

TO THE NATIONAL LIBERTARIAN PARTY JUDICIAL COMMITTEE

RE: SUSPENSION OF LNC SECRETARY CARYN ANN HARLOS, PETITIONER

AMICUS CURIAE BY LEIGH ANN COGLIANO IN SUPPORT OF THE PETITIONER

To the Members of the Judicial Committee:

Before I begin, I would like you to know that due to the personal nature of portions of this response, I did obtain the consent of Caryn Ann Harlos to send this and allow for it to be made public. Although it is a last-minute response, I hope that you will enter it into the official record.

Please allow me to introduce myself by saying that I became the Secretary of the Libertarian Party of New Castle County (LPNCC) in Delaware in 2022 when our previous Secretary stepped down, and I was invited by the Libertarian Party of Delaware's (LPDE) Vice Chair to be a member of our state's Bylaws Committee until I returned back to my unaffiliated status in 2023. However, as I watch this process once again play out, I have decided to make my donation to the National Libertarian Party (LP) in order to renew my membership, that I may be permitted to speak my piece (the online form at LP.org would not permit me to spell my name correctly because it won't allow spaces or symbols in the first name field, and I refuse to put part of my first name in the middle name field).

I have been a small-(l) libertarian for many years, remaining registered as unaffiliated in my state of Delaware for most of those years since I moved here from New York in 2005 because I was disenchanted by party politics. That is until the autumn of 2021, when I saw someone with whom I once worked during the Ron Paul campaign in 2012, who was very welcoming of differing opinions when I knew him, breaking bylaws in order to remove board members he didn't like. I saw Caryn Ann Harlos step up and fight like mad to help those people who were being unfairly removed and realized I should not sit in silence when an injustice was being done, especially if there was a chance I may be able to help. Therefore, I changed my party registration to Libertarian and became a sustaining member of the National LP to ensure I could add one more to their numbers in a bizarre competing convention scenario that the LNC at the time put them through as they awaited their own JC appeal. During that time, other affiliates began facing similar issues, and each time, Ms. Harlos was there to go above and beyond the call of duty for the members whose rights were being violated by breach of bylaws. Now, it is disheartening to see many of those same people for whom Ms. Harlos once fought turn their backs on her, call her names, assume her motives, make vile memes about her, all because she did the exact same thing she did for them: she worked to protect member rights from a rogue state affiliate board that refused to honor its contract with its members, whether implied or explicit, to abide by its own and national bylaws. The situation may be different than 2021-2022, but the premise is the same.

I did not wish to get sucked into party politics again, yet after seeing so many posts that either put words in her mouth or seem to completely misunderstand her intentions, I felt compelled to fight for Caryn Ann Harlos just as she fought for the members of LPDE's board three years ago. As someone who has several members of my family who are diagnosed autistic and who has recently gone through an assessment myself, it seems to me that much of the communication issues stem from a lack of understanding of the way the autistic mind is literally wired differently than the allistic mind. For example, as I read the amicus of Meredith Hays this morning, I noted her statements, "Ms. Harlos Lied About Our July 12, 2024 Phone

Call. . . Ms. Harlos' recounting of this conversation is false. . . . The entire premise upon which I initiated the call with her was to discuss the events surrounding the certificate of nomination that she submitted in Colorado." The premise upon which Ms. Hays initiated the call does not preclude discussing other topics. She goes on to mention a text message as evidence. Maybe that text is clear for the neurotypical mind; however, to the autistic mind, unless the phrasing is direct and explicit, anything implied is likely to be missed. Social cues can be difficult enough to understand in person, but in text, they are nigh impossible to read. In other words, while Ms. Hays may believe the premise for her call was very clear to Ms. Harlos because of the text she sent prior to the call, Ms. Harlos may not have picked up on the subtle cues in the text. Which could mean that what Ms. Hays thought was crystal clear during the conversation may have also been too subtle for Ms. Harlos to process the way Ms. Hays intended.

Of course, I cannot attest either way to the actual conversation, but the date of the 6th Circuit decision does not disprove whether Ms. Harlos and Ms. Hays spoke of the case during their phone call. Word recall is a common issue with autism. Considering the fact that the decision had already taken place by the time Ms. Harlos wrote her Petition for Appeal, it makes sense that Ms. Harlos could mistakenly use the word "decision" rather than "case" or "oral arguments" even though the case was still ongoing when they had that phone call. Using an incorrect word may be a mistake, but mistaken verbiage is not grounds to call all credibility into question.

In the next paragraph, Ms. Hays admits that she has shared her personal life with Ms. Harlos, at least at a "surface-level commentary." Because autistic people do not engage in small talk, to the autistic mind, sharing any personal information is like having a deep conversation. If Ms. Hays shared what to her mind might be a minor complaint in her personal life which is not that important but rather a throw-away comment, to Ms. Harlos, it could have seemed more like a "grievance" because it was personal to Ms. Hays. Yet rather than attempt to understand how an autistic mind processes information, Ms. Hays assumes the motivations of Ms. Harlos and even directs the Judicial Committee to a later paragraph where she elaborates on her assumptions.

I would also like to quickly touch on the amicus sent in by Rachel Nelson. She starts by speaking about accountability, which I agree is very important in leadership, but then goes on to say, "Hannah Goodman made a choice for the LPCO, one fully within the bylaws." As Chair of the Libertarian Party of Nebraska, I hope that Ms. Nelson understands that affiliates of the LP have autonomy only where they do not violate the national bylaws. Ms. Nelson's assertion that Ms. Goodman's choice was "fully within the bylaws" is inaccurate both on a national and a state level, but since more intelligent minds than mine have already addressed this issue, I will not repeat the bylaws that have been violated or the reasoning as to why she is incorrect (see the opinion by Thomas J. Balch provided by both Ms. Harlos and Ms. Hays). As someone who could not vote for the LP candidate on moral grounds, I completely understand Ms. Goodman's concerns about not being able to put her full support behind the LP candidate. However, with that being the case, if Ms. Goodman really wanted to remain "fully within the bylaws" not only of her state but also of the national party to which she agreed as chair of an affiliate, then she should have stepped down as chair and allowed someone else to perform the duties of chair of the party so that the members of the LPCO would at least have the option to vote for their candidate if they so desired. This applies to all state chairs who felt they could not fully support the LP candidate and place him on their state ballots per the national bylaws.

Ms. Nelson goes on to state, “Over the last few months there has been non-stop fighting, hate and no accountability,” yet at the end places all the blame for these issues on the shoulders on Caryn Ann Harlos alone. If she were truly serious about holding leadership accountable, she should include all leadership involved, including the Chair of the LPCO, the one who started this current round of infighting by breaching contract with the members of her state party through the violation of both state and national bylaws, as well as the Chair and other members of the LNC who also engage in this infighting both in an official capacity and outside their office, especially on social media. However, Ms. Nelson is not consistent with her demands for accountability and targets only one individual, the only one consistently standing up to defend the members of the party, no matter which *team* they may be on. Caryn Ann Harlos is not the one who is “not the message the Libertarian Party stands for,” but rather those who put faction loyalty before the rights of the members of the party.

Respectfully,

Leigh Ann Cogliano

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