



LIBERTARIAN

PARTY HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

REPORT

LIBERTARIAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE

APRIL 15-16, 2017

Committee Members

Caryn Ann Harlos (Chair)

Dr. Joe Buchman

Joe Dehn

Ed Fochler

James Gholson

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COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

The purpose of this Committee as per the LNC-creation mandate is to oversee the preservation and publication of Libertarian Party historical documents (at HQ and in the off-site storage facility) and to manage the LPedia site. The Committee was created on January 23, 2017 and the members appointed on February 20, 2017. IT Committee member Ken Moellman was instrumental in laying the groundwork.

It is the hope of the Committee members that the LNC would establish a permanent Historical Preservation Committee.

Meetings and Communications

The Committee is committed to transparency and conducts open meetings every two weeks (or as close as practicable) via Go To Meeting. Committee discussion is also conducted via email with a read-only subscription option available to all Party members by sending a message to lpnpc-request@lists.dehnbases.net with "subscribe" in the subject line. Regular news updates are also sent to potential volunteers and history enthusiasts.

Status of Document Preservation

The Committee is prioritizing items for digitization by focusing first on items of most general Party membership interest which have been determined to comprise newsletters such as Liberty Pledge and LP News. Before this Committee was created, an exploratory group of interested Party members pooled funds to digitize an older preservation effort of LP News (1972-1990) that was done on microfilm. This resulted in less than ideal results due to the old technology but is available to any Party member upon request and may prove useful if the physical archives have any missing issues that were captured in that prior effort. At this time, the 1983-2003 Liberty Pledge issues have been digitized in high resolution .tiff files and compressed versions are being created and OCRd for online distribution while preserving the high resolution files. The remainder of the Liberty Pledges are anticipated to be done within a month, and future issues will be provided electronically by HQ staff. The next item in the priority list will be high resolution scans of LP News. The Committee is estimating costs to complete that goal which are anticipated to be a significant part of its budget; however these items require professional level scanning and likely cannot be farmed out to volunteers while other, simpler, text items can. Multiple volunteers including Michael Fucci (Montana), Trish Lynch (Arizona), Jacqueline Passey-Mason (Virginia), and Thomas Knapp (Florida) have been involved in the document end with others being brought on-board.

Documents will be preserved in several formats. For primary general use, they will be posted on LPedia (see below), but at request of any Party member an electronic archive of the high resolution scans will be provide on a USB drive (at the cost of the requesting member).

Additionally, members are encouraged to start adding their state party and other Libertarian-related items to LPedia to greatly expand the available resources beyond the documents which are the primary mandate of this Committee.

One difficulty encountered by the Committee was the result of having to manage document inventory and organization from a distance as accounting was necessary in order to adequately prioritize and to determine what gaps may exist in the record to be filled. Several volunteers spent several days at HQ to begin an inventory. This difficulty was solved by the April 3, 2017 passage of the records relocation motion by the LNC that authorized a budget for the records to be transported to the vicinity of Committee Chair Harlos for organization, continued inventory (building upon the work started by volunteers), and recommendations on curation. Once the documents are reviewed, immediate recommendations will be made. The LNC may wish to proactively consider some broad guidelines and empower the Committee to carry out same (such as instructions on duplicate retention).

The Committee has also been granted permission by David Nolan's widow, Elizabeth Nolan, to scan and review the archives in her possession. It is believed that she will give the critical portions of this collection to the LNC (while other portions may not be specific to LP history and need to find homes elsewhere), such as David's personal correspondence

and notes on conventions and meetings. Emily Goldberg (Arizona) has volunteered to visit Elizabeth to begin this scanning project. Elizabeth has provided an inventory to the Committee.

Records Relocation

Committee Chair Harlos has been in discussion with Wes Benedict for a timetable to accomplish this task. A tentative date of April 30, 2017 has been scheduled for the arrival of the records at a storage facility in Colorado (a reservation has been made for a 10x20 climate-controlled unit in Parker). Further logistics are being arranged.

Status of LPedia

LPedia is a collaborative history wiki of the Libertarian Party started in February 2005 by Shane Cory as a replacement for the older archive.lp.org. The site had gotten into maintenance trouble in June 2013 when new account creation was disabled and had fallen into technical disrepair as the MediaWiki engine went through version upgrades which were not installed on LPedia primarily due to the fact that there simply was not enough staff time to keep the site updated and the account creation was leading to potential security risks as it was installed on the same server as the main LP.org website. For those same reasons volunteers were not given access to update.

In July 2016, Region 1 Representative Harlos took an interest in saving LPedia from disappearing when a software update would inevitably break it for good and urged the LNC to either take active interest or transfer the asset to the LSLA. This motion was referred to the IT Committee and was put on hold while the transition to the new LP.org site was a priority. During this transition it was determined that the main LP site would be hosted on a different server which made a decision on the fate of LPedia imminent as its host server would soon be deactivated. In December 2016, Representative Harlos visited the Libertarian Party Headquarters and toured the basement and offsite storage and discovered a wealth of unseen historical records. During this same time period, there was an objection to the loss of website information during the main website transition; thus Representative Harlos and Alternate/IT Committee member Moellman worked together to bring a motion to the LNC to establish a permanent historical committee to curate and digitize these records in addition to managing LPedia. The LNC was not disposed to create a permanent committee at this time, but Representative Goldstein, at the encouragement of information supplied by Executive Director Wes Benedict, proposed the Motion that led to the creation of this Committee.

At that time, LPedia had just been moved to a fully hosted wiki-farm host; however, the database was bloated with over 20 gigabytes of spam and required serious cleaning in addition to the desperately needed updates to the Wikimedia software. Volunteer Bonnie Scott (Vermont) spent dozens of hours over the course of over a month doing this cleanup work which was successfully transferred to the new host. In preparation for a re-opening, the Committee spent time considering policies and procedures that should apply to the site, including issues relating to naming conventions, licensing, and backup. It is the consensus of the Committee that the purpose of LPedia is more than just an "encyclopedia" (the model for the well-known Wikipedia) but rather it is a collaborative "library" of which the encyclopedia-style articles are a vital but not exclusive component. It is the primary tool that we will be using to make available the results of our document preservation efforts, and is available to serve the same purpose for documents being preserved by state affiliates. So the policies and procedures necessarily reflect these multiple roles. Procedures have been established to back the site up on a regular basis (and tested by successfully restoring a working version from a sample backup).

LPedia was re-opened for general account creation and restoration to its purpose as a crowd-sourced collaborative effort on March 31, 2017. A good response of new users and returning former users has resulted with article creation and editing proceeding which is a satisfactory results of several months of hard work.

Budget Expenditures and Fundraising

LNC funding for Committee projects came from two separate motions, the first for the records preservation portion (\$5,000) and the second for the records relocation (\$5,000). \$1,390.00 has been raised with \$1,500 pledged (as a Life membership payable over a year period once the records have been relocated). Additional fund-raising will take place through two emails sent by HQ and additional efforts by the Committee. The Committee believes this will gain more traction as real results can be demonstrated to the Party membership as records come online and documentation of the records organization is presented.