



Published for friends and supporters of the Libertarian Party

Liberty Pledge

NEWSLETTER

JULY 1996

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LP National Convention nominates Harry Browne for president in '96

Browne vows to try to win entry into presidential debates; Jorgensen wins VP slot

With an overwhelming first-ballot victory, best-selling author Harry Browne won the presidential nomination of the Libertarian Party at their national convention this weekend.

His next goal: A ballot spot in all 50 states and an invitation to the televised presidential debates this fall.

In the week following the convention, two newspapers and two prominent political columnists urged Browne's inclusion in the debates.

Browne, 63, won more than 68% of the votes from the 600+ Libertarian Party delegates gathered at the Hyatt Capitol Hill hotel in downtown Washington, DC, on Saturday, July 7. He defeated challengers Rick Tompkins (who won 12% of the vote), None Of The Above (10%), Irwin Schiff (5%), and Doug Ohmen (3%).

In his acceptance speech to the cheering delegates and a live C-SPAN audience, Browne posed the question he said might change the direction of government once and for all: "Would you be willing to give up your favorite government programs if it meant you would never again have to pay income tax?"

If elected, Browne promised to immediately abolish the income tax and deliver "huge tax cuts *now*, huge spending cuts *now*, [and] a balanced budget *now*."

Again and again, Browne returned to the central theme of his campaign: "Government doesn't work. People everywhere recognize that government doesn't work. It doesn't deliver the mail on time; it doesn't keep the cities safe; it doesn't educate our children properly," he said.

"Government has failed. So we don't want to reform the federal government. We don't want to slow its growth. We don't want to improve the management of it. We want to reduce it to the absolute minimum possible," he said.

Winning the VP slot was Jo Jorgensen, 39, president of a software duplicating company in South Carolina.

Browne's campaign to be included in the fall's presidential debates won an immediate boost in the days

following the convention.

■ David Broder wrote in his nationally syndicated column on July 10: "Browne is articulate and quick-witted, and he'd undoubtedly draw votes if he could . . . muster enough support to be included in the presidential debates. That is a long shot, but there'd be some value in having 100 million Americans hear him . . ."

■ An editorial in the *Denver Post* on July 11 stated: "As a party, the Libertarians have clearly earned inclusion in this fall's [presidential] debates. It would be fair to set 1996 debates between Clinton, Dole, and Browne as representatives of the only parties to meet the present yardsticks for national recognition."

■ The *Times-Herald Record* (Middletown, NY) on July 9 wrote: "[Browne's] presence at the debate table would make for livelier . . . and more meaningful discussion."

■ *Washington Post* columnist Colman McCarthy wrote on July 13: "Harry Browne, well spoken and not sponging on taxpayers, deserves a place at whichever forum hosts Clinton-Dole debates."

Browne, a resident of Tennessee, writes an investment newsletter and is the author of nine books, including his recent campaign manifesto *Why Government Doesn't Work*, the #1 bestseller *You Can Profit from a Monetary Crisis*, and *How I Found Freedom in an Unfree World*.

The convention received considerable media coverage, with more than 50 newspapers, magazine, and radio journalists — and two separate camera crews from CNN — attending the four-day event. Stories about the convention appeared in most major American newspapers, including the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*.

The party's 800# received more than 10,000 calls during the convention, and calls continued to pour in at the rate of 250 to 500 a day during the following week.

Also at the convention, National LP Chairman Steve Dasbach was re-elected to office by a large margin, defeating challenger Gene Cisewski 58% to 33%. (NOTA won 9%.) Karen Allard was re-elected as Vice Chair without opposition, as was Treasurer Hugh Butler. Gary Johnson replaced John Famularo as LP Secretary.



■ Harry Browne

CAMPAIGN '96

Seeking Political Breakthrough, Libertarians Pick Harry Browne

Doomsaying Author of '70s Gets Party's Nod for Presidential Bid

By David S. Broder
Washington Post Staff Writer

Twenty-five years after its birth, the Libertarian Party yesterday began another push for big-league political status by nominating as its presidential candidate a man who made a personal fortune by predicting economic ruin.

Harry Browne, the 63-year-old, best-selling author of such books as "How You Can Profit from a Monetary Crisis," won an easy first-ballot victory over five rivals in voting by 605 delegates at the Libertarian's weekend convention here.

Jo Jorgensen, 39, a Greenville, S.C., computer software company owner, won the spot of vice-presidential candidate for the party that promises to radically reduce the federal government, abolish virtually all federal taxes and shut down both overseas military bases and the "war on drugs," in order to increase individual freedom.

The Libertarian presidential candidate won more than 900,000 votes in 1980, but in 1992 the party's nominee won only 291,000 votes, despite being on the ballot in all 50 states.

Browne and Jorgensen, in their acceptance speeches, insisted that the rebellion against "big government" and the other parties, by both young people and their parents, could make this a breakthrough year for the Libertarians, who argue that their platform would restore the Founders' concept of limited government.

"We are not alone," Browne told the cheering delegates and a C-SPAN television audience. "The

American people are fed up with this wasteful, extravagant government. They are on our side now. We are mainstream."

Jorgensen said Republicans who promise smaller government and lower taxes "give us the equivalent of 1-900 sex. They tell us how much they want us and how good it's going to be. But when we hang up, we realize they've cost us a lot of money . . . and they're never going to come over."

Browne, a polished platform and television performer, said in an interview that his immediate goal is to show enough support in the polls that he is invited to join President Clinton, former senator Robert J. Dole and the nominee of Ross Perot's Reform Party in this autumn's televised presidential debates.

"If I'm at 10 percent, they won't be able to keep me out," he said. "If I'm at 1 percent, I shouldn't be included. It won't be easy, but it is possible, and no other single step would do as much to establish our credibility."

Aides said the party already has ballot position in 33 states and expects to qualify in all the others by late summer. Browne, who has been campaigning for the nomination for two years with personal funds, said he is about to pass the \$1 million mark in fund-raising, adding, "If we can raise \$10 million, we can be a major force in this election."

During a debate Friday with his rivals for the nomination, Browne conceded that "we have only a very, very long-shot chance of winning, but if we get out of the 1 percent class and get 5 percent, we

will get past the hurdle of irrelevancy and draw tens of thousands of new members to our cause."

The Libertarians, who held their first meeting in a Denver living room in 1971, appeared to be poised for a breakthrough in 1980, when nominee Ed Clark won almost a million votes—five times the previous high mark. But support lagged during the years of the "Reagan revolution," and in 1992, Ross Perot's self-financed independent bid drew almost 70 times as many votes as went to Libertarian Andre Marrou.

Browne said he hopes to draw a clear distinction between himself and Perot, if the Dallas billionaire runs again. "He wants to get under the hood and tinker with the engine," Browne said in the interview. "I want to throw the engine out and replace it with a much smaller motor. He just wants to manage big government better. We would go much further than that."

In his speeches Friday and yesterday and in the interview, Browne outlined a series of positions which he said "you won't hear Bill Clinton or Bob Dole trying to steal":

- End the federal role in law enforcement and anti-drug efforts, abolishing the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

- Predicting that "drug use would decline radically and there would be no drug gangs" if all drugs were legalized for people of all ages, Browne said it "is not the president's business to tell anyone to 'just say no.'"



PHOTOS BY KEITH JENKINS—THE WASHINGTON POST
New Jersey delegate Ed Wessmann waves his sign as presidential nominee Harry Browne is introduced at the Libertarian convention.

- End the federal income tax and all other "direct government taxes, and replace them with nothing." Existing tariffs on foreign goods would be enough to finance the remaining federal functions, he said, adding, "I will challenge every American to decide if he would give up his favorite government program in return for no income tax the rest of his life."
- Provide a missile defense for the United States, but scrap all offensive weapons and overseas bases. "We can be more secure, at much lower cost, if other nations understand we are no threat to their security and we will not intervene in their struggles," Browne said.
- End Social Security, substituting "a firm contract with private insurance companies" for current recipients and telling those now paying Social Security taxes that those deductions will stop and they can start their own retirement plans. Browne also said he would phase out Medicare and Medicaid, but had no specific proposal in that area.

president, it is none of my business." Browne gained attention in the 1970s with bestsellers and lectures predicting runaway inflation, a deep recession or depression and a monetary crisis—and prescribing ways a shrewd investor could withstand the general ruin. His views were frequently ridiculed by professional economists, and he acknowledged yesterday that "I learned in the 1970s you can't predict the timing of events. I still think we're headed for trouble, but it might come next week or 20 years from now."

Browne said in the interview that he had not bothered to vote between 1964 and 1994, "because I could see no difference between Barry Goldwater and Lyndon Johnson" or any of the later Republican and Democratic nominees. But "I became aware of the change in the political climate of the country," with even conventional politicians like Clinton acknowledging that "the era of big government is over."

Radio ads for Browne's campaign will start here Monday, "so the national journalists will know we are serious," he said, and expand across the country as finances allow.

One thing he will not do, he said, is accept federal matching money for his campaign. "I do not believe in welfare for individuals, corporations or politicians," Browne said.



Author Harry Browne addresses the convention in Washington after receiving the nomination for president. Browne told supporters, "The American people are fed up with this wasteful, extravagant government."

Browne is Libertarian presidential nominee

Tax foe tapped as party choice on first ballot

By K.L. Billingsley
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Libertarian Party yesterday nominated Harry Browne its 1996 candidate for president of the United States.

Mr. Browne, 63, of Franklin, Tenn., is the author of "Why Government Doesn't Work," a core theme of the party's annual convention winding up here this weekend.

"The Democrats and Republicans come before you at election time and tell you what you want to hear — that they've changed their stripes," said Mr. Browne in his acceptance speech. But the candidate, who carried 416 of the 605 delegates on the first ballot — 68.7 percent of the vote — charged that it was all talk and no action.

"We Libertarians are going to get the federal government out of everything not specified in the Constitution," he said. "We want huge spending cuts now. We want huge tax cuts now. We want a balanced budget now."

The candidate has promised to slash federal spending by 50 percent the first year and immediately balance the budget. Libertarians, according to a party statement, "favor dramatically shrinking the size and cost of government and eliminating laws that stifle the economy and control people's personal choices."

In an interview with The Washington Times, Mr. Browne challenged voters to give up their favorite federal program in return for elimination of the income tax. "That's what we'll do," said Mr. Brown. "We will replace the income tax with nothing."

Mr. Browne said that younger voters were "intuitively libertarian" but often declined to vote because of the "con game" that the Democrats and Republicans are playing with Social Security. The candidate criticized the election machinery that excludes the Libertarian Party candidate from presidential debates, but he had no complaints about the media coverage, which he called "fantastic."

Major electronic and print media covered the convention, which bore the bustle and enthusiasm of a major-party gathering.

A group of disaffected Republicans and Democrats launched the party in 1971 and it has since

grown to the third-largest party in America. The party's best showing came in 1980, when presidential candidate Ed Clark drew 921,299 votes. In 1992, candidate Andre Marrou received 291,000 nationally, but party officials point to rapid growth in other areas.

Bill Winter, the party's communications director, said that in the 1992 elections more than 650 Libertarian candidates ran for office, including 82 for Congress, 15 for Senate and 15 for governor. Overall more than 2.2 million people voted for Libertarian candidates and 11 were elected or re-elected, including state legislator Don Gorman in New York and Bonnie Flickinger, mayor of Mareno Valley, Calif.

"We are more successful now than ever in our history," Mr. Winter said.

"I wouldn't be running if I thought there were no chance of winning," said Mr. Browne in a statement. "Most people are on our side; the challenge isn't so much to persuade them that our alternative is right as it is to let them know our alternative exists." The diversity among the delegates, from 50 states, suggested that the party is casting a wide net.

Some wore three-cornered hats and came festooned with buttons bearing slogans such as "There is no government like no government." Young people with nose rings jostled with businessmen in tailored suits. A brightly clad skater bore a Harry Browne sign at Union Station.

Speakers at the convention included Nadine Strossen, president of the American Civil Liberties Union, columnists Doug Bandow and Joseph Sobran, Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform, and Clifford Theis, whose topic was "Why Christians Must Be Libertarians." Marshall Fritz of the Separation of School and State Alliance challenged Libertarians not to support the educational vouchers favored by some Republican candidates.

The Libertarians' vice presidential candidate will be Jo Jorgensen, a mother of two who heads a software firm in South Carolina. A Libertarian since her college days at Baylor, where she read Ayn Rand's "Atlas Shrugged," Mrs. Jorgensen rejects the idea that a vote for a Libertarian is a wasted vote.

"A vote for a Republican is a wasted vote because they won't deliver a smaller government." She charged that the Republicans and Democrats amounted to a "one-party system" and predicted that Generation X voters would eventually give the nod to Libertarians.



Harry Browne of Franklin, Tenn., and his wife, Pamela, greet Libertarian Party members in Washington yesterday after his nomination for president on the first ballot with 68.7 percent of the vote.

Delegates don't come out of a mold

By Chris Whitley
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Across the hall from where Libertarians were nominating Harry Browne for president, a sign advertised a 2 p.m. seminar titled "Hemp and Politics."

One delegate had a copy of the Bill of Rights on his red T-shirt, covered by the words, "Void Where Prohibited by Law."

Four of the six Libertarian nominees failed to get as many votes as "None of the Above" did.

The Libertarian Party Convention is not a typical political get-together, and party loyalists relish it.

"We're home," said Dan Karlan, a delegate from Waldwick, N.J., who sported a blue suit and mesh loafers. "Among Libertarians, Libertarians can let down their hair or let down their guard. We can't do that when we're at home."

"Among Libertarians, Libertarians can let down their hair or let down their guard."

— Delegate Dan Karlan

The nation's third-largest party, now 25 years old, prides itself on its diversity of opinions almost as much as its mantra about decreasing government. Delegates here have pressed for issues such as income tax reform and a balanced budget, as well as legalizing drugs and outlawing prescriptions.

Sam Treynor, a delegate who owns a truck dealership in Houston, said the debates have been

much more interesting than any at the Republican or Democratic conventions.

"We're having a lot more fun than those delegations are," Mr. Treynor said. "At least on the floor, we are."

He said some newcomers had trouble understanding the traditional "None of the Above" entry on the Libertarian ballot, which this year got 10 percent of the vote.

Carl Vassar, an engineer from Trumbull, Conn., is leading his state's delegation and petitioning to get on the ballot himself as a candidate for state senator. He said the laissez faire atmosphere around the convention hall is indicative of the party itself.

"Some of the people here are very casual," Mr. Vassar said. "We don't feel like we have to behave in any one way as long as we respect the rules of the convention."

David S. Broder

Live-Wired Libertarians

If America's future is really going to be found on the Internet, then the party to watch in the 21st century may well turn out to be the Libertarians.

I have no idea how many of the people whose lives now center on the computerized communications network espouse the radical anti-government philosophy of the Libertarian Party. But a weekend of interviewing at the Libertarians' presidential nominating convention here showed unmistakably that a high percentage of the 600-plus delegates work and play every day in that newest of electronic universes.

James Lark, who teaches systems engineering at the University of Virginia and serves as an adviser to a growing network of eight Libertarian organizations on and off the campus, said the affinity is natural. "People who use mathematically based systems think logically, and Libertarianism is a nice, clear set of propositions, logically linked."

Patricia McCune, an employee of the Denver-based TCI cable news channel, said her company has found a surprising hit with a weekly program called "Damn Right," which it bills as the first Libertarian cable show. "I love these people," she said. "They are different, but they have a lot to say. They are creating a community of their own on the Internet, and the rest of the country will come into it."

"Different" doesn't begin to capture the oddball flavor of this 25-year-old party, which expects once again to be on the ballot in all 50 states, with its presidential candidate, Harry Browne, the author of best-selling books on how to survive what he sees as the impending economic crisis, and his running mate, Jo Jorgensen, owner of a South Carolina computer software company.

Their platform calls for cutting the federal government back at least 90 percent, abolishing the income tax, scrapping offensive military weapons and overseas bases, eliminating the FBI and ending what Browne calls "the insane war on drugs." They regard Democrats as hopelessly addicted to big government, Republicans as frauds who promise but don't deliver relief from Washington, and Ross Perot's Reform Party as mere tinkers with Leviathan.

Only their own form of radical surgery, they say, can restore the Founders' dream of a nation where the scope of individual freedom is essentially unlimited, where social problems are solved by private charity or left to local and state governments, and where Washington simply provides an adequate defense and

enforces the laws needed to protect personal liberty.

Their presidential candidate received almost 1 million votes in 1980, but they've never come close to that since. Browne is articulate and quick-witted, and he'd undoubtedly draw votes if he could raise enough money to get on TV—or muster enough support to be included in the presidential debates.

That is a long shot, but there'd be some value in having 100 million Americans hear him ask what he says is the key question: "Would you be willing to give up your favorite government program if you didn't have to pay any income tax the rest of your life?" He seems to think millions would say yes. I'm not so sure how many would reject the concept of using government to bolster the general welfare or willingly dispense with the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the national parks, Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security—all of which would be abolished, privatized or sent back to the states by a Libertarian regime.

But I left the convention thinking these folks, easily dismissed as computer geeks and nerds, may be the advance guard of a more significant movement in decades to come—as more Americans join them in that personalized, almost isolated world of computer communication—so different from the town meeting and its offshoot, representative government.

Richard Burke's story hints at what could come. The 32-year-old, self-employed Beaverton, Ore., small-systems phone and computer consultant cast his first vote (back home in Nebraska) for Ronald Reagan, but found too many of his fellow Republicans "very intolerant." As a student at Portland State University, he joined the Democrats "because of their social tolerance, but disagreed with their philosophy of having the federal government redistribute wealth."

He became a Libertarian in 1990 and, on his third try, was elected to a three-member Beaverton-area school board, where he holds the balance of power. "I can block the Republicans from imposing their social values on the schools and I can block the Democrats from imposing their spending schemes," he said. "We can become a force in these local, non-partisan races, where we have parity of resources, and build the grass-roots base we need to become a more mature party at the state and national level. And the Internet and the talk shows will give us a way to spread our views."

Beam me up, Scotty.

Convention With a Difference

If nothing else, Harry Browne, the Libertarian Party presidential candidate, knows a historic moment when it arrives. It helped that he caused it. At the recent national nominating convention in Washington, Browne declared to the party faithful: "Like Bob Dole, Bill Clinton, Phil Gramm and Pat Buchanan, I've qualified for matching funds. But unlike [them], I do not believe in welfare. Not for politicians, not for individuals, not for corporations. So I am the first presidential candidate in American history to qualify for matching federal campaign funds and refuse to take them."

As they have a habit of doing every four years since 1972, Libertarians again have found a candidate of honed intelligence and decent moral purpose. Browne, an investment adviser and author, has a clearheaded loyalty to the party's principles of minute and uncoercive government, personal freedoms and responsibilities, and allegiance only to government roles cited in the Constitution.

Libertarians, with 125,000 registered voters and 15,600 dues-paying members, have a noticeable political edge over third parties, from the Greens to the lowa-based Natural Law Party: They have breadth that appeals to the left, right and disenchanted why-vote-for-anyone Republicrats in between.

To the left, Browne invites a look at his thinking on the nation's most expensive federal program, warmaking: "We are almost always at war—cold or hot, but a conflict nevertheless. . . . And what is the object of all this war? Why, peace, of course. We are always fighting to bring peace to the world. We will have peace even if we have to kill thousands to get it."

For conservatives who claim they want government off their backs, Libertarians would loosen the shoulder straps to drop federal involvement in housing, education, welfare, drugs, crime control and anything else not sanctioned in the Constitution.

Browne sees a market for his ideas in both the large talk-radio audiences and among 20- to 30-year-olds who have no party affiliations yet. The num-

bers of the nation's largest and most organized third party keep improving. This fall, more than 1,000 Libertarian candidates will be in local, state and national races.

Libertarians are shackled with several problems. The party attracts the hate-the-feds set that listens to Browne's demands for "huge tax cuts now, huge spending cuts now, a balanced budget now" and concludes simplistically that Utopia has arrived. Away from the brash talk, Libertarian scholarship, as found in the writings from the 20-year-old Cato Institute in Washington, is reasoned, non-ranting, often fresh and as worthy of a place in the national debate as any agenda advanced by those of conventional mind.

Thanks to full coverage of the Libertarian convention by C-SPAN, the public had a chance to shape an opinion on the party and its people. The 700 delegates had no back rooms, heard no trivial speeches about candidates' war records or alleged character flaws, and were not subjected to displays of fake party unity. Choosing among five presidential nominees, 416 delegates voted for Browne and 60 for "none of the above" as a "reminder" of discontent.

Convention speakers included Nadine Strossen of the ACLU—who won a four-minute standing ovation for her ideas on privacy rights and civil liberties—and Chuck Olson, whose brave offering was "Why I Am a Pro-Government Libertarian."

If only Republicans and Democrats at their predictably managed and manicured conventions would be as fearlessly diverse. The same for the television networks and sponsors of this fall's debates. Harry Browne, well spoken and not sponging on taxpayers, deserves a place at whichever forum hosts Clinton-Dole debates.

To keep out the Libertarian would be yielding to the might of the two main parties, twins in their zeal to pass state laws in limiting ballot access to third-party candidates. At the least, Browne's quickness of mind would raise TV ratings and keep the public from flicking to "Geraldo" reruns or more pundit analysis of low voter turnout.

▲ *The Washington Post*
Washington, DC
July 10, 1996

◀ *The Washington Post*
Washington, DC
July 13, 1996