

# Libertarian Strategy Gazette

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## Why Portland Can Be Important

[Ed: We present a perspective column from a long-time activist who is unable (see end of article) to put his idea into effect himself.]

A convention can do many things. At the Libertarian Party convention in Portland in 2006, we can do more than elect officers or amend the bylaws and platform.

Learning new strategies and reaching out to others are even more important if you want to grow. Programming that does this and entertains as well helps to recharge us and make us more interesting. I have helped develop libertarian strategy and programming since the '60s.

One idea I helped develop was the series of debates between Michael Badnarik and the Green Party Presidential candidate David Cobb. This was our most successful tactic of 2004. It resulted in much positive publicity for us while showing the evils of restrictions on third parties in ballot access, debate appearances and media access. This resulted in more votes for us, as many who could not vote Green voted Libertarian instead.

An even more important result is that we now have a close working relationship with the Greens and a lot of the progressive media on both national and local levels. Along with our attacks on President Bush, this is helping to end the mistaken perception of Libertarians being Republicans who smoke pot.

The Greens took a bad hit in their Presidential totals but did comparatively well in local races. There is still some mending to do between the Nader and Cobb factions. In Germany, Greens received 7% of the vote. They are organized in over 60 countries.

A good relationship here can help our Libertarian friends abroad. Since the public is accustomed to dualities, we can pair off with the Greens, just as the Republicans have paired up with the Democrats.

So let's have a debate at the Portland convention. But let's make it an entertaining one instead of one that ends in the usual arguments. Let's have a debate that heaps abuse on our common enemies:

TO BE RESOLVED: That the Republicans in power are worse than the Democrats in power.

For this proposition, let us invite Michael Badnarik and

[[Portland 2006] (Continued on page 2)

## Stand Up for Liberty!

### Chapter Six

#### Activities for Particular Groups

This Chapter considers Activities that are suited for federal, state, or local political parties, but not all of them. I begin with activities for the national party, and then work up to state and local groups, because this arrangement gives the clearest discussion. Many of the activities that I discuss are already performed by some groups. Other activities could be performed at a different level than the one that I propose.

#### ACTIVITIES FOR THE FEDERAL LEVEL

We have a national committee and a national party because some actions are readily carried out at the federal level. There are also activities that need to happen in every single state, but some state organizations aren't ready to perform them, so it is in the interest of Libertarians from elsewhere in the country to see that they happen. State and local groups benefit when corresponding groups in other states become stronger.

Some activities must be done by the National Committee itself. Other activities need to get done by someone. The National Committee could do them, but other groups could take the National Committee's place. Finally, there are national activities that the National Committee can nurture, but not perform.

#### Activities Which the National Party Itself Must Perform:

\* **Cooperation with Other Libertarian Groups.** A few simple principles are self-evident. State and Local Libertarian groups should be allies that the National Party actively supports, not competitors that it hinders. Independent libertarian groups such as the Cato Institute should be friends with which we actively collaborate, within the limits of tax and election laws, not hostile forces we resist or ignore. Outreach to the greater Libertarian movement is a necessary task for the National Party.

\* **Washington Lobbying and Congressional Testimony:** Only the National Party can convincingly represent the Party to Congress. Why should we lobby? Lobbying on strategically chosen issues introduces Libertarians to reporters, columnists, and other lobbyists. Lobbying puts into play Libertarian ideas. Lobbying can reduce the damage done to the United States by the duopoly party before the Libertarian Party wins, as witness the Defend Your Privacy web campaign. One can get carried away and spend too much time lobbying. However, some measures are cheap and effective.

Lobbying exposes members of other parties to libertarian ideas. The Republican Party has a home industry of proselytizing elected Democrats to convert them from one branch of the du-

[Party Activities] (Continued on page 4)

From George Phillies' book **Stand Up for Liberty! Now available from <http://www.amazon.com>** .

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James Bovard. Against the proposition, let us invite Ralph Nader and David Cobb. Truly there will be much to say for both sides. While these nominees may be ideal, there are other speakers who might draw even bigger crowds and respect.

This would truly be a mock debate. Winning will depend on who delivers the most withering critiques and jokes against the enemy. Both sides will win applause from everyone in attendance. After all, the supply of intellectual ammo is virtually inexhaustible against these two dinosaurs that claim the right to dictate against us.

Nader should jump at this opportunity. We would respond with applause, as opposed to the boos he receives from liberals. The Dems deserve to be Gored after eight years of Clinton and there will be Hilary to pay if more is in store. Cobb might well also welcome this opportunity to do more fence mending and defend his role in 2004.

An even better option might be to have a Libertarian and a Green on each side. The Libertarian critique of the double headed beast is different from the Greens'. There could also be a valid Libertarian critique of how the Democrats are worse. The two sides should confer beforehand to ensure that all bases are covered. This could lead to not only seconds but a third debate as well. There should also be the opportunity for the audience to question authority with Q&A.

To really top off the occasion we could invite P.J. O'Rourke or a top talk show host to emcee. You could even add a panel of VIPs to add questions or comments, such as Gore Vidal, Pat Buchanan or other third party celebrities.

C-SPAN and other media outlets would lick their chops to cover such an entertaining and informative event. Local media, especially college and community radio, would want to cover this as well. Justice Talking, a show on National Public Radio, has covered debates. The host, Margo Adler, is an acquaintance of mine for 20 years through the Pagan movement and the author of a great book on Paganism, "Drawing Down the Moon." She is quite sympathetic to us on the drug question. All the leftist alternative media would be interested.

Portland is also the center of Ecotopia (northern California, Oregon and Washington). This is the epicenter of environmentalism, containing the Emerald Triangle, famous for its hemp and mushroom cultivation. Here Libertarians and Greens have worked together to win local government offices and initiatives. Cobb's media director was based in Oregon and Peter Camejo, Nader's running mate, has an office in San Francisco. In exchange for helping with publicity in Portland, we could share contact with the media covering our convention.

We would also expect them to publicize this event to their members. Arrangements could be made to allow Greens

who attend the debate free access to the debate, our exhibit hall and our floor deliberations. I have heard even Marxist Greens remark that our procedures are more democratic than theirs. If free admission is too costly, we could split the gate with the Greens for every person they bring in. We could sweeten the deal even further by giving them a free exhibit booth provided they return the favor at their next convention.

Another attraction could be a workshop on Green-Libertarian cooperation with panelists from both parties. We have already worked together on a broad range of issues, not limited to ballot or debate access. The most pressing agenda item for the survival of the Green Party is Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) and similar voting reforms that don't marginalize third parties. Since the Greens have passed an IRV initiative in San Francisco this topic could be a workshop all by itself.

We could create a situation where Greens attend our convention to cheer our champions Badnarik and Bovard. The more we welcome them in Portland means more goodwill for us. Their presence would provide an outside yet friendly perspective on our own discussions.

Amid all this camaraderie there will be an opportunity to practice all those good communication techniques that you have learned in other workshops. They can offer their own lessons and get a sympathetic hearing.

The Greens have developed very similarly to the Libertarians and therefore bear close watching. It is a parallel development. We are going in the same direction but never joining. Both movements are offered temptations to be co-opted by the older parties. To avoid a drift to the status quo, we should compete with each other as the parties who can hurt the Democrats and Republicans the most.

I believe the Greens would back this plan as enthusiastically as we would. In 2008, I expect a similar debate over which witch is worse, the Hilary-tary industrial complex versus the McCain-ization of Washington power.

The principle difference between Libertarian and Green development is that the Greens have already been led by a man on a white horse. Have they reached their Nader? This could well happen with us soon and we should be prepared for this crisis. As you may know, the Chinese ideogram for crisis combines the characters representing opportunity and disaster.

The first person who alerted me to the Greens as a development worth watching was Karl Hess. He was much admired by the Greens and I even got him a speaking engagement at a Green conference in West Virginia. In the early 70s I went to my first Green conference. There I met Ralph Borsodi who was writing about back to the land stuff in the 1920s, and Mildred Loomis who was known as the grandmother of the commune movement of the '60s. She was later written about by Sharon Presley as an early Libertarian hero.

Also in the crowd were Helen and Scott Nearing who were part

of the anti-war movement during the First World War. They were close to Henry George's single tax theories which have since been espoused by David Nolan and other Libertarians. They had a magazine called Green Revolution which wrote about community land trusts, organic gardening, natural healing and alternative currency.

The movement took off in the wake of the disasters at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl and the gas crisis of the '70s. The Citizens Party was an early incarnation of the Green Party. The movement also has roots in Germany. Petra Kelly, founder of the Green party there, called the Greens in America more of a spiritual movement rather than a political one.

With the arrival of Nader, along with disgusted and disgusting Marxists and Democrats, the Greens have wandered from their environmentalist roots. While decentralization is one of their key planks, they do range from anarchists to leftist Democrats to Marxist, like most other large leftist groups.

In effect, the goal of the Greens is to reform or replace the Democrats. In this goal they deserve every encouragement, as we have a similar job ahead of us. The American people in their wisdom seek a balance between two major parties to avoid the depredations of a one party state. Therefore the Greens need to understand that their progress depends much on our progress versus the GOP. We should share as much intelligence and strategy as possible in defeating the buy-partisan monopoly that controls the government.

Another important reason for cooperation is that while the Democrats and the communists try to control or destroy those who those who have differing ideas, we can offer a different model of competition which is friendly and even nurturing.

Small businesses which compete with each other will be stronger against a corporate predator than a large store that has forgotten how to compete. Competition in elections with cooperation in referenda that we can both support is the pattern for victory.

Being their allies on issues where we agree helps give them the strength to resist the Democrats and communists. Our cure of limiting the state and theirs of decentralization can be seen as two sides of the same coin.

There may be cases on local level where cross endorsements would be a good strategy, especially in non-partisan races. These are to be decided among individual and local groups. Crafting coalitions shows the world how we can be good allies.

This is an eclectic age as people vary from issue to issue. Progress will be made on one single issue at a time until people awaken to the pattern of liberty. To alert people to this pattern is our job.

The conservative movement is losing steam and will soon splinter. Away from the intoxication of political dominance they will seek us out. This process has been going on for some time already. We should always remain open to refugees from the conservative movement. One of the delights of being a Libertarian is to go from a conservative event to a radical one while saying the same thing, only with different rhetoric. We have always been an example of integrity for both sides.

What is important to the development of our strength is that in our gatherings, our blogs and our writings we recognize that there are many non-libertarians who want to work with us without buying into our entire platform. We should welcome and respect them, understanding that these people can be a great help even if they never become Libertarians. Their identity as non-libertarians adds breadth and depth to our coalitions. Though we are a very intelligent and highly principled band who love to argue it is important that our guests do not feel pressured. Rather they should be intrigued by the freedom to pursue new options, just as we were when we first discovered liberty.

...Donald Meinshausen

## Biography:

Donald Meinshausen ignited the libertarian movement when he organized the draft card burning at the 1969 convention of the Young Americans for Freedom. This event was regarded as the beginning of the modern day libertarian movement.

From 1973 to 1988 Don petitioned all across the country for the Libertarian Party. He has helped organize various programs at Libertarian conventions, such as the dialogue between Karl Hess and Robert Anton Wilson in Seattle, "From Psychedelics to Cyberspace" with Wilson and Timothy Leary in Chicago, and the 60s Meets the 90s Strategy panel with Leary, Wilson and Carl Oglesby in Chicago.

Meinshausen's was the debate co-coordinator for the Michael Badnarik campaign while under house arrest.

Don's website includes many strategic works for both the libertarian and pagan/unitarian movements, and can be found at <http://www.paganinstitute.org/freedonnow.html>.

Don currently does not have web access. Send snail mail to:

Don Meinshausen, Inmate #08496-050, FCI Ft Dix Box 1000, Ft Dix NJ 08640.

Contributions to Don's commissary fund can be sent to:

Lockbox, Federal Bureau of Prisons, Don Meinshausen, Inmate Register Number 08496-050, PO Box 474701, Des Moines IA 50947-0001. (They only accept money orders and money grams.) Don expects to be released in 2008.

*(Continued from page 1)* [Party Activities]

opoly to the other. When the Libertarian Party begins to win elections, we will also grow by converting current public officials to our side. Lobbying, proving that the Libertarian Party is serious about real politics, prepares the ground for converting their elected officials to our party. I am reminded of an anecdote: Recently, a Massachusetts Libertarian Party member testified before the Massachusetts legislature. He began by saying that he represented the Libertarian Party. By report, the committee chair was startled. He said aloud that this marked the Libertarian Party becoming politically active in Massachusetts.

## The National Party Should Make Some Things Happen:

The following activities are important for the Libertarian Party. They could be performed by the national party or by someone else, but the National Committee needs to make sure that these get done.

**\* 50-state ballot access for the Libertarian Presidential ticket.** Many of our state parties generate ballot access by themselves. For example, the Massachusetts Libertarian Party chose to seek major party status in 1998, succeeded, and therefore put our Presidential candidate on the November 2000 ballot without further ado. In other states, local activists choose to get our Presidential candidate on the ballot and can do so by themselves. In a few states, ballot access requirements are extremely onerous. Only by focusing the resources of the entire country's Libertarians on these few states can the Party have a Presidential candidate on the ballot in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The Presidential candidate is the nominee of the national party. The National Committee has the resources, the information, and in some cases the legal standing needed to ensure 50-state ballot access. It is entirely appropriate for the LNC to ensure that our candidate is on the ballot everywhere. Alternatively, the Party could entrust 50-state ballot access to independent groups, but there is a history of financial questions associated with a few elements of this approach. When the Libertarian Party matures, the need for national activity to obtain ballot access will fade.

**\* Bolster State and Local Organizations.** The National Party is responsible for noticing what its state affiliates and independent allies are doing. If difficulties arise within a state organization, the national party should notice and take appropriate action. Most often the appropriate action is to tell the state's activists what their problem is, and letting them handle their own challenges. You might think that local people would notice the difficulties they are wading through, but sometimes people do not see the forest for the trees. Sometimes a problem has been solved before, and passing along the solution will save much time and energy. Furthermore, the National Party does have funds of its own. One way to strengthen the Party as a whole is to identify weaker state groups that have enough good activists, and give those activists the material support needed to create a stronger state party.

**\* Produce activist training and support material.** All across America, individual activists need to know how to solicit signatures, get out the vote, design trifolds, and help Libertarian friends Make Liberty Happen! by becoming activists themselves. Training and demonstrations using traditional (seminars, parallel sessions at conventions) and advanced technical (distance learning, video tapes, internet radio, web pages, streaming video) means can satisfy this need. Either the National Committee or its national competitors could usefully serve the Libertarian Party by developing and distributing training materials beyond those that already exist.

## Activities the National Party Can Support But Not Perform

**Libertarian Congressional PAC.** The Libertarian Party declared an intent to contest a majority of all Congressional seats. I'll explain in Chapter 7 why this is a good idea. In 1998, only two dozen of our campaigns filed with the FEC. A half-dozen of our U.S. House candidates raised \$10,000 or so each. The rest raised almost no money. Modest fundraising for party-ID cable and radio advertising and bumper stickers in places with local activists ready to distribute them would substantially boost results from this in-place effort. To raise and distribute this money we need a Libertarian Congressional PAC charged with raising funds and supporting Libertarian candidates.

**Pro-Liberty Special Interest Groups.** When Democrats and Republicans run for office, they get support from hordes of special interest groups, each pretending to speak for an issue but in reality working for a political party. I am referring equally to the pro-choice group that endorses pro-life Democrats over pro-choice candidates of other parties and to the pro-Second Amendment action groups that endorse gun-grabbing Republicans over pro-Bill-of-Rights candidates of other parties. Those groups support us on the issues, but they are not our friends and are not on our side. We need to replace them with pro-Liberty interest groups that support Libertarians.

For political victory, the Libertarian movement needs its own special interest groups, groups that support Libertarian candidates and points of view. If the Microbrewery Trade Association routinely tilts Democratic, we should launch a Samuel Adams Society and Brewers Club to lead members to Libertarian thinking. The National Party can't be too obvious about setting up special interest groups itself, not if those groups are to be credible. The National Party can find individual Libertarians with the right interests, incite them to create a Libertarian special interest group, and provide nurture and support to get the group off the ground. Special interest groups are so important that I devote Chapter 10 to them.

**Take Back The Internet.** The wags say 'Libertarians rule the net.' This is a bit of a stretch. The \*.libertarian news groups are ineffective, swamped with cross-posts, and riddled with trolls. There is a simple technical fix. The techni-

cal fix is a \*moderated\* newsgroup. The activity is intrinsically national. The National Committee could perform the newsgroup group creation action itself, and find (if need be, help fund) moderators, but the Libertarian National Committee is not credible itself as the moderator.

From the above list, The national party organization has well-defined roles to fill. From forming alliances with other parts of the Libertarian movement and Washington lobbying to taking back the Internet, a range of important tasks are appropriate to all the country's Libertarians working together, or only need to be done once to aid Libertarians everywhere. Some activities are expensive. For example, 50-state ballot access is reported to have cost \$400,000 for the 1996 campaign, and may cost a similar amount for the 2000 A.D. campaign. Subscription fulfillment and membership retention have a calculable marginal cost per member. Nonetheless, the National Party's budget must be kept proportionate to budgets of other parts of the Libertarian Party, so that money remains available for the most important tasks of the Party, the tasks performed by state and local organizations.

### ACTIVITIES FOR THE STATE LEVEL

State groups have many appropriate activities that they should perform. State groups may run statewide candidates, and are certainly well-placed to publish newsletters. A state organization should support local groups and foster friendly competition between them.

A good state committee member spends his time traveling, telephoning, and using the net. He talks to people, finds people to develop local activism, and finds people who will run for office or work as campaign staff. A good state committee develops resources to support local groups and candidates, and develops expertise to advise local groups and help them develop their own people and resources.

A good state chair opens her conversation "How can we help you?". A good state chair knows her people, identifies what her people need even when her people don't know themselves, and makes sure that her people get the support that will let them succeed at what they are doing. A poor state chair spends his time running for office, using the state party's resources, contacts, and activists to support his campaign. A poor state chair opens his conversations with Party activists "Here's how you are going to help me."

All but the smallest states can usefully publish two state newsletters: First, **an activist newsletter** targeting real and prospective Libertarian Party workers. The second **outreach newsletter**, priced to the bare bones, targets prospective Libertarian voters and their friends.

The **activist newsletter** covers political action news, petitioning deadlines, and campaigning methods. It gives activists the information they need to be active effectively. The activist newsletter also supports healthy internal discussion on party policies. The activist newsletter is effectively used to promote healthy positive competition between different local groups. Who had the best election results? Who registered the most voters into our party? Who elected the most

candidates to office? Challenging local groups to better their own records and the records set by their neighbors incites harder work by Libertarian activists.

The **outreach newsletter** covers Libertarian news and candidates to turn out the Libertarian voter base in their support. It writes about efforts of the duopoly parties to raise taxes and reduce freedom, presenting the news in a light that will motivate voters to Vote Libertarian! It encourages readers to take the first steps to activism, to support campaigns by displaying lawn signs and bumper stickers and contributing money. The voter-information newsletter is rationally run at the state level because: Most towns do not have enough political news to justify their own newsletter. Most people's interest in local politics stops short of the state line. Complications of gathering news town by town grow exponentially beyond the single-state level. I'm not aware of a state party that publishes a voter's information newsletter separate from the activist newsletter. By my analysis, quarterly publication with selected dates should be sufficient.

The state Party appropriately supports Statewide and Congressional campaigns, and focuses resources within the state on breakthrough opportunities. Statewide campaigns will vary from state to state. The Libertarian Party is still quite small. We do not have the masses of town committees, political consultants, elected officials, and activists that the Democratic and Republican parties have. Nonetheless, telling people who have volunteered to run for office that they should go run their own campaigns is an inept policy. Statewide officers should not run everyone's campaigns for them. However, *what good is a statewide organization that sits back and does not support its own party's candidates?*

**The Libertarian movement has better uses for its limited income than supporting a state organization that does not return the favor.** If we run candidates for offices above the city/town level, the state organization has the expertise in ballot access issues, the lists of donors and contacts, and the statewide media contacts that allow a serious campaign. A state organization must recognize its responsibility to support its party's people in their runs for office. If a state party does not support -- in a proportionate and appropriate way -- candidates across the state, it should be replaced.

A State Chair and State Committee must remember that except in the very smallest states they are primarily facilitators. The task of a facilitator is to contact Libertarian groups around the state, listen, offer advice, and provide support. Is that what your state committee is doing? Contact local groups around your state. Ask them pointblank how often they've had individual contact with a member of the state committee. Ask them pointblank how often the state organization has offered them advice. Ask them pointblank how often the state organization has supplied money or other resources for a campaign. The answers are an excellent measure of the quality of your state party's leadership.

A good state committee does not view itself as a prime source of major candidates. Look at the other major parties. When is the last time a national chair of the Republican

Party ran for office? (Hint: Bill Miller, Vice President, Republican, 1964). Of course, a weak state organization may not have a choice. There may not be enough Libertarians to do all mission-critical tasks. Some people may have to multitask or key tasks will be left undone. You may need to run state committee members for office because no one else is available, and for whatever reason you absolutely positively must run least a minimum-commitment candidate. You may need to ask a major candidate to help run the state party, because she will do it better than the alternatives. As has been said, if you need something done quickly, get a busy person to do it.

However, once state party officers run for office, there is a difficulty. The two roles of committeeman and candidate have a very real conflict of interest. State committees typically raise money. In many states, this money can legally be used to support political campaigning. Should that money go to the campaigns of the state committee members, or to the campaigns of other Libertarians around the state? State Committees typically do have lists of potential donors. Should those lists be shared with all candidates? Or are they held for the campaigns of state committee members? In the words of one of our nation's leading Libertarian activists: "You can tell the corrupt state organizations. They routinely run their own officers for high office when they had other choices." Running state committee members for office does not have to lead to irregularities. In many states, it's perfectly legal. However, the temptations and opportunities are strong.

## Activities for Local Groups

In the end, it is our local groups that will give us victory.

The foundation of Libertarian Victory is **Local Organization**. Local Organization will identify and develop local Libertarian political figures, giving us credible quality candidates for higher office. Local organizations build the Libertarian movement in every county, every town, every ward and precinct, giving us the strength to nominate and elect candidates to political office. Money and issues are not enough; without strong local issues and local support we cannot win elections. Local Organization fosters local meetings and personal contacts, creating opportunities to activate Libertarian members. Activated members become the specialists and activists, the volunteers and staffers and candidates, who will give us a Libertarian Party that wins elections from coast to coast.

Most important, Local Organization leads to Local Victory. Local Victory lets our friends and neighbors meet us and see who we really are. Local Victory lets our fellow Americans see Libertarian politicians putting into effect successful Libertarian solutions to community problems. Local Victory prepares the foundation for later victories at higher levels.

The Libertarian movement will most surely win higher office via Local Organization and local electoral campaigns. When there are strong Libertarian party groups in every city and town across our Republic, higher political offices will fall into our hands. When we have widespread local success, we will have strong activist organizations and a large Libertarian voter base over large areas. Then, and only then, will higher offices fall into our grasp. Until we have strong activist groups and many regular voters, elections to higher office will be hard to win and difficult

to repeat.

In the words of the Virginia Libertarian Party, "let us accept the proposition that every precinct in which a Libertarian resides shall have a precinct captain". Getting those precinct captains requires a great deal of meeting and telephoning and cajoling. It requires regular contact, so that no Precinct Captain feels that she is working entirely alone. Getting good precinct captains equally requires a great deal of teaching, so that every precinct captain has some idea of what she is to do.

**It is at the local level that campaigns are won and lost.** It is local activists who erect lawn signs, distribute bumper stickers, go door to door dropping leaflets, run phone banks, and stage car pools to get out the vote. Philadelphia activists have demonstrated how well this approach works; in a three way race, the Libertarian candidate carried the precincts in which the Libertarian Party ran full-bore political campaigns. Local activists running for local, non-partisan or weakly partisan office are more easily elected than are candidates for higher office. These local victories let our friends and neighbors see how Libertarians behave as elected officials, and how sound Libertarian ideas will improve government, cut taxes, and increase freedom. Local victories will build the solid Libertarian voter base that we need for future elections.

**Local organizations give personal contact.** The Libertarian Supper club, meeting monthly to hear a Libertarian speaker, is a prime location for current activists to meet prospective activists. A prospective activist is someone who supports Libertarian principles but does not yet work to put those principles into practice. He may very well have heard the principle There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch, but he doesn't believe it. He expects a ballot filled with Libertarian candidates at every election, even though he personally does nothing to get any candidates on the ballot. A prospective activist is someone who can perhaps be incited into activism. Libertarian supper clubs that do nothing except meet every month and talk about liberty make a modest contribution to building a stronger Libertarian Party. Precisely the same Supper club, attended regularly by activists using the meeting to identify and incite prospective activists, becomes the recruiting station of the army of freedom.

**Elected Libertarians in local office** are doing local activism that will build a strong voter base. Wales, Massachusetts has for some years had an active Libertarian in town government. He has been so successful that he was actively encouraged to move up from Town Finance Committee to Selectman. He makes no secret that he is a Libertarian, and that his contributions are a reflection of his Libertarian philosophy. In 1998, Libertarians running for statewide office got vote percentages in Wales that were several times higher than vote percentages in nearby towns. Similarly, in Washington County, Indiana, Libertarian candidates won partisan office in three-way races, and provided an updraft to the Party's statewide candidates. Libertarians who got 2-3% of the vote across the state got 12-15% of the vote in Washington County.

In short, **local organizations have the people who actually do politics.** They run candidates, build the party, and enlarge

our voter base. Local organizations are the sole foundation on which we can build electoral success. State and national organizations have important, specific roles in supporting local organizations, in running candidates for higher office, and in creating the environment in which Libertarian candidates regularly win office.

**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL GROUPS**

Most Libertarians know for a fact that that a strong socialist central government will always be much less efficient than the invisible hand of the market and the collected wisdom of millions of human beings, each of whom is as smart as any government bureaucrat. The fundamental principle is that "strong effective central government" is an oxymoron. This principle applies equally to national governments and to the Libertarian movement. Just as socialist democratic centralism would be a wasteful and inefficient way to run the nation's steel industry, so also libertarian democratic centralism would be a wasteful and inefficient way to run the libertarian movement.

The market provides the invisible hand that guides men and women toward right decisions. The invisible hand is as efficient in the marketplace of ideas as in any other marketplace. A local organization may choose to sell itself to the marketplace by providing services. This is the free market case. A local organization could also choose to operate as a franchisee of a national organization. This is the democratic centralist case. As shown in Chapter 3, the free market approach used in the Local Organization strategy is the most effective approach for our Libertarian Party. There is obviously no way that Libertarian democratic centralism can be as effective for the Libertarian Party as polite competition between Libertarian groups. We can use the market to identify the best ideas, but first we must allow the marketplace of ideas to function within our party. If we run state and local groups as dependent subsidiaries of national and state groups, the growth of those groups will inexorably be strangled by a central party bureaucracy. Local and state groups will compete with the national bureaucracy for the same resources, with the central bureaucracy writing the rules for dividing the pie. A political central bureaucracy is like a government central bureaucracy. No matter how much money and how many resources you feed a central bureaucracy, the bureaucracy has only one response: "More!"

**How many candidates should we run?**

The purpose of a political party is

- To Advance its Agenda via Political Action.
- To run Candidates for Office and Win Elections.
- To Use Electoral Victory to Put Its Program into Effect.

I return to a basic theme:

The purpose of a political party is: To Advance its Agenda via Political Action. To run Candidates for Office and Win Elections. To Use Electoral Victory to Put Its Program into Effect. What sort of candidates can we run for office? I'm going to identify four levels of candidate commitment: The paper candi-

date. The minimum-commitment candidate. The serious candidate. The running-to-win candidate

The paper candidate has the effort made to put himself on the ballot. He may do no more than agree that his name can be used by the party. He then disappears from public view. He raises no money, does no campaigning, and ends as a statistic on election day.

The minimum-commitment candidate gets on the ballot. She answers candidate questionnaires, appears at debates, and answers questions from the press, so that she is never seen by the public as "missing-in-action". However, her campaign raises no money, does no advertising, and schedules no appearances. The serious candidate brings into operation -- within the limitation of budget -- all of the tools of a political campaign. He advertises, has lawn signs and a web site, mobilizes available volunteers, runs phone banks and a get-out-the-vote drive. The candidate may or may not win, but defeat will not be due to lack of effort.

"Running-to-win" differs from "serious" in that the candidate not only is making a maximum effort to win the election, but also has objective substantial reasons for supposing that her victory is likely. There are two obvious reasons for supposing that victory is likely: 1) The candidate is an incumbent defending a friendly district. 2) Objective polling data shows opponents with majority-negatives, while the candidate has strong name recognition, majority-positives, and leads among likely voters.

Note that "ability to spend money" is not listed. If you don't believe me, ask any staffer on President Forbes' re-election campaign committee how Forbes beat President Perot in '96. Note also that many winning candidates did not make it to the "running-to-win" level. Some were serious candidates who overcame adversity. Some were minimum-commitment candidates prepared to accept victory and running in uncontested races.

Not everyone is prepared to make a maximum effort, to sacrifice friends and family for months on end, in order to be elected. Many Libertarians are able to lend their good names to the party, to Stand Up for Liberty! by occupying a place on the ballot, but don't have the money or time or contacts to make more of a run for office. The candidates who represent the party, talk to reporters, appear at debates, and work the media, without a campaign organization, should be recognized as making a significant positive contribution to our party.

Local Organizations and the local candidates that they develop are the path to a Libertarian future.

The only way we can forward our cause as a political party is to run people for office. Some candidates will bring the Libertarian word to the public. Other candidates will win election and serve in office, thereby showing voters how the Libertarian program of small government, low taxes, and the whole Bill of Rights benefits every voter personally.

In my above, I discussed four sorts of candidates that we can

run, namely the paper candidate, the minimum-commitment candidate, the serious candidate, and the running-to-win candidate. Someday, there will be a Libertarian candidate for every election across the United States, and every single one of them will be a serious candidate, generally in a position to run to win. That day is not here yet.

Until then, we make do with the candidates that we have, while inciting as many of our fellow Libertarians as possible to run for election.

How many candidates do we run? In my opinion, there is only one possible answer to this question: We run as many candidates as we can over the long term. That's not quite "run as many candidates as we can": Let's not burn out our activists, so they aren't there for the next election. Let's not run people who will seriously embarrass the party. Let's be sure that the candidates who have a reasonable shot at winning can do the job when elected.

However, it's pretty close: Without wrecking ourselves up for the long term, we should be running as many candidates as we can.

There are people who will say we shouldn't run minimum-activity candidates, the people who answer questionnaires and talk to the press, but do no campaigning. They don't want to run candidates who get 5% of the vote or 3% of the media coverage. They don't want us to run candidates who make the Libertarian party look like a paper tiger.'

To those people I say: When we run no candidate, we'll get not

5% or 0.5% but no percent at all of the total vote. When we run no candidate, we'll get not 30 percent or 3 percent but no percent of the vote. Actually, we'll be lucky to get as good as no percent of the vote. In 1996, Massachusetts Libertarians finally ran no candidates for "Party State Committee", a Massachusetts elective office, and were mocked for their failure by one of the major Massachusetts newspapers.

We should run all the serious candidates that we can. Through the Local Organization strategy, we should work to get those candidates the staffs and fundraising channels that will let them win their elections. But if we can't find a serious candidate, or don't have the staffers, volunteers, and funds to give a volunteer a serious campaign, we should to the maximum extent possible run minimum-commitment candidates for as many offices as possible. The candidates that our Local Organizations develop and support will bring us to the Libertarian future of freedom, prosperity, and peace.

...George Phillies

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