

# Libertarian Strategy Gazette

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## Letters on Libertarian Strategy Upon Strategic Planning

Fellow Libertarians!

Strategic Planning is not a new idea.

Businessmen have been doing it for millennia. The Hellenic philosopher Archimedes, challenged 'if you're so smart, why aren't you rich', is said to have used strategic planning: He anticipated an excellent olive harvest and used out-of-season options trading to corner the market on olive presses, thereby becoming wealthy.

We are not a newborn, fledgling political party. We are more than 30 years old. 28 years after their births, America's other great political parties---Federalist, Democratic, Whig, and Republican---had all elected Congressmen, Senators, and Presidents.

Why should we not have a long record of strategic planning, strategic thought, and strategic analysis? Why should we not have a strategic plan that actually has strategy: What is the objective? How is it to be reached? What resources are needed? What is the timeline? Does this all make sense?

We are the party of capitalism. How can we affect to be ignorant of a process known to every serious merchant, from the automobile magnate balancing between profit and business share --- to the donut magnate contemplating a cappuccino machine next to the percolator?

There are many tasks we can ask or expect or demand of our Party's elected leadership. Some are more fundamental than others. Some are more attainable than others. None is more basic than the ability of leaders to set forth a coherent strategic vision for our party, to identify a path for realizing that vision, to implement that path, and to improve that path based on practical experience.

Our Party's history includes some very different strategic visions. To see them, we need go no further than statements emanating from past candidates for National Chair. Consider the strategic images presented by Kent Guida (National Chair candidate, 1981) and David Bergland (National Chair candidate, 1998) in their campaign literature. I'm not going to argue whose vision was better. I'm only going to contrast the strategic visions. I'll show that our Libertarian Party has long had a sense of strategy and tactics. I'll show that historically we have had very different strategies proposed to us.

What did these two candidates propose?

[Letters on Libertarian Strategy] (Continued on page 2)

## Libertarian Political Action Organize a Campaign

From a series of postings by Tim Crowley to the PA-Libernet Yahooogroup site.

### Message, Targeting, and Strategy

Your message is the answer to the question "why are you running." Your first thought at an answer is rather closely libertarian. While this may be a valid answer, it is not one which is relevant to the average voter. You must answer the question for the voting public, not for yourself.

Your message should succinctly and clearly state the reason the voter should choose you over your opponents. Think about two winning messages from recent years. In '92 the Democratic message was "Clinton will bring change and a better economy." Bush's message was, well, he didn't have one. In '84 the Reagan message was "stay the course, things are better now than they were four years ago. Mondale's message was higher taxes.

In both cases, the winning message was the one most relevant to the voters. Both messages emphasized the winner's strength and the opponent's weaknesses. The right message delivered at the right time is a major factor in winning campaigns.

How do you craft a message that fits you and your principles and is still relevant and appealing enough to the voters to achieve the goals of your campaign? Answering this question involves asking a lot more, and that process is the formulation of your strategy.

A strategy answers the question "How will you achieve your electoral goal?" Facts needed to formulate the answer include a demographic profile of your district (age, party, race, etc.), an issues profile (abortion, gun rights, LP vote history, etc.), a list of both you and your opponent's strengths and weaknesses (both personal and issues) and a list of your expected high priority voters (Libertarian base voters, swing votes, and those in the district, not registered to vote but in line with your ideas). Analyzing these lists tells you which Libertarian issues to stress with which groups of voters.

Let's say you are running in a district where the LP's statewide candidates have gotten in the 4 % range, and in the best recent partisan race for local office, in a district similar to yours, the LP's candidate got 35% in a two-way race.

The district has a Republican congressman but mostly Democrats at the local level, indicating a large swing vote between the two major parties. In the 92 Election, the presidential vote totals for your district were: 36,% for Clinton, 38% for Bush, 25% Perot,

[Organize a Campaign] (Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1) [Letters on Libertarian Strategy]

In his 1981 document, Kent Guida identified "...the key element in the success of the Libertarian Party is the individual activist who (will) help the party grow and succeed..."

Guida demonstrated the sort of activities he would perform as National Chair. He compiled a "Blueprint for Libertarian Activists" sharing experiences of Libertarians from coast to coast. Core issues were:

- establishing successful local groups
- sustaining extant groups via activism
- internal communication
- candidate recruitment and electioneering
- Libertarian education -- the Speakers' Bureau
- fundraising by local groups for local projects

In his 1998 letter, David Bergland proposed a series of actions that he would perform, actions targeted at 'making us a Party too big to ignore', including:

- appoint Steve Dasbach as full-time, paid CEO
- keep the Dasbach Headquarters team
- increase the number of activists and donors "...by 'rolling out' Perry Willis's 'Project Archimedes'..." with the intent of doubling or quadrupling our membership by specified dates
- fundraise for the national party and Project Archimedes from wealthy Libertarians
- expand activist training and Libertarian education programs
- be the party's spokesman to the press and the public

Note the dramatic difference in strategic visions. One candidate focused on individual activists and helping them to build a solid national base for the Party. The other focused on the Washington headquarters, Washington staff, and the national party's membership and operation. There can be no doubt: historically, we have been presented with a range of alternative strategic visions.

We also have a record of how those visions have helped us or failed to help us. That record should be looked at carefully.

A third strategic vision is enunciated in the Clean Slate Action Program's "Stand Up for Liberty!", available on the web at <http://www.cmlc.org>, and as an eBook and trade paperback at <http://3mpub.com/phillies>

George Phillies

The Clean Slate Action Program Committee

Read "Stand Up for Liberty!"  
<http://3mpub.com/phillies> -- eBook and trade paperback  
 You may retransmit, reprint, or archive this article to help your fellow Libertarians see it

1% Marrou.

Your opponent, Sammy S., is a 38 year-old pro-life Republican, running for his second term. He's avowedly for lower taxes, but voted in favor of increased property taxes this term, angering the sizable senior citizen retirement community. Mr. S is an attorney and family man.

You are Lacy Fare, 58 year-old teacher, recently retired from the local college. You are making your first run at elected office, but have been very active in the community, as a part time counselor at the college, and as the organizer of a meals on wheels program for senior shut-ins.

Divide the population into groups expressed as percentages of the electorate. Decide which groups will be the most likely to vote for you or against your opponent and estimate what percentage of each group's vote you can earn with a good campaign.

Professional polling is necessary to accurately gauge the degree of support available for the different issues you might want to address with your message. In it's absence you will have to rely on research into how candidates who have stressed different issues in the past have fared, as well as newspaper research, knowledge of previous coalitions, studying previous election returns, and input from early precinct walking.

Multiply your estimates of earnable votes times each groups' share of the electorate. For the district described above, a simplified coalition profile might resemble the following:

80% of the LP/Perot/Independent vote (.80 x 26) = 20.8 total points  
 65% of the Democrat vote (.65 x 36) = 23.4 total points  
 18% of the Republican vote (.18 x 38) = 6.8 total points  
 = 51% enough to win

The more categories you include in your profile, the more closely you will be able to target your message and efforts toward those voters most easily persuaded to vote for you. You might want to include subdivisions of the above groups such as 27% of Republican women voters and 9% of Republican male voters, or 80% of new registrants from the college, or 65% of the pro-choice vote.

When you estimated the number of votes you could win from the Democrats, Republicans, and Perot voters, you began the process of targeting. Targeting means determining which voters are:

1. Most likely to vote,
2. Most easily persuaded to vote for you, or against your opponent.

Individual targeting refers to a voter's personal voting history. Do they always vote in Republican primaries? Lacy would probably exclude these voters from mailing and other campaign activities, in order to concentrate resources on others.

Household targeting is used mainly to economize on mailings and phone work. If two or more people in a household fit your high priority voter profile, you stand a chance for more votes by

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mailing one piece of mail there than if only one voter in the house fits your profile.

Group targeting is used to address the concerns of single issue and ethnic groups. Lacy would want to get a list of pro-choice voters and mail to them. Enhanced voter files from a list broker often give you the capability of pulling out ethnic surnames for a special mailing. A candidate in a border state might want to send a mailing on the LP's open borders policy to voters with an Hispanic surname.

Geographic targeting is the most used form of targeting. The other forms of targeting tell you who to direct your resources toward, geographic tells you where to campaign.

You should spend most of your time, especially in precinct walking, in those areas which have demonstrated by past performance susceptibility to a Libertarian message. Indicators of this include past LP candidates' performance, evidence of high swing votes, and yes/no votes on ballot issues.

Once you have defined your target voters by the above process, you should focus all your campaign efforts on those

voters, so your message might be something like: Lacy Fare understands the problems of both young and old. You can trust her to protect the right of home ownership, by exempting senior citizens from property taxes on their home. And Lacy will fight to protect a woman's right to choose.

Note that this message emphasizes the positive attributes necessary to appeal to a winning constituency:

Lacy Fare cares  
Property tax relief  
Pro-choice.

And offers significant contrast with the opponent:  
He can't be trusted on taxes  
Anti-abortion position.

Your campaign theme is the visual representation of your message. Everything from the type of campaign appearances you make to the photos used in your brochure should re-emphasize the message. For example, Lacy's brochure should feature pictures of her in a counseling session, helping in the meals on wheels program, and speaking at a forum against the property tax.

