Party joins lawsuit to strike down new campaign finance ‘reform’ bill

The Libertarian Party has joined a lawsuit to overturn the campaign finance reform bill that was signed into law by President Bush.

At a press conference in Washington, DC on April 10, Libertarian Party Executive Director Steve Dasbach joined U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY), the National Right to Life PAC, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Christian Coalition, and others to sign onto the lawsuit, McConnell v. FEC.

The suit seeks to overturn the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act — formally known as the Shays-Meehan bill — which was signed into law by President Bush on March 27. The Libertarian Party joined the lawsuit in part because the campaign finance reform bill places an “unfair burden” on third parties, said Dasbach.

“Once again, Congress has passed a law with no thought to the consequences, and especially with no thought to the consequences to anyone other than Republicans and Democrats,” he said.

Fewer resources
“This bill places an unfair burden on all smaller parties, which have fewer resources and staff members to deal with its red-tape provisions.” Specifically, said Dasbach, the bill will make it illegal for young people under 18 to serve in some leadership positions in the Libertarian Party, will make it illegal for the party to take soft money contributions to build a headquarters (as the Republicans and Democrats have already done), and will make it illegal for the party to sell ads to corporations in its monthly newspaper.

“Some provisions of the campaign finance reform bill won’t matter to the Republicans or Democrats, but they will have a significant impact on the Libertarian Party and other third parties,” he said.

Ayn Rand profiled on C-SPAN show

Novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand will be recognized as one of the most influential American writers of the 20th Century in an ongoing series on C-SPAN.

On Sunday, May 12, Rand will be the subject of a two-hour show that will discuss her background, her literary influence, and the impact of her 1943 novel, The Fountainhead.

The show, part of the American Writers II: The 20th Century series, will air at 3:00 pm ET, and then be rebroadcast the following Friday (May 17) at 8:00 pm.

Three Libertarians elected

In a flurry of Spring victories, Libertarians have been elected or re-elected in Michigan and Wisconsin.

In Michigan, David Eisenbacher won a seat on the Troy city council, coming in first out of five candidates and handily defeating two incumbents.

In the April 1 election, Eisenbacher received 5,146 votes — 30% of the total — to earn a three-year term on the non-partisan, seven-member board.

The 30-year-old Eisenbacher said he was “pleasantly surprised” by the results.

“It feels really good to have won so convincingly, considering that I had no polling data to gauge my support,” said. “We won big.”

In Wisconsin, Gene Cisewski was elected to the Iron County Board of Supervisors. Cisewski defeated a four-term incumbent, 61 votes to 38 votes, to claim the District 3 (Hurley) seat on the 15-member, non-partisan board.

Also in Wisconsin, Libertarian Kevin Scheunemann was returned to the Kewaskum Village Board when no challengers ran against him or three other incumbents. Scheunemann was first elected in 2001.

News blurs

- The Libertarian National Committee has voted to call for the repeal of the USA/Patriot Act, charging that it "sacrifices" liberties in the name of fighting terrorism. At its meeting in Evergreen (CO) on March 16, the LNC urged the repeal of the bill, which gives the government the power to install the Carnivore e-mail snooping system.

- California Libertarian Mark Selzer’s cable access show is now famous ... in Britain. The Libertarian Alternative was featured on March 22 on the Big Breakfast Show, a BBC morning news-and-comedy program. The BBC wanted to film a "typical" American cable access show, with English comedian Squeaky McLean as one of the guests.

- After a debate erupted among Virginia LP members over whether he was ethically qualified to represent the party as a candidate, Jacob Hornberger has announced that he will run as an independent for the U.S. Senate.

- Award-winning movie producer Aaron Russo has nixed his plans to run for governor in Nevada, following a diagnosis of bladder cancer. Instead, he said, he will focus on regaining his health.

- Republican New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson has said he does not plan to seek the LP’s 2004 presidential nomination. Johnson gave a flat “no” when asked about a Libertarian presidential bid at a Feb. 28 press conference.
Libertarian unveils novel fund-raiser

By B.J. Plasket
The Daily Times-Call

DENVER — The Libertarian Party has long struggled to gain public recognition and votes, but a Boulder man seeking the party’s nomination for governor thinks he has come up with a way to combat those problems.

Ralph Shnelvar, a 51-year-old computer software writer and the managing partner of Information LLC, wants supporters to pledge a total of $1 million to his campaign.

But he’s not going to ask anyone to pay up unless the entire $1 million is pledged by July 4. The money, he said, should bring recognition to the party.

“In the minds of TV, newspapers and even the voters, if you don’t have the money, you’re not serious,” Shnelvar said.

Shnelvar, who entered the governor’s race in January after former Longmont gun-shop owner Bob Glass bowed out, thinks the pledge drive will help both his candidacy and the upstart Libertarian party.

“Most politicians raise money and use that money to raise more,” he said. “I’m doing it backwards. I want to raise all the money before they give it to me.”

Shnelvar said the Libertarian Party’s efforts to spread its message of limited government, individual freedom and personal responsibility suffers from what he called “the classic chicken-and-egg problem,” in which the media and most voters ignore the party, making fund-raising nearly impossible.

“You have to have press, but the press doesn’t know about us,” he said. “We want to break that cycle.”

He’s also breaking new political ground.

“As far as I know, I’m the first one to do anything like this,” Shnelvar said.

Shnelvar said he will report the pledges to the secretary of state as they come in and the pledges will be part of a public contribution record he despises but must live with.

“It’s all part of the erosion of political anonymity,” he said. “Next, they will put cameras in the voting booth.”

While the names of those who pledge will be public, Shnelvar will not begin announcing the pledge total until it reaches $100,000.

The Libertarian Party, which fought for years for official recognition in Colorado, does seem to have made electoral strides in recent years. The party now boasts San Miguel County Sheriff William Masters and four members of the Leadville City Council as members, as well as Ron Elsis, a member of the Longmont Board of Adjustment and Appeals.

The party will hold its state convention in Leadville from May 17 to 19.

Shnelvar, who is battling 31-year-old James Vance for the party’s gubernatorial nomination, said the July 4 deadline still gives him “time to spend the money wisely” before the November election.

If his million-dollar fund-raising plan fails, Shnelvar doesn’t plan to abandon his campaign or his quest to advance the Libertarian philosophy.

“I’ll do what Libertarians do all the time,” he said. “I’ll be out there nipping at the heels of the big parties.”

B.J. Plasket can be reached at 303-776-2244, Ext. 451, or by email at bplasket@times-call.com.
Libertarians to field nominees

Barry Smith
Star Raleigh Bureau

RALEIGH — Noticeably absent from the election filings, which closed Friday, were candidates from the Libertarian Party.

"The party, however, will be on the ballot this year and leaders say they plan to nominate a slate of candidates at their state convention in May." McLean said.

State law requires new political parties with enough signatures to get on the ballot to nominate candidates at a convention rather than file at state and county boards of elections as Democrats and Republicans do.

While the Libertarian Party has been on the ballot for a number of elections, it had to requalify because it did not get 10 percent of the vote in either the presidential or gubernatorial elections in 2000.

"Libertarians never get 10 percent of the vote so they are always decertified as a political party immediately following a presidential election," said Johnnie McLean, state deputy director of elections.

"We had to go through the petitioning process to requalify in 2000 as a new political party," said Barbara Howe, chair of the state party and was the party’s nominee for governor in 2000.

Now parties are required to obtain signatures on a petition equal to at least 2 percent of the number of people who voted in the last presidential or gubernatorial election. The Libertarians have already done that, Ms. McLean said.

While the Libertarian Party will have to nominate its candidates at a convention this year, party candidates will be able to file for office the same way as Democratic and Republican candidates in 2004, Ms. McLean said.

She said that she knows of no other party circulating petitions to get on the state ballot this year.

"They normally do that in anticipation of the presidential elections," Ms. McLean said.

Sean Haugh, executive director of the N.C. Libertarian Party, said the party does plan to field candidates for a number of offices this year.

"We are committed to running a full slate for Congress and we have set a goal that there will be no unopposed candidates for the General Assembly," Haugh said.

Ms. Howe said the party has an announced candidate for the U.S. Senate seat up for grabs in North Carolina this year, George Allen Esworthy of Apex.

Other candidates can seek the nomination for that office, Haugh said.

Last year, one Libertarian was elected in a non-partisan race in a Madison municipal election. Another Libertarian lost by 15 votes in a non-partisan Lenoir County Council election, Ms. Howe said.

The N.C. Libertarian Party will make its nominations at its state convention to be held at the Village Inn in Clemmons on May 4-5.
Libertarians will hold state meeting locally

Business convention in Ashland will elect officers and delegates as the party tries to build an organization with some clout

BY DANI DODGE
Mail Tribune

Libertarians are holding their state convention in Ashland this weekend as part of their strategy to be a force in state politics.

At the annual business convention, more than 50 Libertarians will elect officers and party delegates, make candidate endorsements, discuss their platform and spread the word about libertarianism.

“Libertarians believe in a free-market economy, dedication to civil liberties and personal freedom, and a foreign policy of nonintervention and free trade,” said Richard Burke, executive director of the Libertarian Party of Oregon. “Rather than being a political party just to agitate and introduce issues, we’ve tried to be a real political party and part of that success is building a statewide organization.”

In past years, the party held business conventions in Bend, La Grande and Newport. Their annual nominating convention is held in the Willamette Valley. Ashland Libertarian Gina Casternovia said she hopes the Ashland convention will help build a strong Jackson County Libertarian Party.

“We have a lot of people who think this way in the area, but we aren’t organized,” said Casternovia, who runs an educational business service. “There’s no Jackson County Libertarian organization and I would love to foster that.”

Founded in 1971, the Libertarian Party is the third-largest political party in the United States and the state. Out of the 112,599 registered voters in Jackson County, 958 are registered as Libertarians, according to the Jackson County clerk’s office. Less than 1 percent of the state’s voters are registered Libertarian.

Libertarians believe in a free-market economy, dedication to civil liberties and personal freedom, and a foreign policy of nonintervention and free trade. “We believe in truly limited government,” said Burke, who lives in Cedar Mill, “meaning fiscally conservative and socially tolerant.”

Libertarians agree with conservative Republican approaches to fiscal policy, such as decreasing taxes, but on the other hand side with more liberal Democratic policies on social issues such as the Death with Dignity Act, the use of medicinal marijuana and allowing women to make their own choices on abortion.

“We have Democrats and Republicans and they are arguing over how much to spend on social programs,” Casternovia said. “A Libertarian would say we have the authority to create a social program. These should be handled by the people, not the government.”

Casternovia said political questions should be answered by going to the country’s founding documents like the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Libertarians have won about 30 or 40 local nonpartisan elections in the state over the last few years, Burke said. For instance, Burke is president of the Tuatulm Valley Water District board of commissioners, the second-largest water provider in the state. Libertarians have been elected to school boards, a mayoral position and a county commission, Burke said.

“Local offices are what affect people’s lives the most,” Burke said. “They are the ones who say whether I can put up a fence in my yard.”

He said by getting people elected to these local offices, the party is building a “lunch team” of state legislative candidates. Burke said even though they don’t have the ability to win legislative elections now, they will influence state political processes through elections.

“We’ve said we will run spoiler candidates on Republican tickets and change the way they vote in the Legislature,” said Ted Semon, a Libertarian committeemen candidate.

Semon said getting committee members elected to the state legislature is one of the party’s top priorities.

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