot-qualified, from 10 percent of the last vote for president or governor to 2 percent of the vote.

"Since 1998, North Carolina has required more signatures for minor party and independent presidential candidates than any state except California," noted Richard Winger, publisher of Ballot Access News.

For the 2000 presidential election, the Libertarian Party spent about \$100,000 to hire paid petitioners to collect enough signatures to qualify for the North Carolina ballot. The Reform Party spent about \$250,000.

## Tax backers seek more school funds

By David L. Beck

Would Loudon Nelson have voted for Santa Cruz's Measure B?

Definitely, says Franklin Marshall, whose children's biography of the former slave is being published Tuesday to coincide with an election in which two local school districts hope to pass parcel taxes.

"He loved education so much, being illiterate," Marshall said. "It was a parallel with being a slave: his desire, his eagerness for gaining his freedom. I think he probably had the same appetite for being educated."

Backers of Measure B, in the Santa Cruz City Elementary School District, and Measure A, in the San Lorenzo Valley district, hope voters have that appetite, too. Both measures are parcel taxes that require two-thirds approval to pass.

Opponents are relying mostly on letters to the editor and appearances at forums -- what Patrick Dugan, head of the county's **Libertarian Party** Central Committee, calls "personal campaigning."

Dugan argues that the San Lorenzo school district already has more money for fewer students than it did eight years ago. "They need to take responsibility here, and I don't see them doing it," he said.

Dugan signed the ballot argument against Measure A. Measure B's opposition is led by veteran tax opponent Carolyn M. Busenhart, who signed the ballot argument against it.

Both tax measures are intended to supplement traditional school funding with extra money to keep class sizes small, support arts and music programs, retain librarians and pay for other activities the districts say they can no longer afford because declining enrollment has meant less state funding.

The Santa Cruz measure would raise about \$1.3 million per year, at a rate of \$6.25 per month, per parcel. The San Lorenzo Valley measure would raise about the same amount at the rate of \$11.25 per month, per parcel. Both taxes would end after five years.

Their backers are cautiously upbeat. "It's going remarkably well," said Measure B supporter Glen Schaller. In the Santa Cruz Mountains, Measure A campaign co-chair Susan Weber said the drive was "going OK, actually," but added, "We'll be really glad when Tuesday's over. We're all very tired."