

LIBERTY PLEDGE

newsletter

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LITERARY NEWS...

Bestselling author says he's libertarian

A bestselling author has had a brainstorm – and publicly declared that he is a libertarian.

Richard Dooling, whose novel “Brain Storm” was named a New York Times Notable Book in 1998, made the announcement in an interview with *Christianity Today* on January 6.

When asked about his political beliefs, the Nebraska-born author said, “I’m a libertarian. The only thing more offensive than a Trent Lott Republican is a Bill Clinton Democrat.”

This wasn't the first time Dooling had declared his affinity for libertarianism. In 1999, he published what he called “a libertarian’s take on the Clinton mess” in *The New York Times*.

In the op-ed, he argued that “the root of the [Bill Clinton/Monica Lewinsky] scandal lies in the surfeit of intrusive laws that would make criminals of almost anyone the government decides to investigate.”

While not defending Clinton’s personal behavior, Dooling noted that Clinton faced legal action only because of the nation’s “expanded interpretations” of the sexual harassment laws. “If we are to be a nation of laws and not men, then perhaps we should pause before we attack yet another social malady or human weakness by passing yet another unenforceable law,” he wrote.

In 1997, Dooling published “Blue Streak: Swearing, Free Speech, and Sexual Harassment,” a collection of essays about “the politics of offensive language, speech codes, and the First Amendment.”

While not yet a household name, Dooling has quietly built a reputation as a thoughtful, entertaining, and provocative writer. In fact, Stephen King called him “one of the finest novelists now working in America.”

His 1998 novel, “Brain Storm,” was an Amazon Hot 100 bestseller, while “White Man’s Grave” was a 1994 National Book Award Finalist and a New York Times Notable Book. In addition, Dooling wrote “Critical Care” (1996) and “Bet Your Life” (2002).

Dooling is currently collaborating with Stephen King on *Kingdom Hospital*, a television series scheduled to air on ABC in 2003.

New approach on budget

The Libertarian National Committee adopted a new approach when it approved a streamlined, \$1.4 million budget for 2003.

LP membership dues and pledges will be used to fund only core functions, such as *LP News*, rent, inquiry responses and media relations. But funding for special projects contained in the Strategic Plan, such as marketing efforts and the Drug War strategy, will be funded with direct-mail appeals and major donor gifts, said LP Chair Geoff Neale.

“We’re taking a market-driven approach to these projects,” Neale said. “If members fund them, they will happen.”

LOCAL POLITICAL ACTION...

Oregon LP launches fight against ‘temporary’ tax

The Oregon Libertarian Party has launched a public relations offensive to try to stop a “temporary” income tax surcharge on state residents.

On January 6, Libertarians held a press conference in Salem to launch a “Turn the Tide” campaign against the tax.

Tom Cox, the LP’s 2002 gubernatorial candidate, said the proposed tax hike is a “Band-Aid” that will not solve Oregon’s budget woes. The state “government spends too much,” he said. “Voters [should] stand up and demand fiscal responsibility.”

Oregon residents will vote on the proposal, called Measure 28, on January 28. If passed, the three-year tax will cost taxpayers about \$724 million.

Outgoing Governor John Kitzhaber endorsed the tax and said Libertarians and other tax opponents have a “perverse notion that you can disinvest our way to greatness.”

But residents shouldn’t believe politicians’ “scare tactics” and threats to eliminate schools, public safety, and social services if the tax hike fails, said Cox.

The fact is, the state government could avert the so-called crisis by going on a “fiscal diet” and laying off 2,000 middle-level bureaucrats, he said.

Libertarian seeks county executive post

By Christopher Clough
News-Chronicle

The two newest declared candidates for Brown County Executive may be neophytes to the political arena, but they have different views on what the county's problems are and how to solve them.

Roy Leyendecker, a Green Bay resident and 37-year-old spotter and driver for Paper Transport Inc., said keeping taxes down is his top priority. Steven J. Klein, 50, also of Green Bay and a racker at Pioneer Metal Finishing, said he believes the county is in good financial shape but needs some new ideas.

A member of the Northeast Wisconsin Libertarian Party, Leyendecker said he was inspired by Ed Thompson's run at Wisconsin governor as the Libertarian candidate this fall.

"I saw Ed run," Leyendecker said, "and I liked the way he talked, what he said. I'd like to do the same for the county. I'd like to make things better for the taxpayers."

Among his ideas to do that are to implement a budget cap that would limit spending increases each year to the combined rate of inflation and population growth. He would also cut the executive's salary by 20 percent, from about \$77,000 to \$61,500, and use the savings to pay down county debt. Leyendecker didn't offer specific ideas on working with an often-divided County Board but said it's everybody's responsibility to work together for the taxpayers.

"The only thing you can do is try to discuss the issues," he said. "We have to all work together, because the taxpayer comes first. We can't not work together because we don't like what the other guy is saying."

He said he's never sought public office or worked in any campaigns before, but he felt that might work to his advantage. "It's probably a plus, because I'm not set in any way of thinking," Leyendecker said.

Klein also is making his first run at public office, although he said he's been involved in campaign efforts in Arkansas and Oklahoma, where he once lived. Klein has lived in Green Bay since January.

He talked about working to pay down county debt as a way to reduce future payments on the debt and possibly lower taxes. But he said increasing efficiencies in what he believes is a well-operated county is the way to approach that goal.

"I've looked at the programs and policies in place," Klein said, "and everything seems to be in very good shape. If you look at the county as a business, it's making about a 2 percent profit and we are well below the spending cap (5 percent of assessed value), so the county enjoys a very high bond rating. "But a breath of fresh air is needed. I believe more can be done."

While Leyendecker and Klein have declared their intentions to run, they must circulate nomination petitions and turn those in before Jan. 7

(Left) *Green Bay News-Chronicle*, Green Bay, Wisconsin – December 19, 2002

(Bottom) *The Greenville News*, Greenville, South Carolina – December 16, 2002

Hearings set in Clemson on sign ordinance changes

By Anna Simon

CLEMSON – Political candidates in the city of Clemson could be posting political signs earlier before future elections under proposed changes to a city law that came under attack by Libertarian candidates in the November election.

A public hearing for an amendment that would change restrictions on political and issue type signs was set for Jan. 6 at 7 p.m. by the Clemson City Council Monday. The council also set a public hearing for Jan. 21 on proposed rezoning of the Morrison Annex.

Libertarian Carl Lindenmeyer said restrictions that limit posting of political signs to 30 days prior to election are unconstitutional. Lindenmeyer, now deceased, was a candidate in the recent state House District 3 race who said the restriction violated his First Amendment right to free speech.

The council suspended enforcement of the existing ordinance while the city attorney researched the matter.

The proposed amendment would remove limits on when political and issue signs could be posted but the 30-day rule would remain for signs for charitable and civic events.

Political and event signs would have to be removed within three days after the election or event. Issue signs could be posted on private property with property owners' permission as long as desired but would be limited in size.

The hearing on proposed rezoning of the vacant Morrison Annex is part of a Clemson University group's recommendation for improving the Goldenview neighborhood and could protect the neighborhood from further development of large apartment complexes.

The city wants to lease the Morrison Annex, a former school, from the school district to house social agencies, services and a black history museum and has proposed a low-cost lease similar to the \$1 a year agreement the school board has with the city of Easley for the old West End school, which now houses groups like the American Red Cross. However, the school board, strapped by state budget cuts, voted to sell the former school on six acres that has been appraised for \$460,000 based on its potential for an apartment complex.

Also Monday, the city election commission proposed ways to make voting in city elections run more smoothly, such as better signage, larger rooms at polling places and better training and pay for poll workers.

New fence is 'worthy goal,' says Libertarian

The perimeter fence authorities say is needed at the McMinn County Justice Center was the target of local members of the Libertarian Party at the County Commission meeting Monday night.

Libertarian spokesman David Hutson urged commissioners to seek a financial solution to installing the fence and even put money on the table to go toward the fence construction.

Hutson told commissioners the Libertarians wanted to donate \$100 to the cause and challenged other groups and individuals to donate funds toward "this most worthy goal."

"We have chosen to donate funds for this purpose because we believe that in a free society, the role of government is not to take money from citizens and use it to take care of our every whim and desire from cradle to grave, but it is to protect our freedoms from those who would infringe upon them," Hutson said.

Hutson said the purpose of local government is to protect its citizenry from criminals who take or damage property and bring physical harm to the populace.

"To securely jail criminals is of the first importance, and we wish to make this belief tangible with this donation," Hutson said.

Hutson also said funding used by the McMinn County Sheriff's Department in its recent DUI checkpoint effort should be used to support the construction of the protective fence.

"This would also serve to protect honest, law-abiding citizens from being treated as criminals who are guilty unless proven innocent," Hutson said.

With the conclusion of his speech, Hutson whipped out a \$100 bill and laid it on the table before County Executive John Gentry.

(Left) *The Daily Post Athenian*, Athens, Tennessee – December 17, 2002

(Bottom) Associated Press, December 29, 2002

(Right) Associated Press, December 15, 2002

State LP hires first full-time director

(AP) Madison - The state Libertarian Party has hired its first executive director in hope of building on its showing in the 2002 race for governor.

Libertarian nominee Ed Thompson, the brother of former Republican Gov. Tommy G. Thompson, got about 10% of the statewide vote in the race won by Democrat Jim Doyle over GOP Gov. Scott McCallum.

The new executive director of the Libertarian Party in the state is 22-year-old Jeremy Keil, who said over the weekend that he will focus on building party membership, raising money and finding good candidates for the 2004 elections.

Wisconsin is now one of about a dozen states with a full-time, permanent executive director to push the party's platform of limited government and respect for civil liberties, said Keil, who is working out of a Wauwatosa office.

Keil worked on the Ed Thompson campaign. He said Thompson wants to run again for public office but isn't sure which post he will seek.

Keil said the party will focus on local, state and potentially the U.S. Senate race in 2004.

Libertarian backs ferret amnesty

(AP) A California lawmaker has an idea for a compromise between ferret owners and the state: ferret amnesty.

Ferret lovers have been trying to legalize the critter for almost 10 years with no success.

State agencies, fearful the animal could damage some of California's delicate ecosystems, have opposed its legalization.

"I've never seen a ferret, but we need to resolve this issue once and for all," said Sen. Dede Alpert, D-Coronado. "I realize when we have a \$21 billion budget problem this doesn't seem terribly significant, but it's important to ferret owners, and it's an issue we should have final resolution on."

The bill would make every pet ferret in the state legal if it's been neutered or spayed, registered, and vaccinated for rabies.

The animal also would need to have a tracking microchip implanted, in case it escapes. Importing ferrets would remain illegal. Currently, owning a ferret is a misdemeanor punishable by a \$1,000 fine.

The little carnivores are more than a foot long and weigh about 5 pounds.

"They're little clowns. Very intelligent. They always look for the best in life, which I think is their main appeal," said ferret owner Pat Wright, a Libertarian candidate for lieutenant governor in November whose ballot designation was "ferret legalization coordinator."

But the state and the Audubon Society's position in the past had been that ferrets can escape and threaten ground-nesting birds and small mammals.

"You're playing with fire when you bring in species from other areas. You can't predict ahead of time what's going to be a problem," said Ron Jurek, a Department of Fish and Game wildlife biologist.

(Right) *The Weekly Standard*, Washington, DC
– November 19, 2002

(Below) *Grand Junction Sentinel*, Grand
Junction, Colorado – December 16, 2002

Montrose Libertarian seeks repeal of local grocery tax

MONTROSE — A tax on groceries is under fire in Montrose by critics who claim it is inequitable to poor and fixed-income residents.

"I'm just trying to get sales tax removed from groceries, especially for people who can least afford it," said Russ Madden of Montrose.

He was soliciting signatures last week on a petition that aims to repeal a sales tax on food that is purchased in the city of Montrose for consumption at home. It does not specify an alternative revenue source.

The Western Slope Libertarian Party and local residents like Madden claim it is simply an unfair tax.

People who are poor or live on fixed incomes pay a larger portion of their income on food compared to higher income brackets.

"We're in tough economic times here in Montrose, and the city needs to realize that and that they need to do what's right for the elderly and people on limited incomes," said Tim Jacobs, a Libertarian who lives west of the city.

But groceries are a prime source of cash, generating about 24 percent of the city's sales tax revenues.

"Whether we like it or not, the city's revenue structure is that we don't have a property tax, but we do have a sales tax on food. If you take away a significant amount of income without replacing it, it is going to be a problem," said Mayor Noelle Hagan.

The city stands to lose about \$2.5 million in sales tax if the petition is successful, city officials said.

It does not collect a property tax, relying only on sales taxes and other sources of revenue. Consumers pay a total of 6.9 percent of state and local sales tax in Montrose, including 3 percent charged by the city.

The city's share is set to increase to 3.5 percent in January. Voters approved a half-percent sales-tax increase in November to pay for classroom construction in Montrose County School District Re-1J.

The local Libertarian party, which is leading the petition drive, needs about 450 signatures by February.

A properly completed petition would go to the City Council, which would decide whether to enact the petition's demand or send it to voters at an election.

Spoiling some of the fun

IN SOUTH DAKOTA'S Senate race, voting irregularities on the Oglala Sioux Indian reservation have made some Republicans wonder whether Democratic senator Tim Johnson's 524 vote victory over Rep. John Thune was legitimate. Voter fraud, they speculate, sent South Dakota's junior senator back to Washington for another six years.

But while this accusation could have merit, another factor undoubtedly helped Johnson's cause: Libertarian candidate Kurt Evans managed to garner 3,000 votes from South Dakota's tiny electorate (just 234,435 people voted).

Libertarians also tipped the balance in favor of Democrats in some of the nation's excruciatingly close gubernatorial races this year.

In Wisconsin, Democrat Jim Doyle can thank Libertarian Ed Thompson (brother of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson) for his victory. Thompson took in 185,000 votes, while Doyle's margin over incumbent Republican Scott McCallum was 68,000 votes.

In Oklahoma, where a proposed cock-fighting ban drove rural voters to the polls to support Democrat Brad Henry, who opposed the measure, Republican Steve Largent had a bigger problem to contend with: Independent candidate Gary Richardson, who ran on a Libertarian platform. Richardson collected an astounding 14.1 percent of the vote, to Henry's 43.3 percent and Largent's 42.6 percent.

And in Oregon, Libertarian Tom Cox proudly takes credit for spoiling the election for Republican Kevin Mannix. In an editorial for the *Oregonian* called, "In My Opinion How I Cost Mannix the Election," Cox writes, "Ultimately the deciding factor was the Libertarian candidate--me. Did I cost Mannix the election? Yes. If Republicans and Democrats don't adjust to serve this constituency, this race won't be the last to include a Libertarian surprise."

The Republicans' Libertarian problem is not unique to this election cycle. It became evident in 1998 when Republican John Ensign fell 500 votes short of toppling Nevada's incumbent senator Harry Reid. Libertarian Michael Emerling Cloud collected 8,000 votes. In 2000 it happened in another Senate race when Maria Cantwell squeaked by Washington senator Slade Gorton by just 2,225 votes, with Libertarian Jeff Jared taking almost 65,000 votes.

Although both Republicans and Libertarians support lower taxes, smaller government, and a free-market economy, the Libertarian agenda differs from the GOP's in important ways. Most Libertarians support gay rights, at least some drug legalization, and an isolationist foreign policy.

When accused of spoiling elections for Republicans, Libertarians take an attitude similar to Ralph Nader's Green Party when they were accused of spoiling the presidential election for Democrats in 2000: They don't care. Says George Getz, Libertarian Party press secretary, "You can't spoil tainted meat."