Dear Pledgers,

HAPPY NEW YEAR!! The good news is that the Pledge program has grown by 50% in 1988. However, many pledges ended with the year just past, so - although the growth trend continues - there's lots of work ahead of us.

Some specifics: Pledges received in December totaled $7,625. Of that, $3,262 was derived from credit card pledges, $1,397 from EFTS (Electronic Funds Transfer System), and $2,936 (38%) from checks and cash.

Once a supporter signs up for a credit card or EFTS pledge, that donation is automatically processed each month, with minimum fuss to the donor and the staff.

Pledges fulfilled by check or cash, on the other hand, involve not only a monthly chore for the donor but a time-consuming process of daily mail sorts, computer code checks, and computer-generated reminder notices at the office -- cutting into equipment, staff, and volunteer time.

The more pledges received in the credit card or EFTS format, the less time and money spent making money -- and the more there is available for other efforts.

It's my goal to see the Pledge program bringing in $10,000/month by this summer's national convention in Philadelphia, with at least 80% in the credit card or EFTS format.

Please consider "reformatting" your pledge if at all possible.

IN THE NEWS, don't miss this month's clippings:
* Criticism of the NES; and the OFFICIAL election results;
* A press profile of new LP Chair Dave Walter, run during his '88 campaign for Auditor General of Pennsylvania;
* Two topical articles - one on the history of public vs. private education; one reflecting the civil liberties concerns of today's students; and finally, on the back cover,
* Coverage of a recent Liberty Forum meeting where LP founder Dave Nolan spoke on the health and future of the Party. A thought-provoking and timely article; recommended!

P.S. I read lots of clippings each month, and print the ones I think most informative. What kind of news do you want to see? Let me know!

IN THE NEXT ISSUE, expect to see a survey, and your responses (at least those mailed promptly) in the March issue. Remember, Liberty Pledge News is sent not only to Pledgers, but to the Torch Club, State Chairs, and National Committee members as well, so please do participate and let your opinions be known.

I value your opinions; if you have questions, problems, issues or ideas you want addressed in the survey or otherwise, please write to me: Sharon Freeman, c/o LP National Office, 1528 Pennsylvania Ave., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.

If you want to increase your pledge, call 1-800-682-1776.
Neither do we. Are you just a little surprised that you didn't hear even a murmur about this on election night? (also Duluth, MN. NCW5 Tribune Arh

We may be so complacent and lazy so happy to get taxpayer-paid advertising from the major parties, that they consider any news of divergence from the ruling hegemony?

By John Chodes Tribune/Oakland, CA c. 152,739

Government-funded public education has been a miserable failure. It produces illiterate, spiritless and passive graduates who have neither the motivation nor the skills to find a good job or succeed. As a result, private sector schooling is growing by leaps and bounds. It is a particular invasion of private, controlled media that were willing to ignore votes for third-party candidates run under different banners in different states. Re-elected President George Bush chose libertarians to run in the election as third-party candidates. The Libertarian Party had 5% of the vote.

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The money woes of a minority party

By Alan W. Bock

Final official results aren't in yet, but realists in the Libertarian Party are now estimating that presidential candidate Ron Paul will have received between 430,000 and 500,000 votes when the dust clears, about one half of one percent nationwide. Although that's more than the 225,000 votes 1984 candidate David Bergland received, it's got to be disappointing to LP activists, who had hoped that by nominating a former GOP congressman with the rudiments of a political organization in place, they would finally break the million mark.

In 1980, LP presidential candidate Ed Clark received 920,000 votes and that remains the high water mark for the modern libertarian venture into elective politics. The Libertarian Party was founded in 1971, in the living room of David Nolan, then living in Denver and watching, with Republican friends, President Nixon announce wage and price controls. That's it, they decided. The GOP has utterly abandoned free enterprise and a new party is needed.

Nolan is now living in Orange County and has been thinking rather intensively about the health of the party he helped to start. He shared some of those thoughts with a crowd at Liberty Forum Thursday night. You can judge whether he's a pessimist or a realist.

When he looks at the number of votes received compared to amount of money raised by LP candidates in the 1980s, Nolan finds the cost-per-vote (adjusted for inflation and corrected for special circumstances like perceived closeness of the race) remarkably comparable. Paul raised about $2.1 million and got about 430,000 votes, or $4.88 per vote. Clark raised $3.5 million (much of it from his wealthy running mate, David Koch) and got 920,000 votes. That's $3.80 per vote, but it would be $5.59 per vote in 1988 dollars.

So if it costs $4 to $5 per libertarian vote, the next LP presidential candidate (if there is to be one) will have to raise $10 to $15 million to achieve the statistically significant level of 3 percent. A minor-party candidate needs 3 percent or more to show up on the polls. That's because most national polling samples have a margin of error of 3 percent, and anything less than that doesn't register on their radar screens.

Raising that kind of money won't be easy. Nolan thinks that from about 1963 (after the assassination of President Kennedy) to about 1980, the United States was in a period of widespread dissatisfaction with government and the ability of the two-party system to cope with the nation's problems. We had the Vietnam war, Watergate, the civil rights revolution, the rise of the women's movement and the tax revolt. The LP, like other minority or dissident groups, benefited from this dissatisfaction and experienced remarkable growth.

Ronald Reagan benefited from the country's mood, too, running on promises to stop government growth and even cut it back. Once in office, however, he nibbled at the margins of government growth and shuffled priorities, but made no significant cutbacks in the size, scope, cost, or intrusiveness of government. That was apparently all most people wanted. Nolan thinks we are now in an era of relative satisfaction — even smugness or complacency — in which most people think the system, while not perfect, works pretty well.

The 1980s have also been an era of increasing social tolerance for people who are different or eccentric. People who like to smoke marijuana or tobacco, ride motorcycles without helmets, build patios in their backyards, have babies at home using midwives, drive without seat belts, or hang onto some of the money they've earned, find their neighbors increasingly willing to use the force of law to punish them for their choices.

To compound that situation, there's been a closing of the system. The Republicans, having won seven of the last 10 presidential elections, have a virtual Electoral College "lock" on the office, which should become even tighter after the 1990 Census. The Democrats, due to gerrymandering, the advantages of incumbency, and the fact that people like pork-barrel politics when it means money for their home town, have a virtual lock on Congress.

Meantime, ballot access for third parties has become more complicated and expensive. It cost the Ron Paul campaign $500,000 to $750,000 just to get the LP on the ballot in 47 states.*

Advertise may be the only option because our politics these days are so media-driven. People in the print media like to scoff at television's inherent shallowness and taste for 10-second sound bites, but the print media really don't do much better. You may find more details about the horse-race aspects of a campaign in newspapers than on TV, but not much more perspective or in-depth discussion of issues. The three major weekly "news" magazines are increasingly dominated by soft features.

As a possible force in electoral politics, libertarians are caught in a vicious circle. To get money, they need credibility. To get credibility, they need visibility. To get visibility, they need to show up in the polls. To show up in the polls, they need money.

Will the Libertarian Party run a presidential candidate at all in 1992, or will it transform itself into a different sort of organization? Either way, will it be able to break through the current climate of complacency? Perhaps only a crisis can improve its prospects. Stay tuned.

*Actually paid by LP Ballot Access Fund contributors -- Thanks folks!

Bock is the Register's senior columnist.