Will the Web spawn a new political party?

A new political party might arise from the Internet — and it will probably be libertarian in nature. That’s the prediction of Investor’s Business Daily, which wrote that “the idea that one of the big parties could fall by the wayside isn’t far-fetched ... nor is the idea that the two-party system itself could be in danger.”

In a front-page article on March 18, reporter Charles Oliver noted “the switch from an industrial society to an information society has brought enormous changes ... it’s difficult to think politics will be immune to these forces.”

Specifically, the rise of the Internet and World Wide Web — “where voters everywhere are tied together by computer, constantly exchanging political ideas and information” — could force “tremendous change” on America’s political system, predicted the national investment newspaper.

And who might gain from a cyber-revolution in American politics? A libertarian-style party, speculated Oliver — while acknowledging that the “Libertarian Party has not yet emerged as a threat to Democrats and Republicans.”

But the good news for LP members: “If the two big parties fail to win over wired voters, others are ready to try. The Libertarian Party claims to have been the first party with its own Web site. It now aims many of its activities at winning the online vote,” he wrote.

Libertarian books dominate Amazon.com’s political lists

Who says the Internet is a stronghold of libertarian beliefs? Amazon.com, that’s who. In early April, the massive online “virtual” bookstore listed three explicitly libertarian books among its top 10 bestselling “Ideological Tracts and Manifestos.”

According to Amazon.com, its #1 bestselling ideological book is Libertarianism, A Primer by David Boaz; followed by The Libertarian Reader by David Boaz, editor (#2); and Why Government Doesn’t Work by Harry Browne (#8).

And four libertarian works are included on the online bookstore’s list of 15 bestselling “Political History, Theory and Biography” books: Libertarianism, A Primer by David Boaz (#5); What it Means to be a Libertarian by Charles Murray (#7); The Libertarian Reader by David Boaz, editor (#11); and Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal by Ayn Rand (#14).

Jacob Hornberger considers run for LP’s presidential nomination

Jacob Hornberger, the president of the Future of Freedom Foundation and a public speaker known for his passionate oration, has announced that he is “giving serious consideration” to seeking the LP’s presidential nomination in 2000.

In an advertisement in the May issue of LP News, Hornberger said that over the next 18 months, he will make “a final decision whether to seek” the party’s nomination.

“I am very excited about the possibility of entering the competition to be your nominee for president. And I am looking forward to exploring this possibility with you in the months ahead,” Hornberger wrote.

A noted public speaker in Libertarian circles, Hornberger gave the popular keynote address at the 1996 LP National Convention.

He is the founder and president of the Future of Freedom Foundation, a Virginia-based, non-partisan, non-profit “educational foundation whose mission is to advance liberty and the libertarian philosophy by presenting an uncompromising moral, philosophical, and economic case for individual freedom and limited government.”

LP sets record: 25,000 members

Thanks to a 165% growth in members over the past four years, the LP has passed a milestone once considered an “impossible dream” — 25,000 dues-paying members.

On March 25, the party reached the 25,000-member threshold, thanks to a flood of new memberships generated by the LP’s direct-mail marketing blitz, Project Archimedes.

The new record represents a dramatic 165% growth since March 1994, when there were 9,512 contributing LP members — and is a 294% increase since 1988, when party membership stood at only 6,402.

LP National Director Ron Crickenberger said he was delighted by the new record — but said he prefers to focus on what the party can accomplish with so many new members.

“I believe that hitting 25,000 members is just the beginning of the curve — that we are poised for continued growth at a rapidly expanding pace,” he said.

“But keep in mind why we need new members: As our membership grows, so grows the number of Libertarians in office, so grows our media presence, and so grows our influence in the political debate. That’s why we exist as a political party — and that’s why this membership news is so exciting. It means we have more people working for liberty.”
Third-party candidates seek help for struggle from Capitol Hill

WASHINGTON — As polls continue to reflect widespread public sceptically about the two major political parties and interest in an alternative, long-shot efforts are going forward to crack the door open for independent and third-party candidates in the next presidential election.

Leading the effort is Republican Rep. Ron Paul of Texas, who was the Libertarian Party's presidential nominee in 1996 and was elected to the House as a Republican in 1986. He is sponsoring bills that would make it easier for such candidates to gain ballot position in the various states and to gain admission to presidential debates. He had hearings before the House Oversight Committee last week, and while they raised hardly a ripple, they served notice that third-party advocates are persevering in their uphill fight.

The first bill would require states to establish "fair and uniform" standards for all candidates to get on their ballots. In 1996, the Libertarian Party managed to achieve ballot access in 40 states for its nominee, Harry Browne, but the effort was extremely costly and time-consuming. Thus, Perot's Reform Party also qualified in all 50 states, along with other minor parties, the U.S. Taxpayers Party and the Natural Law Party.

The second bill, introduced by Speaker Newt Gingrich, would make it easier for independent candidates to get on the ballot in at least 40 states.

The commission debated the merits of admitting Mr. Perot. Who is the case.

While state election laws require candidates to collect a certain number of signatures, before they can be placed on the ballot, Mr. Paul's proposal would make it easier for third-party candidates to gather signatures.

"We were hoping for 5,000 signatures," added the author of the bill, Rep. Bobby Moak.

Even marijuana smokers would have their rights at risk if Moak's amputation bill became law. According to a report in the Sun Herald in Mississippi, the judge and the drug offender would have to agree before a foot, a hand or some other body part was taken in lieu of jail time.

Steve Dasbach, chairman of the Libertarian Party, points out that 72.4 million Americans, or about 34 percent of all adults, have tried illegal drugs and more than 22 million Americans used illegal drugs last year.

If widely implemented, these laws would subject a third of the U.S. adult population to surgical torture or life in prison, says Dasbach.

The brutal anti-drug bills that are popping up reveal a frustration stemming from the fact that a large minority of Americans refuse to behave precisely as pertinent laws demand. Fortunately, most legislators understand that cutting off a hand to spite a drug user would also dismember the Constitution.

Libertarian Spokesman: Fewer Signatures Mean More of a Chance

By JASON ENGLISH

Area Libertarians are celebrating a legislative victory after the Virginia General Assembly passed a "more reasonable" signature requirement for political candidates of lesser-known parties. Robert Stern, area chairman of the Libertarian Party, said it was an "audacious" effort to ease the requirements statewide and congressional Libertarian candidates who need to get their names on an election ballot.

The House of Delegates and the Senate each passed versions of a "ballot access" bill during the session that ends today. Previously, statewide candidates for parties not officially recognized by the state — like the Libertarian Party — were required to obtain, at a minimum, the number of signatures equal to one half of 1 percent of the total number of registered voters in Virginia in the specific elections.

Not that requirement to 10,000 signatures, significantly easing the hurdle for candidates hoping to break the two-party system's control in national and state polities.

"We were hoping for 5,000 signatures, but it's still a major improvement," said Snapp in a phone interview Saturday.

Candidates for congressional offices will only have to obtain 1,000 signatures, compared to about 1,250 previously.

Snapp said since last summer's primary, Libertarians have focused on the ballot-access issue, making phone calls and writing letters to the local state legislators. Snapp didn't know if the increased pressure made the difference in the General Assembly's mind.

"We'd like to think so," he said.

The commission debated the merits of admitting Mr. Perot.

But it's still a major improvement," he said.

Snapp said he was especially pleased to have won the vote on behalf of an amendment that would allow candidates who take money from taxpayers and contribute about the same wide variety of ideas that Americans hold.

In 1996, third-party candidates received about 1 million votes, 7.8 million of them going to Mr. Perot. But the stock argument against admitting third-party candidates to the presidential debates is that they don't gather them up and impair the voters' ability to hear and make judgments about the major-party nominees. It is an argument that's been made in 1996, and is likely to prevail again in 1998, unless a third-party candidate demonstrates the strength of the polls that Mr. Perot mustered in 1992, when he won 4 percent of the vote.

A third choice

Still, if voters are as unsympathetic to the suits as two major parties give them as the polls indicate, the fight of the third-party forces may not be forever vain.

Jack Germond and Jules Witcover write from The Bus's Washington Bureau.

- The Baltimore Sun
  Baltimore, Maryland
  March 11, 1998

- The Tampa Tribune
  Tampa, Florida
  March 9, 1998

- The Winchester Star
  Winchester, Virginia
  March 6, 1998
Libertarians celebrate their gains, challenges

By ERICA GARCIA
CORRESPONDENT

FRANKLIN — New Jersey Libertarian Party members applauded their progress but vowed to press on yesterday at the group's annual convention.

Murray Sabrin, the party's candidate in November's gubernatorial race, said that since he received nearly 5 percent of the vote, party recognition has increased, and Libertarian ideas have become part of the mainstream.

"We have made the term 'Libertarian' a digestible term," he told the convention crowd.

Sabrin said the numbers have been "gratifying," and urged colleagues to push on.

"We have to organize and build this coalition to create the society we all want," he said.

He spoke of a moral and philosophical vacuum that needs to be filled by Libertarians in upcoming years. He said he gave a talk on why Jews must be Libertarians and joked that he could give a similar speech for Christians and other denominations because it is based on the Ten Commandments.

Sabrin said he was thinking of writing an essay titled, "Is God a Libertarian?"

"She is," Janice Presser answered quickly. Presser will be running for a seat in the 3rd congressional district and is state chair of the New Jersey Libertarian Party.

"We've become a real party in New Jersey," said Michael Buoncristiano, a congressional candidate in Hudson County. Buoncristiano said that although he doesn't have a chance to win, he is "showing people there is a choice."

Libertarians are candidates in each of New Jersey's 13 congressional districts.

Much of the party's success may be attributed to concentration at the local and grass-roots levels, from precincts to townships, said Timothy Moir, a regional representative from Pennsylvania.

"I think that's the direction in New Jersey as well," he said.

Party optimism was not limited to local and state levels.

New Jersey has a "good slate of candidates," said Ron Crickenberger, national director of the Libertarian Party. "I see continued growth."

National membership stands at about 25,000. He said, a figure that has doubled from a few years ago. Elected officials now total about 220, he said, with Pennsylvania having the greatest concentration, at 34.

Libertarians back action committee formed to fight tax hike for stadium

BY FRITZ WENZEL
BLADE STAFF WRITER

An anti-tax group known as People Incensed by the Stadium Tax has formed a political action committee that will help in the fight against increased taxes in Lucas County to pay for a sports stadium in downtown Toledo.

The group, which is backed by the Lucas County Libertarian Party, is not opposed to the construction of a sports stadium, said Dave Domanski, chairman of the group. But it is opposed to the use of tax money to build it, he added.

"The function of government is not to build a stadium," Mr. Domanski said.

In addition to his role with the political action committee, Mr. Domanski is chairman of the county Libertarian Party, and is a former Toledo mayoral candidate.

Lucas County commissioners have voted to refer to voters a one-quarter-cent sales-tax increase to pay for the stadium, which would be the new home of the Toledo Mud Hens Class AAA baseball team, and for a swimming complex at the Lucas County Recreation Center in Maumee.

Voters will face the measure in the May 5 primary election. If approved, it would raise the sales tax in the county from 6.25 cents to 6.3 cents on the dollar.

The tax increase would remain in effect 35 months, generating $35.4 million. Most of the money — $26 million — would pay to build a 12,900-seat stadium, proposed for a site in the warehouse district between Summit and Superior streets.

The rest, $9.4 million, would fund construction of the aquatic complex at the recreation center.

Jim Boehm, committee treasurer, called the proposed sales tax a "regressive tax that impacts the poor the hardest."

"It is especially unfair when they will likely be using the stadium the least — or are commissioners planning to give free seats away to the poor?" he asked, adding, "Don't count on it."
Libertarians offer alternative on ballot

By John K. Brown

This year marks the first time since 1914 a new political party will field candidates in all West Virginia congressional races.

In fact, if the Republicans fail to appoint congressional candidates in the 1st and 3rd Districts, this new political party, the Libertarian Party, will be the first third party to replace one of the two traditional parties at the top of the ticket.

Recently, the party was added as a choice on new voter’s registration forms. It is the first time in state history that a political party other than the Democratic and Republican parties has been listed as a registration choice.

The party will nominate its candidates by state convention in 1998. The primary nomination convention will be held May 9 at the Holiday Inn Charleston House in Charleston. Since it will be held three days before the Democratic and Republican primary elections, the Libertarians will be the first candidates named to the general election ballot in November. The filing deadline for Libertarian candidates is May 11 if nominated at the primary convention.

By running more than 16,000 votes in the 1996 gubernatorial contest, Dr. Wallace D. Johnson of Beckley earned the Libertarian, Party major-party status.

The philosophy is that individual rights are supreme to society’s whims.

His showing, in fact, was the best showing of more than 15 third-party gubernatorial candidates nationwide that year. But earning enough votes wasn’t the most difficult task that year. The party had to collect more than 32,000 petition signatures just to get on the ballot. This was a monumental task, since the signers had to be registered voters who gave up their right to vote in the primary election that year.

The party’s philosophy, libertarianism, is best described as “a defense of liberty,” hence the root word. This is further evident by the party’s choice of masthead or emblem, the Statue of Liberty. The party was founded in 1971, but really didn’t begin to take root in West Virginia until 1995.

Despite the relatively short existence of the party, the philosophy is founded upon ideas proposed in the Declaration of Independence, and the United States Constitution, including the Bill of Rights. The central theme of these documents is clear: the rights of the individual are supreme to the whims of society.

Libertarians view the role of government as a service to protect these basic rights.

It should come as no surprise that Libertarians consider Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, as their unofficial founding father.

His words serve as their credo: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

The essence of the words above is “Life, Liberty, and pursuit of Happiness.” The right to life requires the government protect us from crimes of force and fraud, including foreign aggression. The right to liberty requires the government not to disrupt any peaceful and honest activities of its citizens. The right to pursue happiness requires government not to disrupt the pursuits of its citizens that do not conflict with the rights of others.

It is easy to see why the Libertarian Party is the party of less government. It believes the government’s only role is executive, legislative and judicial services. Anything more is reserved for free enterprise or the state.

Libertarianism, like the ideas of our Founding Fathers, is rooted in capitalism. Capitalism is the social system driven by the actions of the free market and competition. It is the opposite of socialism. Communism is the advanced, pure form of socialism, which gives the government total control. Communism’s ultimate goal is an unattainable utopia where the good of the state is supreme.

Communists and socialists view liberty as dangerous and they are partially correct. Someone once said, “Liberty is always dangerous, but it is the safest thing we have.” And Benjamin Franklin once wrote: to wit 1, “Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.”

The state motto in West Virginia is “Montani Semper Liberi” which is Latin for “Mountaineers are always free.” If this truly has meaning to state voters, it’s time to consider a new alternative. West Virginia’s new choice in politics is the Libertarian Party.

Brown is chairman of the Libertarian Party of West Virginia.