Election ’94 Results: Ten Libertarians elected; party gains ballot status in four more states

The Republican tidal wave that swept through Election ’94 resulted in mixed — but generally upbeat — tidings for the Libertarian Party.

While seven Libertarians were elected to public office and three re-elected, several high-profile races ended with somewhat disappointing vote totals, and the New Hampshire Libertarian legislative delegation was reduced from four members to two.

The party won ballot status in Wyoming, South Dakota, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Indiana, and maintained it in every state except Utah. The party is now on the ballot in 23 states for 1996, its best-ever showing coming out of an off-presidential-year election.

“We made tremendous strides in the area of ballot access. It’s going to make a tremendous difference [for 1996],” said LP National Chair Steve Dasbach.

2.2 million voted Libertarian

Libertarian candidates won 596,000 votes for Congress, 648,000 votes for U.S. Senate, and 416,000 for governor. In all, it is estimated that more than 2.2 million people cast votes for Libertarians. “In the face of the Republican onslaught and a massive erosion of Democratic support, Libertarians in general held their share of the vote, or, in some cases, expanded it,” said Dasbach.

Libertarian winners included Jim McClarin, New Hampshire House of Representatives; Dan Gallegos, Regional Transportation District Board, Colorado; David Morris, Advisory Neighborhood Commission, Washington, DC; Daniel Walker and Dick Bjornseth, Ochlockonee Soil & Water Conservation District Board, Florida; Tom Jamerson, Chesterfield County Soil & Water Commission, Virginia; and Steve Ziegler, Charles County Board of Education, Maryland.

Re-elected were Don Gorman, New Hampshire House of Representatives; Bonnie Flickinger, Moreno Valley City Council, California; and Sandy Webb, Simi Valley City Council, California.

On the negative side, two incumbent State Representatives in New Hampshire were defeated; Andy Borsa and Finlay Rothhaus, cutting the Libertarian delegation in half. But the Steve Winter for governor campaign garnered 4.5% of the vote, ensuring continued “major party” status in New Hampshire, and preserving a Libertarian presidential primary in 1996.

Libertarians in NH blamed the legislative losses on an increased number of Republican candidates, which blocked many dual-nomination opportunities, and a structural change on most ballots, which lessened the votes Libertarians picked up from their cross-nominations.

“Obviously, the one disappointment about the election was the reduction of our delegation in New Hampshire,” said Dasbach. “But, in hind sight, it’s clear that the Republicans and Democrats learned from our past successes, and were able to more effectively block us this election. Now the challenge for us is to learn from their success, and come back even stronger in the next election.”

Several highly touted campaign opportunities ended with lower than expected results: Jon Coon for U.S. Senate in Michigan won 4.5% of the vote, and Guy Wilson for U.S. Congress in California (District 37), in a two-way race against an indicted Democrat, won 21.9%.

Other closely watched races

In other closely watched races around the country, Terry Savage for State Assembly in California won 6.9%; Don Ernsberger for U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania won 1.7%; Mike Hurley for State Representative in Missouri won 23%; John Reda for State Representative in Delaware won 18%; Scott Kjar for State Assembly in Nevada won 6%; and Larry Pratt for State Assembly in Nevada won 27%.

Looking at the election from an ideological perspective, Dasbach said, “This election is being interpreted as a move in a Libertarian direction. The Republicans are all talking about cutting back the size of government. I mean, I’m skeptical that the Republicans will actually do anything to cut back government, but clearly that’s what they believe the people wanted.”

Dasbach also said he wasn’t surprised that voters didn’t automatically vote for Libertarians. “It’s clear that voters thought the Democrats have failed. It’s reasonable that [voters] would now give the Republicans a chance to fail before they would be willing to trust a new party. This is an expected process that we have to go through,” he said.
Liberarian Party advocates return to constitutional government

ANOTHER OPTION: Your vote Nov. 8 could create another third major party.

by Bill Bill

In response to the opposing views as presented in the Star-Free Press, I would like to address the opposition by both the Libertarian and Republican county chairmen.

I would like to reference an article on page 25 of the same edition, entitled, "Payson Roundup, May 33-35, 1994." The article begins with the following statement:

"The Libertarian Party advocates return to constitutional government. If the present political system dissatisfied people of voting age were to create a third major party on Nov. 8 when they vote.

The election, not onlly are there Libertarian running for various offices, but other minor parties are on the ballots, including American Independent, Peace and Freedom and the Green parties. If all dissatisfied people of voting age were to vote for any other candidates, potentially, a major third party would be established.

Since I am chairman of the Libertarian Party, I would hope that my party becomes a major third party. However, since each non-party candidate is the only candidate for any major party candidates, there would be no Republicans or Democrats in office.

The Libertarian Party platform must change from year to year, with the exception of the principle that taxes should be reduced, except at times when new political issues become relevant.

The party's statement of principles begins: "We, ... challenge the cult of the omnipotent state and defend the rights of the individual. We hold that all individuals have the right to exercise dominion over their own lives, and have the right to live in whatever manner they choose so long as they do not interferwe with the equal rights of others to live in whatever manner they choose.

"Governments throughout history have regularly operated under the opposite principle, that the state is supreme and that it is the duty of the subject to dispose of the lives of infants and the fruits of their labor...

"We, ... deny the right of government to interfere with private property such as citizenship, nationalization and emigration, and to support the public power of robbery, trespass and fraud.

The Democratic Party leaders talk about a compassionate government. Is it compassionate to take property from those who have lawfully earned their property? Is it caring for a government to take from some in order to give to others? It is certainly not what our founding Fathers envisioned or what was established our nation, they specifically limited the powers of the federal government by specifically enumerating those powers to be granted.

In my view of the U.S. Constitution, I do not find where the federal government is empowered to act in the area that county Democratic Chairman Hank Stelle believes is under Libertarian principles. (Emphasis added)

While I agree with Mr. Statt that the Republican administration must bear some of the blame for the deficit and the recession, Mr. Statt seems to be overlooking the fact that our founding fathers established our nation, they specifically limited the powers of the federal government by specifically enumerating those powers to be granted.

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Libertarians hopeful of their ballot future

By Flynn McRoberts

To Libertarians, it was like a glimpse of the Holy Grail. Acclimated to electoral obscurity, the Libertarian Party was pleased with results of a recent Times Mirror poll that suggested a majority of Americans believe that the country needs a third major political party.

So though the party's full slate of statewide candidates in Illinois has modest goals for the Nov. 8 election—which required the required 5 percent of the vote to become an officially established party—Libertarians are dreaming much bigger.

David Kelley, this year's Libertarian candidate for Illinois governor, recalled that "when I started running in the early 80s, people could barely pronounce my name. And he didn't mean 'liberal.'"

Now they recognize that Libertarians stand for much smaller government. But under Texas law, if they got more than 5 percent of the vote in the previous governor's race, and from voters who had not participated in the Republican or Democratic primary.

None of the Libertarians expects to win—at least, not yet.

"The reason for running is to provide voters a choice," said Joe Barnett of Arlington, a past state president of the Libertarian Party and this year's media spokesman. Votes for their candidates signify a desire for change that will push the other candidates to alter their stances, he said.

In the 1960s, the Constitution and Conservative parties were the protest ballot in some races. In the 1970s, it was the La Raza Unida and the Socialist Workers Party. But under Texas law, if they got more than 5 percent of the vote in the general election, they were guaranteed ballot status for the next election without collecting signatures. If they received more than 5 percent of the vote from those who had not voted in the Republican or Democratic primary.

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To Ed Nagel. Libertarian candidate for U.S. Congress, the Food and Drug Administration's bid to regulate vitamins in a good example of a federal agency run amok. Nagel was in town recently to talk about his fight against the FDA in the parking lot of his Albuquerque, New Mexico, home.

"To government agents of the FDA, Rodger Sless was in the business of selling a 'drug,' requiring long-term government surveillance, and postal inspection of private communications, and an unsanctioned three-car, wheeled-surfing 'rad' in the parking lot of his Albuquerque office, where a SWAT-type team of agents posed loaded guns and screamed: 'Hands on your head.'"

"The effect was terrifying," Nagel said. "At least one worker suffered extreme emotional distress. Although there was no shouting or threatening at this time (one among more than two dozen such raids), many have been inspired by this action: Rodger, an example of all of us."

"On that April day in '91, Nagel said, "this federal agency, trying to suppress our God's gift to us, our right to choose nutritional supplements, files, vitamins, financial records—what could enable Rodger Sless to conduct his business as usual. How did this affect him? At mid-15 months later, Rodger reports in his own words: 'My life stopped.'"

"On Jan. 4, of this year, Sless was indicted for introducing an unapproved new drug into interstate commerce," and 14 other related counts, all but one a felony, Nagel said.

Why? Nagel asked. No FDA approval is required for vitamins, he said, but "at least the FDA wants to change its role."

On June 17, 1994, a federal court jury cleared Sless of 11 of 15 counts in the indictment. Sless attorney, Nancy Lord, a physician/attorney from Atlanta, styled the case as an issue of personal freedom, and "eminent overreaching."

We applaud public-interest groups such as the League of Women Voters that have insisted that the Libertarians, in those races in which they have candidates, be represented in debates and candidate forums.

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Libertarians liven up political season

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While we endorse a platform of any party, the Libertarian Party seems to be bringing some provocative ideas to the table. And the established major parties both could use some shaking up.

Candidate says FDA agency run amok

By EVELYN VIGIL

Monitor Editor/Publisher

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3rd-party hopeful scores in debate

While the two major-party candidates were busy hurling insults at each other, Libertarian Joseph Killian was winning over the unconvinced.

By Dana DiFilippo
Courier Times

It was campaigning the old-fashioned way — tell jump on your opponent and sink your teeth in. But the constituents were the ones crying for mercy yesterday, after state Rep. Robert "Tommy" Tomlinson and his Democratic opponent John Cordisco spent much of a candidates' forum singing much.

After the smoke cleared, the few undecided voters in the audience knew one thing — Joseph Killian is not the oddball popular opinion holds many third-party candidates to be.

"Instead of telling you where they stand, all (Cordisco and Tomlinson) did was condemn each other," said Bill Boychuck of Falls. "Joseph Killian was the only one talking about principles instead of personalities."

Levittown resident Colleen McDonnell agreed, saying, "He was really straightforward in dealing with the issues.

In the run-up, the Libertarian candidate challenging Cordisco and Tomlinson for the seat now held by the retiring state Sen. H. Craig Lewis, called for less governmental interference in citizens' lives.

"Consumers pay over a trillion dollars a year to keep up with governmental regulations and licensing," Killian said. "Here's a good example for you: The Lord's prayer has 66 words. The Gettysburg Address has 286 words. The Declaration of Independence has 1,322 words. And regulation on the sale of cabbage, ladies and gentlemen, has 26,911 words — you need a truckload of books to run a produce stand. Government takes the 'free' out of free enterprise."

Killian deplored the government for "looting" businesses by imposing choking mandates, such as requiring employers to provide health care for their workers.

BOB UNGER

Third major party? You bet

Ross Perot will never be president, and his United We Stand organization might never win a congressional seat. But the Texas billionaire will have performed a service much more valuable for his country. He made it possible for millions to vote for an independent or third-party candidate without the usual hesitation about throwing away their votes. A recent Times-Mirror poll found that 53 percent of Americans believe the nation needs a third major political party.

Americans have lost faith in their two-party system because both have betrayed their founding ideologies. Despite Democratic rhetoric about their standing for the middle class, the party is the refuge of those who still believe that the Great Society social welfare system and the higher taxes that it fostered are the answer to what ails America. The Republicans, meanwhile, are fond of saying that they believe in lower taxes and less government; in reality, the Republicans have failed abysmally to deliver on either.

And the voters — correctly — have come to understand that the two parties are nearly indistinguishable. Major-party candidates decide what they believe based on what pollsters and focus groups tell them the voters want them to believe. They then tape 30-second television spots intended to elicit a reflexive response and do their best to avoid saying anything controversial for however long the campaign lasts.

And that is politics in America 1994.

That state of affairs will come to an end within just a few years. Illinois hardly reflects the depth of feeling among people who feel disenfranchised and betrayed by the existing two-party system. Our overly restrictive state laws — passed by Republican and Democratic legislators desperate to preserve the current system make it very difficult for third parties to get their candidates on the ballot.

This year, the Libertarian Party is the only other party fielding a full slate of candidates for statewide office (others, including the Populist Party and the Harold Washington Party, are running county candidates). The United Independents Party failed to get the required number of signatures filed on time to have its candidates listed, and nobody else was able to meet the state requirement that the party assemble signatures on petitions from at least 5 percent of the number of votes cast in the previous election.

Efforts to relax the requirements have never gotten anywhere because the rules are made by the Republicans and Democrats in the Legislature, who — if nothing else — share an interest in preserving the status quo.

But sooner or later, that will change even here — despite the collusion of the Illinois press and the electronic media with the kingpins in the Republican and Democratic Party.

(The Libertarian candidate for governor, David Kelley, whose name will appear on the ballot Nov. 8, was not allowed to participate in Wednesday's League of Women Voters-sponsored gubernatorial debate — to the discredit of us in the professional press, who should have refused to be party to the debate for failing to include him. Further, the Illinois Associated Press Editors Association decided against inviting Mr. Kelley to its own debate between the candidates held Friday in Champaign.)

I am not willing to predict that the Libertarians will be the next major party, but the Libertarians are building a broader coalition of support from gun owners, members of the Christian right, motorcyclists opposed to helmet laws, members of United We Stand and the United Independents parties.

To be sure, the Libertarians need to field more candidates for school boards and city councils, but nobody will be surprised if the party gets 5 percent of the vote in the statewide races for constitutional office in November. Should they capture 10 percent or more, they will force the Legislature to consider easing the laws for other parties to get their candidates on the ballot.

It may not be long before Christian conservatives take steps to break from the Republican and Democratic parties over abortion and other moral questions. Some cynics argue that Christians and politics should not mix, but strong candidacies like that of the Rev. Dennis Higgin's of Jacksonville's Lincoln Avenue Baptist Church — who was a candidate in the Republican primary for the 18th congressional seat — are proof that Christian conservatives can organize an effective voting bloc and decide elections as a result.

The dilution of Illinois politics by lookalike Democrats and Republicans is nearly complete. Look for one or more alternative parties to force their way in over the next few years.

Bob Unger is editor of the Journal-Courier.