Anchorage, Alaska Libertarians file free-market taxicab initiative

Libertarians in Anchorage, Alaska have filed an initiative that would significantly deregulate the local taxicab market.

On February 2, LP activists submitted over 10,400 signatures to the city clerk’s office to place the initiative on the April 2 election ballot. Only 6,240 valid signatures are required.

LP State Chair Al Anders said the initiative would allow any “qualified applicant” — as defined by current city standards — to receive a permit to drive a taxicab upon request.

Currently, would-be taxi drivers must appear before a Transportation Commission and argue that “public convenience and necessity” requires more permits, said Anders.

“This initiative would make the closed taxicab market, accessible only to a privileged few, into an open market accessible to almost anyone,” he said. “The result would be increased competition amongst providers, and more choices for consumers.”

Since 1984, only three new taxicab permits have been issued in Anchorage, boosting the total number of permits from 158 to 161.

Consequently, existing permits are often sold for thousands of dollars, said Anders.

“If our initiative is approved, those permits will probably be worth as much as Enron stock,” he said. “But I don’t feel much sympathy for those who bought their permits in the closed market. The industry should be open to everybody.”

The idea for the initiative came from Jerry Rohacek, an LP member and economics professor at the University of Alaska at Anchorage, said Anders. His students helped gather signatures, starting in November 2001.

The city clerk is expected to validate the signatures by the end of February.

Party lobbies FAA for pilot gun rights

The national Libertarian Party mounted an e-mail campaign to try to convince the Federal Aviation Administration to allow commercial airline pilots to carry firearms to stop terrorists.

In late January, the LP sent an “urgent action item” to its 36,000-name e-mail list, urging Libertarians to contact the FAA and recommend that private airline companies be allowed to make their own rules about guns in cockpits.

This approach would allow passengers to choose which airline they frequent based on that company’s commitment to passenger safety, said LP Political Director Ron Crickenberger.

“While many of the [post Sept. 11] security measures implemented at airports won’t help to deter terrorism, and may even be counterproductive, allowing the arming of airline pilots is sure to have a preventative effect,” he said.

In response

The campaign was launched in response to a provision in the Aviation and Transportation Security Act, which requires the approval of the Under Secretary for Transportation before any commercial pilot is allowed to carry a weapon.

Libertarians say pilots and airlines — not government bureaucrats — should make that decision, said Crickenberger.

“The decision to carry firearms should be left up to the people most directly responsible for passenger safety — the airlines and the pilots,” he said. “Allowing pilots to carry firearms will be one small, but very important, step in preserving the basic human rights of self-defense for all of us.”

The deadline for public comments on the provision was February 14.
Liberties erode in name of ‘national security’

When Attorney General John Ashcroft told the nation, “To those who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty, my message is this: Your tactics only aid terrorists,” he wasn’t blazing any new trails. He was merely doing what despots and would-be despots always do: attempting to intimidate into silence those who dare to question him.

Ashcroft’s statement is one of the most astounding things to be said by a U.S. official in many years. To read it carefully — letting its full message sink in — is to be overcome by a sense of horror that is otherwise hard to imagine. Every American should be offended to hear the government’s chief law enforcement officer equate public expressions of concern about the threats to liberty from drastic “anti-terrorism” measures with joining al-Qaeda. Does Ashcroft have such a low estimate of the American people’s intelligence?

Perhaps he needs to become acquainted with Thomas Jefferson, who said, “The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground.” That’s true in the best of times. It’s doubly true during war — especially an Orwellian undeclared, open-ended crusade against an enemy as nebulous as “international terrorism.” Ashcroft is a perfect Orwellian character.

In 1984, Big Brother told his people that “freedom is slavery.” It follows that slavery is freedom. Ashcroft refuses to concede that the Bush administration is seeking to curtail liberty in the least. Those who see diminised liberty must be hallucinating, seeing “phantoms of lost liberty.”

So when the president unilaterally abolishes due process for non-citizens, we are only imagining an erosion of liberty. And when Congress passes, without even reading, the administration’s alleged anti-terrorism bill, which expands the government’s powers of surveillance, permits secret searches of homes and weakens judicial oversight of law enforcement, again, we are deluded if we think freedom is evaporating. I write “alleged anti-terrorism bill” because the new law does not restrict the expanded powers to suspected terrorists, but applies them to any criminal activity.

This is a classic power grab under the cover of an emergency. Sept. 11. It’s given policy-makers a chance to bring down from the shelf every new police power they have wanted for years. They assume no one will question the need for such broad powers, and if anyone does, they can shut him up by portraying him as an ally of the terrorists. The game is rigged in favor of power.

It is no comfort that the erosion of liberty in the name of fighting terrorism has a bipartisan cast to it. Democratic Sen. Charles Schumer of New York has given his blessing to oppressive government with an op-ed in the Washington Post titled “Big Government Looks Better Now.”

Schumer insists that only the federal government “has the breadth, strength and resources to keep us secure. Forgive me for asking, but did we not have a federal government on Sept. 11? Was it not in charge of our security on that date? Then what is the senator talking about? And if it isn’t impolite to ask, just where does the federal government get all those resources? Last time I checked, it didn’t produce anything. It simply took resources from the people who did produce them.

Once we understand that all government possesses is the power of legal plunder, our whole perspective changes. The game is rigged in favor of power.

That’s what we had on Sept. 11.

SCHLEON RICHTMAN

Commentary

THE YEAR 2002

THE YEAR 2001

To those who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty, my message is this: Your tactics only aid terrorists...

As Schumer puts it, barely concealing his glee, “For the foreseeable future, the federal government will have to grow.” Of course, the senator was trying to enlarge it long before Sept. 11.
DuPage Libertarians take fight for ballot spot to court

By STACY ST. CLAIR
Daily Herald Staff Writer

DuPage County Libertarians have taken their battle for a primary ballot spot to the courthouse.

In a lawsuit filed this week in circuit court, 16 party members asked a judge to accept their petitions to run for precinct committeemen and to place their names on voting cards in the March 19 primary.

The county election commission last week removed the would-be candidates from the ballot after ruling Libertarians were not an "established" party locally.

"This is a slap in the face to all DuPage residents," said Austin Hough, chairman of the Libertarian Party of Illinois. "This is not a tyrannical government — or at least it's not supposed to be."

The state party has offered to pay the legal bills for the candidates, who have dubbed themselves the "DuPage 16."

The election commission's rejection was a major blow to party leaders, who have designs to make DuPage County the launch pad for a Libertarian movement in Illinois. The traditionally Republican area caught off-guard was a major blow to party leaders, who have designs to make DuPage County the launch pad for a Libertarian movement in Illinois. The traditionally Republican area caught off-guard.

The appeal is expected to be set before the primary.

The Libertarian Party is planning a Wayne County organization.

The Libertarian Party is planning a Wayne County organization. Issues of property rights will be an emphasis for the party, which plans to field local candidates in the fall election.

"Wasteful spending and property issues are ones that people can get into," said Rex Bell of Hagerstown, the party's local contact.

There is no organized Libertarian party in Wayne County and the state party is helping organize one.

An affiliating convention will be held Jan. 21 at the Greens Fork Community Center.

"We're trying to affiliate as many counties as possible," said Sheri Conover Sharlow, communications coordinator of the Libertarian Party of Indiana.

The Indiana party organized in 1971. In 1994, it gained ballot access.

"What we're trying to do is give voters another option," Bell said.

Bylaws will be passed and officers elected at the convention. Anyone may attend but only dues-paying members of the Libertarian Party may vote.

"There's nothing that says you can't vote Libertarian in the fall general election if you don't pay the $25," Sharlow said.

"But the only people who can vote on bylaws and on officers are dues-paying members."

Members pay annual dues of $25 to support the party. The Libertarian Party does not accept government matching funds from qualifying presidential races.

People can pay the dues and become members at the affiliation convention.

Billerica Libertarian to challenge Meehan for seat

By CHRISTINE McCONVILLE
Sun Staff

BILLERICA — Libertarian Ilana Freedman is planning to announce tonight her candidacy to challenge U.S. Rep. Martin Meehan for the congressional seat in the 5th Congressional District.

"I really think this opportunity is long overdue for the district," said Freedman. "The people of Massachusetts are looking for another approach to solving the problems we have."

Freedman criticized Meehan's disregard for his term-limits pledge. Meehan, a Lowell Democrat, promised constituents that he'd step down after four terms, but he's now running for his sixth.

Freedman has only been living in Billerica since 1999, but in that short time, she has gained tremendous recognition. She and her husband, Richard, are both Town Meeting representatives who have embraced the give-and-take of local politics. They are visible and active participants on Town Meeting floor.

Freedman sees her plans to jump from local office to national office as a logical and positive step.

"The original intent of our founding fathers was that we would be governed by citizen legislators, people who came from the private sector, went into government for a short time, and then went back to the private sector," she said.

"The years, government has gotten so large, and legislators have become so distant from their constituency."

Freedman says that government has too much interference in American lives.

"We pay almost 50 percent of the money we earn in taxes of one kind or another. That's huge."

"There are legitimate roles that the government can play, of course," she continued.

"Government should be involved in defense and security and in things between states, like air pollution, but the government shouldn't be involved in micro-managing education or personal life choices," she said.

Freedman is an industry analyst and an expert on the impact of disruptive change. Since 1993, she has been a senior partner of Gerard Group International, a private consulting firm that specializes in strategic positioning and industry trend forecasting.
Analyzing what we hate about politics

Sev eral years ago, I devised a movie classification system based on an analysis of character development, core theme and conflict resolution. If, for example, the central characters are tough, independent men who never cry, and if they arm themselves with their guns, the movie falls into the category, "Republican." On the other hand, if the central characters are women who win revenge against their Republican husbands in a tear-jerking court scene, I deem the movie "Democratic."

The Matrix and Shrek are "Libertarian" movies because the central characters are independent but accountable; and, oh boy, can they fight! Movies that are so amoral, so insidiously misleading and seductive that I can't advocate leaving the audience with the impression that we think it can happen, when it can't, are called "soma" flicks, present a rose-colored surreality that leads the viewer to believe that bad laws and manipulated voting ensure that evil still pays very well. Perhaps we like princess stories with happy endings, but that's not how elections work. They're more like bad movies. They're expensive to produce, the stars are troublesome, and for many of the players, each election amounts to no more than a resume for the next one.

Maybe American government works like a pendulum, and an uptick is sure to come. But I'm not counting on that. If our democratic process is to survive, it'll take effort from people who've never cared, never tried, or who've already quit.

Let's do this election right. For my part, I can't be as entertaining as a movie, but I'll try to be more informative than a yard sign and more truthful than a campaign promise.

— W. A. Homming for a medical ultrasound company by day and writes Libertarian musings by night. Contact him by e-mail at andrew_homing@juno.com

Young Libertarian speaks out

Nineteen-year-old candidate seeks JP slot in election

By VANESA SALINAS
Harlingen Morning Star

HARLINGEN — Dressed in a black suit and tie with an American flag pinned to the coat, Miguel Leija, Jr gave a speech to members of the Rhome Club, an auxiliary of the Libertarian Party Cameron County.

Leija, from Harlingen, is running for Justice of the Peace Precinct 5, place 2, and believes a new and fresh face should be seen in politics.

"A vote is such a little thing that we forget that, one vote at a time, a person speaks," said the 19-year-old candidate. "And together with others, makes a sound that can be heard for a long time."

The Rio Hondo Elementary School teacher said he is prepared to give it all he has and bring in a strong campaign to run against current Justice of the Peace David Horning, starting March. He plans to advertise his campaign with banners and television and radio ads.

"Financing is not a problem for Leija. He believes many Libertarians are hurt by their campaign budgets, but through fund raising and selling limeade business he owned, he managed to raise $15,000, which he plans to use for his campaign."

The Libertarian party is the only political party that unswervingly stands as a bulwark against the encroachment of the state, to defend your freedom," Leija said.

Leija graduated from American Academy at the age of 15. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Concordia College and University in Austin at the age of 18.

He plans to pursue a master's degree in political science at the University of Texas at Brownsville. If he is elected as JP, he will be taking night classes.

"Abide by the laws and be strict," is the way Leija described how he would be if chosen as JP.

Despite hearing criticism for his age, Leija feels confident he will be victorious. He said he will not incorporate any Libertarian views to the job because "the law still stands the same, it's just the point of a different party."

"We want people to know your freedom," Leija said. "We want people to know that young men and women are striving for a better future," Leija said.