



A SHORT HISTORY OF THE LIBERTARIAN PARTY 1971-2001

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The Libertarian Party is, by most objective standards, the most active and successful third party in the United States of America — running more candidates, electing more people to public office, and winning more votes at the local, state, and federal level than any other new political party. The party is organized and active in all 50 states. These accomplishments were achieved *in spite of* legal barriers erected by the Democrats and Republicans to keep Libertarian Party candidates off the ballot. We have spent millions of dollars fighting these restrictions, so that someday *all* Americans will be able to have the *widest possible choice* on election day.

Libertarians seek a return to the basic principles that made America great. We support an unfettered free market economy as the best way to provide abundance and prosperity for all. We defend America's traditional civil liberties and personal freedoms as the foundation of a tolerant society. We endorse a foreign policy of non-intervention, peace, and free trade as prescribed by America's Founding Fathers.

The Libertarian Party was created because the older parties betrayed our country's fundamental principles. Defending, restoring, and extending the original vision of America is the Libertarian Party's goal.

1971

The Libertarian Party is founded December 11, in the home of David Nolan. Disillusioned Republicans, Democrats, and political newcomers hope to create an alternative to the old parties.

1972

First national convention held in June in Denver, Colorado. John Hospers, a philosophy professor at the University of Southern California, is nominated as presidential candidate. Libertarian Party vice presidential candidate Tonie Nathan becomes the first woman in U.S. history to receive an electoral vote.

1976

Presidential candidate Roger MacBride and running mate David Bergland gain ballot status in 32 states, and receive over 170,000 votes. *Newsweek* magazine notes that Libertarians are gaining "unique appeal on both the left and right."

1978

Ed Clark receives 5% of the vote in his race for Governor of California. Dick Randolph of Alaska becomes the first elected Libertarian state legislator. Presidential nominating convention held in Los Angeles. Ed Clark and David Koch named presidential and vice presidential candidates. Permanent ballot status achieved in California as more than 80,000 voters register Libertarian.

1980

Ed Clark appears on the ballot in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and receives almost one million votes. His campaign

runs extensive national television ads and offers many Americans their first look at what the Libertarian Party has to offer. At the same time, Dick Randolph is re-elected to Alaska state legislature. Libertarian Ken Fanning is also elected to the Alaska legislature.

1982

Louisiana congressional candidate James Agnew receives 23% of the vote. Alaska gubernatorial candidate Dick Randolph receives 15% of the vote. Arizona gubernatorial candidate Sam Steiger receives 5% of the vote.

1984

On the ballot in 39 states, David Bergland and Jim Lewis come in third in the race for President for the first time in the Libertarian Party's history. Andre Marrou becomes the third Libertarian elected to the Alaska legislature. Libertarians are elected to 11 more local offices nationwide.

1986

200 candidates across the U.S. receive 2.9 million votes. Ray Cullen, candidate for Treasurer in California, gets 570,000 votes, the largest ever for a third party candidate in that state.

1987

Doug Anderson is elected Elections Commissioner in Denver. Libertarians sweep the city council race in Big Water, Utah, winning every seat. Former U.S. Congressman Ron Paul (Texas) resigns from the Republican Party and joins the Libertarian Party. Seattle convention nominates Ron Paul for President and Andre Marrou for Vice President.

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1988

Ron Paul, on the ballot in 46 states and the District of Columbia, comes in third, receiving more than 430,000 votes nationwide — almost twice the total of any other “third” party.

1990

Approximately two million people vote for Libertarian Party candidates. Election Day is “Double Digit Day,” as many LP candidates for U.S. Congress and state house draw percentage numbers in teens, twenties, and thirties. New Mexico state legislature candidate Illa Mae Bolton gets 31% of the vote. California congressional candidate Joe Shea receives 27%. A 5% vote for New Hampshire gubernatorial candidate Miriam Luce qualifies the Libertarian Party of N.H. as an “official” party with ballot status.

1991

New Hampshire state legislators Cal Warburton and Finlay Rothhaus resign from the Republican Party and join the Libertarian Party. Chicago nominating convention names Andre Marrou and Nancy Lord as presidential/VP ticket.

1992

In New Hampshire’s presidential primary election, Andre Marrou beats incumbent President George Bush in Dixville Notch, the first town to vote in the nation. In the general election, four Libertarian state legislators are elected in New Hampshire. In addition to the re-election of Warburton and Rothhaus, Don Gorman and Andy Borsa are elected. Once again the party’s presidential ticket is on the ballot in all 50 states and DC. The more than 700 Libertarian Party candidates nationwide receive more than 5.7 million votes for state and federal offices alone. The 23 Libertarian candidates for U.S. Senate receive over one million votes, the highest total for a nationally organized third party since 1914.

1993

LP National Director Stuart Reges testifies before Congress, endorsing legislation to make it easier for third party candidates to participate in presidential debates. In “off-year” elections, 15 Libertarians win public office, scoring victories in local and county races across the country. Miriam Luce is appointed to the New Hampshire State Liquor Commission and Bonnie Flickinger wins election as Mayor of Moreno Valley, California.

1994

During the year, more than 40 Libertarians are elected or appointed to public office, setting an all-time record, and LP activists participate in the successful effort to stop President Bill Clinton’s takeover of the nation’s health care system. In November, more than 650 Libertarian candidates run for office. More than 2.2 million people vote Libertarian.

1995

Membership and voter registrations soar to record levels. The LP moves its national headquarters into the prestigious Watergate Office Building, which the *Wall Street Journal* dubs “a sign of the times” of the party’s growing stature. In November, three more Libertarians are elected to city councils: Bruce Van Buren (Avondale Estates, Georgia), Dewayne Methaney (Auburn, Georgia), and Doug Carlsen (Brighton, Colorado.)

1996

The Libertarian Party becomes the first third party in American history to earn ballot status in all 50 states two presidential elections in a row. At the nominating convention in Washington, DC, best-selling author Harry Browne gets the party’s nomination. He goes on to win 485,759 votes in the general election, the second-best showing in party history. The party runs almost 800 candidates for office, and 10 of them break the 100,000-vote barrier. LP candidates for statewide and federal office alone win 5.4 million votes, and seven Libertarians are elected or re-elected to office.

1997

Another record-setting “off-year” election for the Libertarian Party, with 39 Libertarians elected to office in November — including four city council winners: Fred Collins (Berkley, Michigan); Ron Wittig (New Meadows, Idaho); Bob DeBrosse (Piqua, Ohio); and John Gearhart (Palous, Washington). In all, 64 party members join the ranks of LP office-holders during the year.

1998

African-American civil rights leader Roy Innis and talk radio powerhouse Art Bell join the party. In California, Art Olivier becomes mayor of Bellflower, while in Georgia, Dewayne Metheny is elevated to acting mayor of Auburn. In November, the party sets a new record by running 853 candidates in 44 states. Neil Randall wins election as a State Rep. in Vermont, while Zenneth Caudill and Mary Dufour win partisan office as Jefferson Townships Trustees in Indiana. In all, 19 LP candidates are elected.

1999

The party breaks new ground in political activism with its Internet-based campaign against the FDIC’s “Know Your Customer” bank spying regulation. After being flooded by 250,000 complaints, the FDIC withdraws the plan. Party founder David Nolan is named one of the “2,000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 20th Century” by the International Biographical Centre in England. Fourteen Libertarians are elected in local Spring elections.

2000

Folk singer Melanie joins the party. The Anaheim, California convention again nominates Harry Browne for president and former Bellflower (CA) mayor Art Olivier for VP. They head a ticket of 1,436 LP candidates, including 256 candidates for U.S. House — the first time in 80 years a third party has contested a majority of Congressional seats. In one of the closest elections in history, the LP presidential ticket gets 382,892 votes. However, 34 Libertarians are elected to office, Massachusetts U.S. Senate candidate Carla Howell wins a record 11.9% of the vote, and the LP’s candidates for U.S. House win 1.6 million votes — a new record for any third party. In all, LP candidates earn more than 10 million votes across the USA.

2001

In November, the party runs about 300 candidates, a record slate in an off-year election — and sets another record when 76 Libertarians are elected. A study in *Ballot Access News* reports that the LP is the most successful third party in 50 years, based on the “best” vote totals of candidates for U.S. Senate and governor. The number of Libertarians holding office closes in on 500.