

LIBERTY PLEDGE

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Libertarian Leadership Conference a Success

Over President's Day weekend, leaders of state parties from across the nation met in Las Vegas for the annual Libertarian State Leadership Alliance Leadership Conference. The conference hosted numerous speakers and workshops aimed at improving state affiliates' abilities to be an effective political party and increase the Libertarian Party's influence at the state level.

The speakers taught a variety of skills that were meant for state affiliates to take back to their respective states for implementation. Topics discussed at the conference included proper steps to filing with the Federal Election Commission, how to improve media relations and direct marketing strategies. The convention also hosted forums that helped state affiliates and other activists brainstorm about how to reach out to Republicans and Democrats now that their numbers are at record lows.

However, the LSLA conference wasn't just about state affiliates. The annual conference is regarded as the second most important Libertarian Party event of the year, with the biennial National Convention being the first. As such, the conference is a meeting of Libertarian activists, organizers, candidates, and financial supporters alike. More than 100 people traveled to Las Vegas to attend the conference and helped train to become more effective activists and leaders within the Libertarian movement.

In addition to the guest speakers, the LSLA conference also hosted a presidential debate where seven Libertarian Party presidential candidates discussed important issues in both mainstream and Libertarian politics. Participating in the debate were candidates Jim Burns, Daniel Imperato, Bob Jackson, Michael Jingoian, Steve Kubby, George Phillies and Wayne Allyn Root. The debate was formatted in several rounds, with questions asked by the debate moderator, Duensing, then questions asked by the audi-

ence and ended with questions asked by the candidates themselves to an opponent of their own choosing.

Many in attendance felt the presidential debate was a decisive debate for the future of the Libertarian presidential race, and felt the candidates had to prove themselves at this widely attended debate if they had any hope for attaining the nomination in May. There were many issues of contention among the presidential hopefuls, but most of the debate revolved around the candidates trying to establish themselves as the most qualified candidate rather than debating direct policy questions. However, the audience was able to effectively gauge the performance of all the candidates.

Following the conclusion of the LSLA conference, the Libertarian National Committee met for their quarterly board meeting. This was the first board meeting of the New Year, and the first time the board has met since the December 2007 meeting in Charleston, SC. During the LNC meeting, the board passed a resolution calling for withdrawal from Iraq without "undue delay." The resolution passed overwhelmingly with 12 votes in affirmation, two in opposition and one abstaining vote.

Also, a new committee was voted into existence that will investigate how to better conduct outreach to women and minority groups. LNC members Angela Keaton and Stewart Flood will serve on the committee. The committee will be financially self-supporting in its trial phase, with an evaluation on its effectiveness after one year.

This year's conference was organized by Nevada State Chairman Jim Duensing. Next year's conference will be organized by Alabama State Chair Stephen Gordon, who was elected Chairman of the Libertarian State Leadership Alliance during the 2008 conference.

“Firecracker” Brightens California Politics

By Casey Lustberg and Sean Haugh

Norm “Firecracker” Westwell, named for his adamancy in his attempts to legalize fireworks, is the Libertarian incumbent up for reelection to the Ocean View School Board in Orange County, California. After running for city council in 2000, school board in 2002 and state assembly in 2004, he was elected to the Ocean View School Board in 2006. At the time, the school district was on the verge of bankruptcy; it had had no CFO in a year and board meetings accomplished nearly nothing. However, in the past two years since Westwell has been on the board, drastic improvements have been made. According to Westwell, the school district has rid itself of its lackluster leadership, and now is on the right track with excellent teachers and high student test scores.

His colorful nickname came from his first major foray into local politics, when he advocated for a repeal of the restrictive local ordinance prohibiting fireworks. His children inspired him to start speaking out by asking him why they couldn’t have the same fireworks he got to use when he was a child. Westwell spoke out so much on this issue that people in town started calling him “Firecracker.” The name stuck to the point that it is now included in his listing on the ballot.

Westwell says the top priority right now is finding a way to deal with the budgetary cuts mandated by Republican governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. The governor recently demanded 10 percent cuts from all California school districts. Westwell and his fellow board members are currently working to make the financial hit less jarring to the district.

In addition to running his campaign and drastically trimming the budget, Westwell has recently been working to rewrite as much of the Board’s policy as he can in the interest of promoting Libertarian ideals. He has been working specifically on drawing clear distinctions between “public” and “government” schools, and, keeping with the old Libertarian Party slogan, “free” and “tax-payer funded” lunches. Westwell’s efforts to alter policy have met some significant opposition, and as he puts it: “The wheels of government turn slowly.”

Nevertheless, Westwell works tirelessly. “You have to be active, you have to be involved, you have to be seen,” is Westwell’s advice to any potential can-

didate. Also important, “you have to dress like a leader,” to gain the respect of those who are watching you.

When he is not drafting policy, Westwell can be found anywhere a Libertarian can make a stand or have a presence. He makes a point of going to as many school functions as possible, as well as being involved, in any capacity, in local politics. He has even been working with local Democrats trying to align the policies of the Libertarians and the Democrats in order to defeat local ordinances. Westwell knew he had to actively build bridges and let people see the human face of Libertarianism. “You can’t go in and make big changes with a machete,” he reports. “I’m trying to set it up so that the next guy who follows me will have an easier time of it.”

Among his most recent achievements is the opposition to a local pet-neutering ordinance. The ordinance is “liberty robbing,” according to *The Coastal News*, which covered the story in their Feb. issue.

Westwell says he was originally terrified about public speaking, and that it took him about a year to get over that. When asked how he got over his fear, he replies that he just kept on doing it until he finally became at ease with it. Despite his humble start, Westwell is certainly active and successful in the political arena--always advancing the cause of freedom and liberty. “If you go to city hall and ask the guys there if they know a Libertarian, they will pull my name up first,” he says.

All of the public exposure has done well for the 49 year-old incumbent. He has already raised \$1,700 and says he anticipates much more. Westwell rates his chances of reelection as excellent, noting that this time he may even receive support for the city employee’s union.

As with many Libertarian election winners, those within the establishment were terrified of him at first, but once they had a chance to work with him, they learned that not only is he not all that scary, but he can be a friend and ally. “They’ve been through two labor negotiations since then with pay raises,” says Westwell. “Maybe not the raises they wanted, but they got them. Now they are open to hearing new ideas.”

For more information, please check out Westwell’s candidate tracker profile at www.lp.org.

The Libertarian Party a Big Hit at CPAC

One of the biggest political events of the year is the annual Conservative Political Action Conference hosted in Washington D.C. The conference, put on by David Keene's American Conservative Union, attracts exhibitors and attendees from across the nation. With usually more than 5,000 in attendance, CPAC offers exhibitors an amazing opportunity to do outreach to a very energized crowd of mainly college and high school students.

It is said that misery loves company, and for many of those at this year's CPAC, there was plenty of miserable company to go around. After former presidential hopeful Mitt Romney announced to a stunned CPAC audience that he was suspending his campaign--essentially handing the nomination to John McCain--glum faces could be seen on many Republican faces after realizing the death of the GOP's limited-government principles were at hand. In fact, Romney's crew for his exhibition booth quickly exited the building and surrendered the booth to Ron Paul supporters.

However, in the midst of uncertainty about the future of the Republican Party with a McCain presidential run, the Libertarian Party was there to remind conventioners that there still was a party dedicated to smaller government, lower taxes and more individual freedom.

The Libertarian Party helped co-sponsor this year's CPAC, and ran an exhibit booth in the main hall where it provided information to conference attendees about the party. Distributed at the booth were LP stickers, literature, buttons and a copy of the World's Smallest Political Quiz. After people stopping by the booth finished taking the WSPQ, their results were plotted on a large-scale version of the quiz that sat in front of the booth.

Results of the WSPQ were quite surprising given the demographic of the event. Booth staff fully expected the bias to be heavily right-of-center in the "conservative" quadrant. However, roughly 70 percent of the responses fell into the Libertarian quadrant of the Nolan Chart. There was even a high concentration of dots at the 100/100 mark. Many quiz-takers were surprised to learn of their libertarian leanings, and had never thought about the party before.

"The numbers of libertarians at CPAC was actually quite surprising," says Libertarian Party Na-

tional Media Coordinator Andrew Davis. "I think the past two terms of the Bush Administration, aggravated by the impending nomination of John McCain, really made people begin to question their future with the Republican Party. Because the Libertarian Party was there to play 'rebound,' we were able to help make the decision that much easier."

Welcome to the Liberty Pledge Club!

Don Adams
Sidney Atkinson
Stephen Baker
Chenelyn Barker
Barry Bechard
Theodore Burleson
Stephen Cantin
Cyril Crume
Frank Duncan
Dwight Ennis
John Fehsenfeld
Robert Ford
Charles Glenn
Alexander Gray
Kris Green
James Gross
Erich Hannan
Paul Herrmann
Regan Hess
Bruce Hoepner
Darrel Holiday
James Lancaster
Janet Maillaro
Timothy Millar
Dennis Morris
Jan Nace
Derek Nelson
George Rains
Frank Robinson
Shane Stephenson
Jason White
William White
John Wieder

Thank you for your generous support!

National Headquarters Calling for Candidates

By Tommy Fijacko

Alexis de Tocqueville once wrote: "There are many men of principle in both parties in America, but there is no party of principle." Although in his book, *Democracy in America*, this French visitor gave insight into many aspects of American government, politics and society that were true in his time and perhaps even truer today. We should probably gloss over this small line from his book in order not to discredit the other perceptive things he wrote which are still valid to this day.

Today, there is a party of principle, welcoming all of those who seek freedom and a system of government that governs best by governing least. However, building up and strengthening the Libertarian Party takes hard work, and a lot of it. This is a task we are strongly committed to doing.

Seeking out candidates to run for office is an essential duty of any serious political party. At present, we are calling our members in various states and are asking them to run for local, state, or federal positions. While donations are certainly valued and necessary in order to operate the Party, it is the work of volunteers and candidates across the country that promotes our cause. Whether we succeed in recruiting a candidate to run for water board or Congress, we feel progress is made as more people learn about our principles and are positively affected by them as well.

Recruiting candidates is a process that is harder than one would imagine. While picking up a phone and speaking to a fellow libertarian is simple, if not enjoyable, getting one to run for office is easier said than done. However, the Libertarian Party has put together a call-campaign at the main office that is calling LP activists, volunteers and donors, asking them if they would like to run for office.

"I just can't right now," or, "I'm too busy," is a standard response we get. Of course, it is easy to say no. Giving money is a much simpler way of supporting the Party and, indeed, less time consuming. Saying yes, however, takes a certain level of dedication to liberty and a drive to promote it. Thankfully, we do have both kinds of supporters: those who give money and those who campaign for public office. Nevertheless, both kinds of supporters are in high demand.

Running for office should not be as intimidating as people make it out to be. Winning local elec-

tions is less difficult than some would believe. State and federal offices obviously have the dreaded petition requirements to get on a ballot. It is no lie: third-parties are not welcomed by those in the national spotlight, for they are a threat to the status quo.

Nevertheless, getting on a state and federal ballot, however difficult it might be to actually win, is very valuable to our cause. When a citizen who is frustrated at the complete ineptness and lack of principle of so many officials in our two-party system finally steps into a voting booth to cast his ballot, a principled choice like the Libertarian Party is there to offer him a different path. Without appearing on the ballot, we offer no choice to those opposed to the status quo. Without appearing on the ballot, we are forever destined to fail.

Running for office certainly takes commitment, but there are many offices in your area that will require only a little of your time. Each position that a Libertarian wins is another victory for liberty, and helps even more to spread our message. If you are willing to simply answer a few questions for the media or constituents about the Libertarian Party, and willing to represent your Party in a public office, we urge you to consider running.

I invite you to recall the group of Libertarians in Lee County, FL., who, when elected to a majority on their local soil and water conservation board, dismantled a wasteful government program that cost taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars. On top of this, they refunded the money that was saved back to the taxpayers! Without these good Libertarians from a water board in Florida, the residents of Lee County would still be paying into a broken system.

"Mankind will never see an end of trouble until lovers of wisdom come to hold political power, or the holders of power become lovers of wisdom," Plato wrote. We cannot confine ourselves to being free-riders of a failed system. In order to make change, we have to be the change.

If you are interested in running for any kind of office under the Libertarian Party, please contact (202) 333-0008 and anyone you speak with will be more than glad to get you going in the right direction. Our staff at the national headquarters can help you identify possible races in your area, as well as help you with any campaign questions that may arise.