

The Connecticut Libertarian

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www.lpct.org

Targeted Reform: Blessing or Curse?

by James Madison

As Libertarians, we know the best way to improve any government program is to simply throw it out.

The trouble is that if elected, the Libertarian office holder will be called upon to vote on many proposals that fall far short of a complete end to inappropriate government involvement.

To help give an indication of how a Libertarian state representative or state senator might vote on these inadequate but inevitable proposals, the LPCT occasionally releases positions on actual bills before the Connecticut legislature along with a “Yes” or “No” vote.

One such proposal and position we released in 2000 was HB05067. The summary read, “To assist parents of students in private schools by providing a tax credit.” We indicated that the vote would be “Yes” because it would produce a form of tax relief and would encourage parents to look outside the government school system.

LPCT member Paul Velardi quickly observed a problem in supporting the proposal. “This incentive is clearly directed toward parents of students attending private schools, the vast majority of which are associated with faith-based churches and organizations,” he said. “In that sense, it clearly creates state recognition and preferred treatment of religious institutions.”

Paul’s point has merit, and more importantly, it addresses a much larger concern: many bills that offer partial solutions have unintended consequences or unpredictable side-effects because they

Toward a Libertarian Victory

by Mike Pretnar

STAMFORD—It wasn’t very long ago that the Libertarian Party meant nothing to me. I was raised in Connecticut, educated in government schools, and influenced by the mass media. For 22 years the blindfold of our country’s two-party mentality was pulled over my eyes.

I’m sure I wasn’t alone. I recall that whenever word of the latest government failure or atrocity made headlines, the reaction of my friends and myself was one of immediate anger, followed by incredulity, quickly giving way to hopelessness and apathy. What could we have done, and why should we have cared? We had problems of our own to worry about: grades, parents, parties, and what not.

However, once I was introduced to the Libertarian Party, it didn’t take me long to see that most of the affairs of Washington actually *did* affect my life. Profoundly. Harry Browne’s “The Great Libertarian Offer” and Charles Murray’s “What It Means to Be a Libertarian” planted the first seeds of passion, but this time the outrage didn’t wane. Suddenly as innumerable taxes, laws, regulations, and spending programs that infringe on our rights and ignore the Constitution made less and less sense, Ayn Rand’s “Atlas Shrugged” struck a deep chord within me.

I believe that change in this country will take place through a determined effort to spread ideas and knowledge, and that the majority of intelligent, compassionate Americans are as I was. These are the people we can, and must, reach; people that keep some semblance of an open mind in the hope that someday they might find an alternative to the two parties—or the “lesser of two evils”—that are dragging us slowly into bondage.

We have to start planting the seeds, and then—as has been said—it’ll be “a long row to hoe.” Yes, but the only row worth hoeing. So I’m running for Board of Representatives (city council) in my native Stamford, Connecticut.



Mike Pretnar

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Victory

In Stamford there are 20 Districts, with two representatives elected for each District. Mine is a moribund district; according to the town clerk, just 737 of the approximately 1,850 registered voters in District 2 even voted in the last election. It is a virtual dead zone that can be brought to life by an energetic and enthusiastic candidate. (That's me, the energetic and enthusiastic candidate.) My opponents are long-term Democrats who will sit on their hands expecting to be re-elected again. I don't foresee them doing very much in the way of campaigning.

But here's what I will do: inspired by Mike Costanza's 26% showing in his State Representative's race last fall, I will not only walk my District (beginning in June), I will walk it twice. Furthermore, on election day (November 6) I will stand outside the polls to hand out literature and shake hands with every voter.

Here's what I need you to do: supply me with the tools I need to win a seat; 4,000 brochures; 2,000 refrigerator magnets; literature for mailings and the polls; and enough money to hire someone to research the telephone numbers of the 1,850 registered voters in my district and then phone them to get out the vote.

It seems like quite a request, but actually it's not. If everyone reading this sent merely \$10 a month for five months, we'd have it more than covered. I am putting up at least \$500 of my own money in this quest. I am making the ultimate commitment for liberty. Please help me by making your maximum contribution of \$250 (by law) or whatever you can afford.

Make checks payable to Pretnar for Board of Representatives and if it's a monthly pledge, please indicate that on the memo of your check (1 of 5, etc.). Mail it to: Lorraine James, PMB 322, 65 High Ridge Road, Stamford, CT 06905. Also, please include your employer and occupation to comply with government regulations. Thank you for your support.

As Edmund Burke once observed, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

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Reform

do not go far enough. This leaves Libertarians with a dilemma. Do we support partial solutions because it's better to do something than nothing, or do we oppose many of these partial solutions because they are going to have any number of undesirable effects?

Other examples include:

- **Cutting taxes for any specific group.** Taxes as a whole go down, but it can be construed as favoritism toward that group.
- **Taking federal matching funds.** It's our money that they took from us, so getting it back is just recompense, but it's also political welfare.
- **Electrical deregulation, California style.** They deregulated wholesale prices but not retail prices, causing an imbalance in the market that was worse than complete regulation.
- **Public access television.** It's a federal violation of property rights. It was created because the FCC locked people out of the television market. Do we fight for the cable company's property rights before abolishing the FCC?
- **Savings & Loans in the 1980's.** The federal government removed regulations but left the bail-out's in place. This allowed for S&L's to take huge risks without the built-in punishments provided by the market.

The list goes on and on. The particular issues and the details of each issue may be complex, but the principle remains the same: partial solutions can move us toward freedom, but they still leave enough government in place to make a mess. Rather than attempt to answer it here, we'd like to hear from the LPCT membership. The question is:

Should Libertarians support partial solutions and how?

Send your responses to: TCL@lpct.org or James Madison, 6234 Town Brooke, Middletown, CT 06457. A summary of the consensus and excerpts of some of the more illuminating responses will be published in a future newsletter.

Meeting Notice: The LPCT will meet from 9:00 a.m. to noon on Saturday, April 14th in Waterbury. All members are welcome, and bringing visitors is *strongly* encouraged. The format is informal, and stopping in for any portion of the time is welcome.

Directions:

- East/West*
- Route 84 to Waterbury
 - Exit 20 to Route 8 North
 - Route 8 about 1 mile (Go to N/S below)

- North/South*
- Exit 36 on Rt. 8, "Huntingdon/Colonial Ave."
 - Right at the light at the bottom of exit
 - Go straight through 3 lights up a slight hill
 - At the 4th light, take a right onto Cooke Street
 - Go up a steep hill
 - Take 5th left onto Avalon Circle
 - Go halfway up the circle,
 - Slate blue house with white garage, #100