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I. Statement of Principles

We, the members of the Libertarian Party of Minnesota, hold that all individuals have the right to exercise sole dominion over their own lives, and oppose the initiation of force or fraud as a means of achieving political or social goals. We are dedicated to the right of all individuals to live in whatever manner they choose, as long as they do not forcibly interfere with the right of others to live as they choose.

Governments throughout history, including our own, have operated on the principle that the state has the right to control the lives of individuals and confiscate the fruits of their labor. All other political parties in this country grant government these powers. We, however, hold that governments, when instituted, have only one legitimate function: to protect the rights of the individual.

We challenge the concept that governments have the right to become involved in any activity not directly related to the protection of individual rights. Governments should exist only to ensure the right to free speech and action, the right to own property, and the right to engage in voluntary contractual arrangements with other individuals. No individual should be forced by the State, or another person, to relinquish any portion of his or her life or property for the benefit of another person.

II. Preface

What does the Libertarian Party stand for?

Positions taken by the Libertarian Party of Minnesota are based on the inviolate principle that your life is your own. This means that you may provide for and enjoy your life in any way you wish as long as you do not forcibly interfere with anyone else's equal right to do the same.

Members of the Libertarian Party do not necessarily advocate or approve of any of the practices our policies would make legal. Our exclusion of moral approval and disapproval is deliberate. Individual rights must be recognized; the wisdom of any course of peaceful action is a matter for the acting individual(s) to decide. Personal responsibility is discouraged by government when people are denied the opportunity to exercise it. Libertarian policies will create a society in which people are free to make, and learn from, their own decisions.

Throughout history, governments have operated on the opposite principle: that the State may dispose of the lives of individuals and the fruits of their labor. Even within the United States, all non-libertarian political parties and organizations assume that government bodies and agencies may initiate force against you and seize what you have produced without your consent through taxation and regulation.

Your primary right is your right to your own life. In order for this to be realized, you must have the final say over how your life is to be lived. No other person or group of persons can justify forcibly interfering with your life.

From this basic right derives all others, such as:

Your right to property; that is, what you produce or trade for.

Your right to pursue happiness; that is, the reason you choose to live, what makes life worthwhile for you.

This means, for example, you have the right:

to make arrangements with anyone else to exchange services and property, and to carry out those exchanges free from outside interference;

to save your property for future enjoyment or trade;

to be free from invasions of your privacy; and

to defend yourself and your property;

but only as long as you do not forcibly interfere with another person's equal right to do the same.

III. Platform

A. Individual Rights and Civil Order

No conflict exists between civil order and individual rights. Both concepts are based on the same fundamental principle: that no individual, group, or government may initiate force against any other individual, group, or government.

1. Property Rights

The most basic property one has is one's own body and one's own life. If one chooses to use one's life to acquire honestly and peacefully other property by industry, gift or trade, such acquisition represents that part of one's life. Therefore property rights are part of individual rights.

We hold that the owners of property have the full right to control, use, dispose of, or in any manner enjoy their property without interference, until and unless the exercise of their control

infringes the valid rights of others. We specifically condemn current government efforts to regulate or ban the use of property in the name of aesthetic values, riskiness, moral standards, cost-benefit estimates, or the promotion or restriction of economic growth.

We demand an end to the taxation of privately owned real property, which actually makes the State the owner of all lands and forces individuals to rent their homes and places of business from the State.

Where property, including land, has been taken from its rightful owners by government or private action in violation of individual rights, we favor restitution to the rightful owners.

Freedom of privacy, speech, press, and religion are conditions of property rights.

2. Protection of Privacy

The individual's privacy, property, and right to speak or not to speak should not be infringed by the government. The government should not use electronic or other means of covert surveillance of an individual's actions or private property except in the case of known criminal activity. Correspondence, bank and other financial transactions and records, doctors' and lawyers' communications, employment records, and the like should not be open to review by government without the consent of all parties involved in those actions. As long as the National Census and all federal, state, and other government agencies' compilations of data on an individual continue to exist, they should be conducted only with the consent of the individual about whom the data are sought.

We oppose the mandatory issuance by the government of an identity card to be required for any purpose, such as for employment or border crossings. We support the right of individuals to use encryption and we oppose restrictions on its use or export.

3. Freedom of Speech

Freedom of speech and communication is essential to a free society. Any attempt by government to control communications, whatever the medium, is an attack on freedom of speech. We oppose

any attempt by government to regulate film, recording, the Internet, other electronic media, or publishing industries, including the press. We oppose all forms of censorship, including the laws and regulations on adult-oriented materials, broadcast programming and content, and advertising. We propose that ownership of broadcast rights be based on the principle of property rights rather than license regulations. We advocate that the cable communications industry be free from government regulation or ownership.

4. Freedom of Expression

We defend the right of individuals to use their own property to express their own beliefs, no matter how repugnant to others; but not to infringe upon the property of others in that expression.

5. Freedom of Religion

We defend the rights of individuals to engage in or abstain from any religious activities that do not violate the rights of others. In order to defend religious freedom, we advocate a strict separation of church and state. We oppose government actions that either aid or attack any religion. We oppose taxation of church property for the same reason that we oppose all taxation.

6. Abortion and Population

We oppose government actions that compel, prohibit, regulate, or subsidize abortion, sterilization or any other forms of birth control. We oppose all coercive measures for population control.

We oppose government laws and policies that restrict the opportunity to choose alternatives to abortion, such as free market oriented adoption services.

We advocate replacing taxpayer subsidies for childbearing, such as AFDC, with private charity. We urge the elimination of special tax burdens on single people with few or no children.

7. “Victimless Crime”

We hold that any action that does not infringe upon the rights of others cannot properly be termed a crime, therefore we favor the repeal of all federal, state and local laws creating

“crimes” without victims.

In particular we are opposed to all regulation of activities such as gambling, prostitution, juvenile “status offenses,” use or possession of medicines, drugs, drug paraphernalia, vitamins and firearms, and mandatory usage of seat belts and helmets.

We call for the repeal of all laws regarding consensual sexual acts. The state has no right to proscribe any lifestyle that is freely chosen. We call for an end to state oppression and harassment of homosexual men and women.

8. Gambling

Because gambling is a voluntary activity, and therefore a victimless crime, we oppose the government monopoly in or regulation of all forms of gambling.

9. Drugs, Tobacco and Alcohol

Each individual, as sole owner of his or her own body, can morally decide what or what not to put into it. To give up this right, in principle, is to give up self-determination and submit to slavery.

We favor the repeal of all prohibition-type laws against the sale or use of any drug, tobacco or alcohol. Prohibition artificially increases the price of the product, resulting in violent crime. However, users of drugs, tobacco and alcohol must be held fully responsible for their actions.

We call for an end to the “War on Drugs,” which is in reality a war by the federal, state and local government on the people. Until such time as the prohibition of drugs is repealed, we call for an end to the denial of pain relieving drugs such as marijuana and heroin to those who are suffering.

10. Children’s and Dependents’ Rights

Children and others who are dependent have the same right to be free of coercion as all other people. We accordingly call for the repeal of all juvenile status offenses such as truancy, under age smoking, curfews, etc.

We support the efforts of parents or guardians to protect their dependents from force or fraud.

11. Government and “Mental Health”

We support the right of people to the control of their own minds. The involuntary commitment of an individual not convicted of a crime, but merely asserted to be different or incompetent, is a violation of liberty. We further advocate:

1. the repeal of all laws permitting involuntary psychiatric treatment of any persons, including those incarcerated in prisons or mental institutions;
2. an end to the spending of tax money for any program of psychiatric or psychological research or treatment;
3. an end to all involuntary treatment of prisoners in such areas as psycho-surgery, drug therapy, and aversion therapy;
4. an end to tax supported “mental health” propaganda campaigns and community “mental health” centers and programs.

12. Secession

We recognize the right to political secession. This includes the right of secession by political entities, private groups, or individuals.

13. The Right to Keep and Bear Arms

In recognition of the fact that individuals are their own last source of self-defense, and the fact that arms are property, we support the right of individuals to keep and bear arms. We oppose compulsory arms registration and regulation.

Minnesota is one of only seven states whose Constitution does not contain the right of individuals to keep and bear arms. We call for an amendment guaranteeing this right.

14. Due Process for the Criminally Accused

We defend the premise of “innocent until proven guilty,” therefore we oppose current “no knock” laws, preventative detention, and all similar measures which destroy liberty.

We also call for a repeal and elimination of all laws, rules, regulations and interpretations thereof as well as civil actions by the government which deprive individuals of their property (asset forfeiture) without being found guilty of any crime.

15. Restitution for the Falsely Accused

We support full restitution for all losses suffered by persons arrested, indicted, imprisoned, tried or otherwise injured in the course of criminal proceedings against them that do not result in their conviction or which is later overturned. Funding of restitution will be the responsibility of those persons initiating criminal action against the falsely accused if it can be proven the action was intentionally false.

Because life cannot be restored to a person who is wrongly executed, we oppose the death penalty in all cases.

16. Restitution for Victims of Crimes

We support restitution for the victim to the fullest degree possible at the expense of the criminal or wrongdoer. We accordingly oppose “no fault” insurance laws, which deprive the victim of the right to recover damages from those responsible.

17. Restoration of Criminals’ Liberty

A criminal, having paid for the crime, should be accorded full restoration of liberty.

18. Juries

We advocate replacing mandatory jury duty with voluntary juries and private arbitration.

We support the Fully Informed Jury Amendment, which would require judges to inform juries of their traditional right to decide the rightness or wrongness of the law in the given case, as well as the guilt or innocence of a person relative to the law.

19. Freedom of Association

We support the right of individuals to peacefully assemble for any purpose. We oppose any government attempts to regulate private discrimination, such as in employment, housing, education, social clubs, or gatherings and business. The freedom to choose with whom to trade, assemble or associate includes the freedom to choose with whom not to trade, assemble or associate. Therefore, we oppose government laws and policies requiring forced segregation or forced integration.

20. Equal Protection Under the Law

No individual's freedom should be denied or abridged by the laws of the State of Minnesota or any locality on account of sex, race, color, creed, age, national origin, or sexual preference. Protective labor laws and other laws which violate rights selectively should be repealed entirely rather than be extended to all groups.

Discrimination imposed by the government has brought disruption in normal relationships of peoples, set neighbor against neighbor, created gross injustices, and diminished human potential. Anti-discrimination laws are the reverse side of the coin and will, for the same reasons, create the same problems.

21. Native American Indians and the State

We deplore the Federal and State governments' continued paternalistic and exploitative policies toward the Native American. We call for the abolition of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which throughout its history has sought forcibly to make Native Americans wards of the State by destroying their individuality and traditional culture. We call for an end to Federal, State, and local interference in the property rights and civil liberties of Native Americans. We call on the State and Federal governments to honor all current treaty obligations.

B. Trade and Society

People are the sole owners of their own lives. What people produce in life we call property. It is

right that people be free to keep or trade what they produce with others. We oppose government intervention in production and trade through taxation, regulation, licensing, inflation, etc. The proper role of government in the economic realm is to protect life, property, and honest trade, not restrict it. Efforts to forcibly redistribute wealth or forcibly restrict honest trade is slavery by other names.

1. Taxation

Taxation, the taking of people's wealth by force and threat of force, is legalized theft and extortion by those who are the government. Only individuals can rightfully decide how their money can be spent. As a means of moving towards our goal of limited government and no taxation, we call for spending cuts in all areas of government. We support eliminating all withholding taxes and requiring taxpayers to pay taxes on a quarterly basis until taxes are replaced with a voluntary or contractual system.

2. Subsidies

In order to achieve a free economy in which government victimizes no one for the benefit of anyone else, we oppose all government subsidies, special interest laws, tariffs or quotas for anyone for any reason.

3. Money and Inflation

We recognize that government control over money and banking is the major cause of inflation, depression and distortion of relative prices and production. In order to have a free market and its relative stability, we advocate replacing legal tender laws, the Federal Reserve central bank, and the maze of banking, monetary, and securities regulations, with standards set in the free market. Until a free market monetary system is established, we support voluntary exchange using gold, silver, or other commodities in exchange for goods and services.

4. Employment and Licensing

We seek the elimination of protectionist occupation licensing and mandatory certification laws, which prevent individuals from working in whatever trade they wish. Such special interest laws serve to prevent competition and mobility and give a semi-monopoly to those already licensed,

at the expense of the consumer and those who are trying to get started in a protected profession.

We advocate privatizing the current government licensing bureaucracies, removing their monopoly status, and letting them compete in the free market.

5. Welfare, Poverty and Unemployment

We advocate replacing the current counter-productive political welfare system with private charitable efforts. As an interim measure we advocate a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for all charitable contributions.

We ask “Why are people poor and unemployed?” The answer is government intervention in the marketplace, (i.e., taxation, inflation, regulation, licensing, minimum wage laws, retirement laws, etc.) which destroys opportunity, mobility, hope, independence, and wealth.

Welfare and unemployment programs appease those whom government has oppressed, and keeps them dependent. Truly free markets in which people are allowed to keep the fruits of their labor and produce a surplus with which to help others is the rational moral answer to helping the unfortunate. Free markets typically generate more jobs than there are job seekers.

6. Unions and Collective Bargaining

We support the right of free persons voluntarily to establish, associate in, or not associate in labor unions. An employer should have the right to recognize, or refuse to recognize, a union.

We oppose government interference in bargaining, such as compulsory arbitration and right to work laws. Therefore we urge the repeal of the National Labor Relations Act, the Taft-Hartley Act, and all similar laws which prohibit employers from making voluntary contracts with unions.

Strikes or boycotts do not justify the initiation of violence against other workers, employers, strike-breakers, or anyone’s property.

7. Business

We advocate freedom and responsibility for all with special interest laws for none. Therefore we call for the repeal of all laws which help or hinder business, such as corporation laws, corporate limited liability laws, corporation taxation, tariffs, quotas, anti-trust laws, bankruptcy laws, and all similar laws.

On principle, Libertarians call for the eventual complete separation of business and government.

8. Consumer Protection

We support strong and effective laws against fraud and misrepresentation. However, we oppose paternalistic government regulations that dictate to consumers, impose prices, define standards for products, or otherwise restrict risk-taking and free choice.

9. Health Care

In order to insure the best possible health care, we advocate the deregulation of the health care industry. Government intervention, restriction, and protectionism in the health care industry has driven up costs and decreased the supply of doctors, nurses, technicians, hospitals, and medical insurance. We advocate replacing compulsory or tax supported plans to supply health services or insurance with voluntarily supported efforts.

10. Right to Die

Because all individuals should have full responsibility and control over their own lives, anyone, including terminally or hopelessly ill persons should have the right to die at the time and place and under the conditions of their own choosing. We support the concept of living wills in which individuals declare the manner in which they are to be treated and the procedures for disposal of their remains. In the absence of such wills and the ability of the individual to choose (e.g., coma) the matter should be decided by the family or such person or persons the individual may have clearly preferred with whatever guidance they may desire. In keeping with the principle of non-coercion, no individual shall be forced either to continue or terminate life sustaining care.

11. Transportation

We advocate a true free market in transportation; accordingly we support systematic

privatization of all forms of transportation including, but not limited to: Amtrak, all airports, taxicab and bus services. We support elimination of all state and federal transportation regulations and regulatory agencies.

12. Postal Service

We propose the privatization of the monopolistic governmental Postal Service. Pending privatization we call for allowing free competition in all aspects of postal service.

13. Public Utilities and Energy

We advocate bringing the positive benefits of free market competition to utilities; accordingly we call for privatization and deregulation of all government monopolies, such as garbage collection, electric, gas, or communication utilities, the Public Utilities Commission, fire departments, water and sewer departments, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Price Anderson Act, the Minnesota Energy Agency, and all similar regulatory agencies.

14. Freedom of Marriage

We hold that unions between adults are a private matter, and should not be the subject of government licensing, regardless of sex. We call for the State of Minnesota to not restrict or give preferential treatment to private contracts between adults.

C. Domestic Ills

Current problems in such areas as crime, pollution, health care, decaying cities, and poverty are not solved, but are primarily caused, by government. The welfare state, supposedly designed to aid the poor, is in reality a growing and parasitic burden on all productive people, and on balance, injures rather than benefits the poor themselves.

“Public good” is the mask behind which various bureaucracies or pressure groups hide while using the government police powers to their own ends. We oppose any government action, acquisition of property, or violation of freedom in the name of the “public good.”

1. Land Use

The role of planning is properly the responsibility and right of the owners of the land. Accordingly we oppose all government intervention against this right such as zoning laws, building codes, urban renewal, regional planning, subdivision laws, rent controls, and eminent domain. We advocate free market methods of land use control by means of private land use covenants. We call for the repeal of laws which allow the state and local governments legally to steal private property through eminent domain or condemnation proceedings, regardless of “compensation.”

2. Pollution

Pollution of other people’s property is wrong. Strict liability, not government agencies and arbitrary standards, should regulate pollution. We advocate repeal of the laws that prevent full ownership of the air and water above and below land, thus denying individuals protection under the law against polluters. Private property rights must replace public property.

We further advocate repeal of corporate limited liability laws protecting the individuals who own or manage corporations from the personal liability of pollution.

We further advocate the repeal of sovereign immunity laws, which protect those in charge of government property, utilities and military installations from the personal liability of pollution.

3. Public Entertainment Facilities

We advocate a free market in entertainment; accordingly we call for the privatization and deregulation of all government ownership, financing or involvement in stadiums, fairs, malls, convention centers, racetracks, etc.

4. Education

In order to achieve the best possible opportunity of education we advocate bringing the positive benefits of competition to the monopolistic government schools. Therefore we call for the privatization and deregulation of schools. Also we call for the repeal of compulsory education laws, truancy laws, school and teacher certification and licensing laws, and taxpayer financing of

education.

As an interim measure we advocate tax credits for any individual or business sponsoring a person's education, equal to the amount of that assistance. We also support open enrollment and the expansion of Minnesota's charter school program which allows parents, students and educators to independently set up semi-autonomous schools operating under reduced public authority.

On principle, Libertarians call for the eventual complete separation of government and education, and call for an immediate end to state mandated curricula, including but not limited to: the Profile of Learning, Goals 2000, and School to Work.

5. Campaign Laws

We call for the repeal of restrictive state laws that effectively prevent new parties and independent candidates from being on the ballot. We urge the repeal of federal and state campaign finance laws, which repress the voluntary support of candidates and parties, compel taxpayers to subsidize politicians and political views they do not wish to support, and entrench the two major political parties.

6. "Sunset Laws"

We advocate a constitutional amendment requiring an automatic end to all government offices, departments, bureaucracies, laws, regulations, and expenditures every year. And unless individually voted on they would cease to exist as such.

7. Sovereign Immunity

We call for an immediate end to the doctrine of "sovereign immunity," which implies that the state can do no wrong and which holds that the state may not be held accountable without its permission.

8. None of the Above

We propose the addition of the alternative "none of the above is acceptable" to all ballots. In the event that "none of the above" wins, the elective office for that term will remain unfilled and

unfunded.

9. Citizens Initiative and Referendum

We support a constitutional amendment recognizing the people's right to Initiative and Referendum.

10. Government Accounting Practices

We support requiring government to follow generally accepted accounting principles and require the elimination of off-budget items.

11. Rotation of Legislative Committee Chairs

We support requiring the rotation of committee chairpersons and limiting their chairship to four years.

D. Foreign Policy

The principle of non-initiation of force should guide the relationships between governments. We call for a non-interventionist foreign policy of avoiding entangling alliances, quarrels and treaties, and recognizing the right to unrestricted travel, trade and immigration. We advocate the negotiated withdrawal from current treaties that bind us to military commitments around the world. We favor the rapid resolution of all boundary disputes based on the existing treaty law. As fishing rights disputes are the most pressing of these questions, we propose these to be resolved first.

Specific planks on foreign policy can be found in the National Party platform.

IV. Omissions

Our silence about any other particular government law, regulation, ordinance, directive, edict, control, restriction, regulatory agency, activity, or machination should not be construed to imply approval.

V. Conclusion

It is disappointing that in the third century following the signing of the Declaration of Independence, we find ourselves having to fight against those same things from which our forefathers declared their independence. Those principles of human freedom and dignity we support in this platform are similar to those our government was originally created to protect. Remembering what in fact constitutes a crime leads us to the inevitable and sad conclusion that presently government is the greatest criminal of all. The Libertarian Party's goal is to gain recognition for that freedom and dignity to which each individual has a right.

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