

Liberty for America

February 2014

Some state Libertarian parties are reporting remarkable growth over the past decade. The Libertarian Party of Maryland indicates that in the past decade its membership has increased tenfold. In the past year, libertarian registrations for the Libertarians in Colorado have increased by almost 28%. Since 2010, the North Carolina Libertarian Party has seen voter registrations increase at a 28% annualized rate. In the last quarter of 2014, Libertarian registration in Florida increased by 13%. When individual voters are contacted, some state parties have encountered interesting results. In Western Massachusetts, regular Libertarian candidate Bob Underwood has found that about 10% of the nominal registered Libertarians were surprised to learn that they were registered with the Libertarian party.

In contrast, the number of dues-paying members of the national party continues to fall. At the end of January the national party was down to 11,902 members and 662 other donors. The LNC has briefly discussed UMP and other news-sharing plans, but has obstacles related to federal campaign finance. State chairs have also been discussing UMP. Readers interested in the history of UMP are directed to the Central Massachusetts Liberty Coalition website CMLC.org in particular the newsletter coverage.

I said of National Party membership: "Under the old UMP, State and National membership fell badly. The old UMP did not leave the national party enough money to function, a matter that was obvious from the beginning except to the people who mattered.

"As a practical question, how many of your state members -- those of you with dues-paying state memberships -- are national members, or vice versa? About 2/3 of our state members are national members. About 1/3 of our national members are state members.

"Certainly, in my state our party's decision to run for President the author of DOMA, an antiabortionist who wanted to purge the Asatru and the Wiccans from the military, was not well-received by the membership.

"In my opinion, there are lots of small problems, not one big problem.

"Challenges, in my opinion, include

Attachments to Republicans.

Conspiracy theorists.

Unfortunate spending decisions, e.g., \$38,000 to an LNC member for editing, and then asking the members for money.

Lack of vigor in putting out the party's message.

On the bright side, the issues with recent LNCs have gone away for the moment.

Lack of up to date literature.

Odd contracts, e.g. LPStuff not giving us the contact info on sales.”

Only some of our state parties are filing with the Federal Election Commission. State parties that do not file cannot send money to the LNC. In other losses, regional representative Rob Oates was removed from the national committee automatically for missing meetings. His state chairs get to choose a replacement, who could be him. Vermont gubernatorial candidate Dan Feliciano, who was our most successful gubernatorial candidate, is apparently going to switch parties and join the Republicans. Why? Other LNC members recalled a Missouri member who switched parties after the 2008 election, the suggestion being that false Republican promises are luring the party-switchers.

There is now an International Alliance of Libertarian Parties, a nascent organization of Libertarian parties from around the globe. Countries perhaps to be represented in the IALP include Belgium, Russia, France, Germany, Italy, Tunisia, Australia, Brazil, Argentina, and the United States. The LNC voted 13-4 to join. Voting against, for entirely different reasons, were Hayes, Katz, Mattson, and Olsen. In order to silence complaints that this process would cost money, your editor personally volunteered to pay the \$150, or perhaps a bit less, that joining will cost. My perspective is, approximately speaking, long live the libertarian internationale!

The IALP has a very simple set of opening bylaws that will doubtless be developed as time goes on. When the proposal was brought to the LNC for discussion, the usual advocates of Roberts for parliamentary procedure complained that the bylaws did not have all these features to be found in Roberts. It was not clear to your author whether the people in question were trying to be helpful and incidentally creating a demonstration of the well-known fact that the best is the enemy of the good, or whether for some reason they were acting in ways that serve to obstruct forward progress. After one of the advocates fired off a huge list of questions to Geoff Neale as our representative to the IALP, Neale responded he was the representative of the LNC is a whole and was not obliged to enter this conversation. I suggested to Neale that the IALP should adopt Francis and Francis for parliamentary procedure. In criticizing the proposal, Mattson reminded the LNC that once upon a time Neale had made a series of proposals for buying a building and that the outcome was not quite the same.

The LNC is having an intermittent but significant discussion asking what the point is of running someone for president. Some people say that the presidential campaign should be focused on retaining ballot access, where ballot access is a phrase used to mean improved ease of ballot access for the presidential candidate. Other LNC members proposed that the presidential campaign is the tide that raises all boats and therefore will assist candidates for low office and getting elected.

We are advised that state chair Kevin Knedler has resigned, and that this change is associated with his retiring. Sarah Bevins is apparently the new interim chair. It is interesting to know that the membership crash of the national party is highly concentrated in Ohio, where over the last year nearly half of the members of the national party became former members. We have heard from informed sources, that some Ohioans were displeased with the arrangements involved in procuring \$10,000 to fund a National Party memberships for Ohioans, and that the friction may have cost the Ohio LP some good activists.

The end of year financial reports of the LNC are now out. Of particular interest is the decline across the year in total income. In the first half of the year, typical income was \$100,000 or more per month. After July, income began to drift downwards, finally reaching \$63,000 in November. Of course, the total is slightly confused by the \$138,000 that the LNC raised for convention income. There is also close to \$100,000 in project and program revenue. Other income, described as general fundraising income, came to \$1.1 million. The reserve fund dropped to \$5000, well under the amount of money needed to run the National Committee for any significant period of time.

The national committee had an argument as to how often fundraising pitches should be sent out. The number of fundraising letters has been increased for the year from 6 to 9. LNC member Dan Wiener found a report that the Clinton presidential campaign that is not a presidential campaign is sending out one or more electronic pitches a day to try to get money. Apparently at two pitches a day they began to encounter consumer resistance.

State chair discussion of the Libertarian State Leadership Alliance is having some interest in how the LSLA finances have been run.

The LNC is finally acting on its June, 2014 minutes. The obstacle was that the former National Secretary never presented any minutes, so that current National Secretary Alicia Mattson had to reconstruct the minutes by listening to decidedly less than outstanding audio recordings. For her labors, supporters of our national party should be appropriately grateful. Readers will note the U Might Be and Libertarian Angels projects were voted by the LNC as a priority, and then ask how these clever ideas are advancing.

Does Gary Johnson view the Libertarian Party as the cheap date? In a stunning video interview, 2012 Libertarian Party Presidential candidate effectively said that running as a Libertarian is not desirable, but it's the cheap way to go. In an interview with Neil Cavuto on Fox News, Johnson would was asked if he would run for president again. According to Independent Political Report, the conversation went:

NC: Are you going to run for President again?

GJ: I hope so, Neil. I hope to be able to do that. I hope to be able to provide a voice that's not being heard right now.

NC: Are you going to run as a third-party candidate again, not as a Republican?

GJ: Yeah, as a Libertarian, as a third party. You know, the ideal label right now is "independent," but that's a tough nut to crack. You've got to get on the ballot in enough states to run for President {...}

Writing on the state chairs list, LNC member Daniel Hayes reports that Gary Johnson also said "The ideal political affiliation right now is independent," Johnson said. "I would be that, but to get on the ballot in all 50 states would be a \$10 million endeavor. Running as a Libertarian, with all the volunteers, they cover that base. They make that happen."

The Johnson quotes are strong negative advertising for the national party, which gave Johnson the highest honor that a political party can bestow on one of its members, namely we entrusted Johnson with our 2012 presidential nomination.

Prominent Libertarian leaders on the State Chairs are asking when or if Johnson is going to announce that he is seeking the Party's 2016 nomination.