
Libertarian Strategy Gazette

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'Exciting campaigns' in Indiana

A move to abolish the national platform

By Jeff A. Smith

On Oct. 7th, the national Libertarian Party sent out an announcement/fundraiser that publicized a couple of highly organized and "exciting" campaigns in my home state of Indiana. Of particular interest is the Indianapolis city council campaign of Greg Dixon, a local Baptist minister, whose church was once involved in a Waco-like stand-off with the IRS. Before his nationally publicized dance with income tax tyranny could escalate to a tragic climax however, Dixon honored a pledge of nonviolence and surrendered church property to federal authorities.

The campaign is managed by the ex-regional head of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, a political veteran whose clout within both the Indiana and national parties is currently in an ascendant phase. Scores of additional volunteers have also committed their time, talent and treasure to this unprecedented LPIN municipal campaign.

On the surface, there is much for Indiana Libertarians - and party members nationwide - to be proud of in the Dixon campaign. Those who believe the LP's royal road to success is paved primarily with local electoral victories are justifiably impressed with how the Indiana party has marshaled its resources - and its famously efficient organization - behind the minister's campaign.

There are possible ramifications of the Dixon campaign that cause me to have mixed feelings about it, but they must be understood against a larger backdrop.

At the September meeting of the Indiana LP State Central Committee, representatives from different parts of the state complained about how the national platform continued to be a stumbling block, as local candidates tried to open paths of communication between themselves and the conservative folk of the Hoosier State. The result was a resolution by LPIN's governing body calling for the abolition of the national platform. (This isn't a call to drastically shorten or reformat in a clearly defined way: this is a move to *abolish the platform totally*.)

The resolution passed easily, with minimal opposition. State Chair Mark Rutherford, who is also 3rd District Representative to the LNC, then circulated a statement sympathetic with the resolution's spirit to his fellow state chairs and national committee members.

[The Platform?] (Continued on page 2)

Support Your Candidates

By Marc Selzer

Libertarians sometimes get impatient and support some candidate from another party that sounds a little Libertarian on some issue or another. This is because they do not see Libertarians taking over the political world yet and they feel this person may be a good compromise. Well before you do that remember that if it was not for uncompromising Libertarians being on the ballot those politicians probably would not even be aware of our ideas. Uncompromising Libertarians on the ballot taking up a percentage of the vote have kept those ideas alive and influencing the politicians in the old and the new parties.

Also, why would someone run as a Libertarian taking up their valuable time and money if they can not count on your support and your vote? How will we attract capable and/or wealthy and attractive candidates to carry the Libertarian torch if you are not going to give them your vote and your loyalty?

So next time you are tempted to vote for the lesser of two evils rather than the Libertarian just remember the lesion of the last presidential election. So many people who wanted smaller government decided to vote for GW Bush because he said he wanted to cut taxes. But now just like all the times before Republicans have said that, once he got into office he raised taxes through the roof while saying he is lowering them. Not only has GW doubled and quadrupled social spending in the U.S. he has also put almost everyone in Afghanistan and Iraq on welfare too. Instead of fighting terrorists he has decided to put them all on welfare, food stamps and subsidized medical care as well as giving them a cushy government job. 2 out of every 10 people in Iraq will be getting a well paying government job on the backs of U.S. taxpayers. Thanks to GW and his fellow comrades in the Republican Party Iraq will soon be a worker's paradise. GW has added about \$5000 per year per person to the tax bill of every American for the next 10 years. So don't get fooled again, vote Libertarian 110% of the time.

I have seen some Libertarians get impatient on social issues and think that some other party may make more progress on civil rights and point out that more Democrats voted to end the Federal prosecution of medical marijuana cases than Republicans. Or because more Democrats are against the war. Well do you think they would be as strongly with us on those issues or others if we were not keeping it alive and keeping the pressure on them by being on the ballot for 30 years pushing our point of view? I think not.

I have also seen Libertarians join some other flash in the pan
[Support Your Party] (Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 1) [Abolish the Platform?]

Before his campaign was blessed by LPIN CentCom, Reverend Dixon was questioned about his political views. He admitted that he took exception to traditional Libertarian positions on certain volatile social issues that involve individual rights and lifestyle. In spite of this, Dixon said that while what he preached from the pulpit was his business, he would not make these views part of his campaign.

It would seem that LPIN's leadership longs for a day when interviews of this kind won't be overshadowed by the spectre of a national platform.

Let's be clear: I have no quarrel with the Dixon campaign per se, or the way LPIN CentCom has handled it.

However, the campaign represents a galvanization of powerful forces that could cement in place an already existing right-wing bias in LPIN's ideological orientation, agenda and outreach strategy. I believe LPIN should pursue new constituencies through a broad-based ideology, rather than appeal even more to conservatives by effectively divorcing ourselves from the national party.

But beyond this, and of possible interest to Libertarians around the country, is how the Indiana affiliate is manifesting - in graphic relief - a smoldering dialectic; one that has been unfolding within the entire Libertarian Party for a long time. LPIN's resolved determination to liberate itself from the "irrelevant" national platform, (which is thought to mostly embody the calcified concerns of a once-empowered collection of nerds and science fiction freaks), is just a local outcropping of the wider movement to publicly disavow our past and, by so doing, make way for "The New Libertarian Party."

I suppose it's to be expected that Libertarians would be attracted to the idea of removing regulatory obstacles to each state's ability to express the real views of its membership, and better relate to prospective members. After all, doesn't the Libertarian philosophy support the right of individuals to live according to their own conscience? Why then, it may be asked, shouldn't state parties have the right to develop their own personalities, even to the point where positions on issues differ radically from state to state?

I'm not arguing against the right of individuals to work for the things they believe in. I simply contend that if this right is pursued through a movement to abolish the platform, a principled continuance of this line of reasoning leads inevitably to either complete secession by states from the national body, or dissolution of the national organization.

There can be no meaningful national effort without a platform. It's also clear that a document consisting only of principles - with no application to issues - would be insufficient, since the degree to which interpretations differ on how principles apply would render effective and sustained coopera-

tion impossible. As a growing movement, it's important that we offer old and new members a message to invest in that remains relatively constant.

It's ironic that many of those wanting to abolish the platform are also supporters of the U.S. Constitution. The irony is twofold:

First, both documents represent people's coming together to better pursue their interests through cooperative effort.

Second, in terms of rights violation, the platform is superior to the Constitution. No one has ever been forced to join the LP and support its platform. The Constitution, on the other hand, imposes its will on all who live within its geographical jurisdiction.

Research has shown that most people join the party because of national issues. If the party becomes factionalized by the loss of its unifying document, it would lose a national voice that can be relied upon year after year to express the same basic viewpoint. Candidates, LNC and staff would have nothing to guide their issue positions or hold them ideologically accountable.

While those wanting to focus on local electoral skirmishes have valid concerns, let's not surrender the platform-based unity required to win the final battle in Washington.

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(Continued from page 1) [Support Your Party]

third party because they think that they have a better chance than us of bringing about change. Well Libertarians have seen many third parties come and go in the 30 years and we will still be here to bury the next one.

So next time you see a Libertarian candidate at a supper club or a convention thank them for carrying the torch for you and better yet, volunteer to help their campaign or donate to it. All they get for their efforts is your support and appreciation, so lets give it to them.

By voting Libertarian you amplify your vote by a hundred times. Let us say you joined the Democrats to turn them around on the drug war and civil rights or the Republicans to make them really become the small government party. This would be futile because you will never get to the 60 or 70 percent mark it would take to turn those parties around. You will just be de-clawed and de-fanged and help to add your support, numbers and votes to the people who are in control of those parties who are raising taxes and taking away your civil rights. But as a Libertarian you can through a big government politician out of office with only one or two percent of the vote.

The Republican and Democratic parties are like ships sinking in a mire of big government bureaucracy and by getting aboard you are just adding your weight and helping them sink faster, no matter what your intentions are when you decided to join. Your voice, even though it may be the opposite of the people in charge of that party, will just be used to shovel more coal on the fire to help them go faster down the track towards an ever bigger left or right wing big brother. Only outside those parties will you be able to derail that train.

So lets keep our eyes on the prize and understand that we are a minority opinion and we will not get that opinion heard by adding our voice to someone that disagrees with us, in whole or in part, and who is part of the big government machine.

...Mark Selzer

Southern Vice Chair, California Libertarian Party

A Year in the Strategic Plan

by Sean Haugh

The responses to my last column, "Is the Strategic Plan Still Viable?" were most enlightening, and I thank you for them. Some were critical of the Strategic Plan (SPT), and some were highly supportive.

No matter the perspective, most all the replies highlight two key obstacles that prevent SPT from being successful. SPT needs to be aggressively marketed to the state parties and local activists. We can't just publish the report, put it on the shelf, and expect it to do its magic. Whether enthusiastic or

skeptical, my article was the first time the majority of respondents apparently had heard about SPT.

SPT could also benefit from some serious attention to prioritization. One of the biggest criticisms was the sheer size of the final report. Hardly anybody wants to sit down and read 202 pages. Such a weighty tome is overwhelming to all but the most dedicated LP internal policy wonks. We have failed to articulate one coherent objective, about which the rest of the plan neatly falls into place. One response put it most succinctly, "We don't have a plan - we have a wish list."

It is expected that the LNC would take the lead role in the refinement and marketing of SPT. However, as I noted last issue, the final report was published three weeks before 9/11/01, and since then we've been distracted by one crisis after another. It's taken all of our attention just to keep the doors open.

And when we have turned our attention to SPT, the LNC has made a mess of it. Eliminating a strategy - any strategy - on a 9-7 vote displays an open contempt for the consensus-building process that is the whole basis of the plan. Now we have LNC members putting forth the preposterous theory that the LNC "owns" the Strategic Plan, and thus can do whatever the heck it wants with it.

If the SPT has one glaring failure, it's that it didn't go far enough. SPT didn't adequately refine the six goals and twenty strategies into one coherent package. Even worse, SPT blithely assumed that the LNC would take up the task as primary caretaker of the plan.

Now that is a big disconnect. SPT takes great pains to represent a grassroots movement. It is stated repeatedly within the final report that the plan can only be of value if the individual members and supporters of the party find it useful. Indeed, some of the initial resistance to SPT comes from the mistaken, yet perfectly natural, assumption that it is some grand pronouncement from above.

So, why the heck did we entrust the further development of SPT to the LNC? Is it really the LNC's problem if it doesn't have a clue of how to run the whole SPT show? For SPT to be successful, it has to be taken out of the hands of the LNC.

If anybody's going to "own" SPT and expect it to prosper, it has to be us, the members and supporters of the Libertarian Party. It's not just a national level initiative. All levels of our party organization, right on down to each individual grassroots activist, have their distinct voluntary roles in putting SPT to work.

So, who will take responsibility for the next required steps in the development of SPT? Well, I'll take a crack at it. Heck, why not?

I am grateful that with LFA we have a way of communicating with the membership beyond the national party structure. My intent is to publish a new column every issue that addresses each goal and strategy until we have put together a full primer on SPT. What with six goals and (now) 21 strategies, that will take just over a year.

Several of the goals and strategies have official Champions, and I'll ask them to contribute. As the project rolls out, I am hoping to find ways to make it more interactive than simply me running my mouth at you, so we can discover some of those necessary refinements. Many of us check the LFA message board daily, so please feel free to make use of that forum for this purpose.

All the while, I'll be interested in hearing from you about your experiences with SPT. What works for you, and what doesn't? What priorities did you set, and what were the results?

Of course, if the response from the members and supporters is a resounding silence, I reserve the right to cancel the series, chalk up SPT as another grand and noble waste of time, and put my energies into more productive ways to grow this party.

That's what I can do to address the marketing obstacle. I can counter the other main obstacle right now. The one coherent principle, the ultimate purpose of all this strategizing and planning, is the Libertarian Party's Mission Statement:

"The mission of the Libertarian Party is to move public policy in a libertarian direction by building a political party which elects Libertarians to public office."

If we ain't doing that, then I don't see the need to have a political party. Each article in this series will have to not only describe the particular goal or strategy, it will have to clearly demonstrate how that plank supports the Mission Statement in order to justify it's place as part of the plan.

...Sean Haugh

Sean Haugh's Column "The North Carolina Way" appears regularly in *Liberty For All!* <http://www.libertyforall.net> and is reproduced here with permission.

Correcting Errors Politely

When Illinois Libertarians were confronted with a news report that the Libertarian Party had already chosen its 2004 Presidential candidate, they asked for a correction (names omitted to be nonconfrontational)

Libertarian Party names candidates for top offices

October 23, 2003

BY (name) Staff Reporter

Pledging to reduce taxes, curtail federal spending and privatize Social Security, the Libertarian Party of Illinois an-

nounced its candidates for president and U.S. Senate on Wednesday at a college fraternity house on Chicago's South Side.

"We are poised to make a terrific impact on national politics," said NAME, a former HAS BEEN KNOWN TO WORK FOR A LIVING, and the Libertarian Party's presidential candidate. "Voters are worried about national security, about the state of the economy and the cost of health care. The Libertarian Party has solutions for all these issues and, frankly, the solutions don't involve greater legislation, they involve less legislation."

Jerry Kohn, a teacher in Oak Lawn and a library trustee in Oak Forest, said he wants to run for the U.S. Senate to make "serious and deep" cuts in government spending, promote a laissez-faire foreign policy and push the "original social order" of freedom. Kohn, 42, ran for state representative in the 28th District in 2002.

NAME, who spoke SOMEPLACE OR OTHER, said the only way to stimulate the economy is to eliminate "burdensome taxes and regulations," particularly the income tax, and just keep the federal excise tax."

We find reported on the Internet that an Illinois Libertarian activist wrote a scrupulously polite rejoinder

"Date: Thu Oct 23, 2003 4:21 pm

Subject: Libertarian Party candidates article

Dear (Reporter):

I would like to thank you for your article on the Libertarian Party candidates in today's Sun Times. (<http://www.suntimes.com/output/elect/cst-nws-lib23.html>) All too often, third party candidates are ignored by the mainstream media, and it's good to see that changing.

I would like to correct one item in the article, however. NAME is not the only candidate pursuing the Libertarian Party's presidential nomination, which will be decided at the LP national convention next May in Atlanta.

OTHER NAME of SOMEPLACE OR OTHER ([http://HIS WEB SITE](http://HISWEB SITE)) is the other leading contender. An online poll tracking the popularity of all candidates is available at: <http://cass.molp.org/polls.htm>

Best regards,
Libertarian"

Note that the letter notes the error without criticizing the reporter, criticizing the newspaper, becoming belligerent, or any of the other flaws that might offend the newspaper and reporter whose services are being requested for a correction.

The response, as supplied to us, was

From: (Reporter)
To: (Libertarian)
Subject: RE: Libertarian Party candidates article
Date: Thu, 23 Oct 2003 23:27:26 -0500
Libertarian:
Although NAME was presented to the media as the candidate and not a candidate, I appreciate your comments. There will be a correction in Friday's paper.

Reporter

**Lucha Por Tu Libertad
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Robert Underwood writes us:

The first three chapters of "Stand Up for Liberty!" by George Phillies are now available in Spanish under the title "Lucha Por Tu Libertad"

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at that point it is listed

More chapters will be added as they are translated.

Robert Joseph Underwood
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phillies@4liberty.net for future meeting plans

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