



Caryn Ann Harlos <secretary@lp.org>

[Inc-business] Resignation

1 message

Joe Bishop-Henchman <joe.bishop-henchman@lp.org>

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Reply-To: Inc-business@lp.org

To: Inc-business <Inc-business@lp.org>

Members of the Libertarian National Committee,

It has been 25 years since I first became involved in the Libertarian Party. I can still see my heroes like Harry Browne and Richard Rider and Ed Teyssier as we successfully rolled back wasteful government spending in San Diego, I can still hear the countless Libertarians I've listened to as we shared with optimism our hopes for the future, and I can still feel the exhaustion and sore feet from working tirelessly to bring Libertarian ideas to voters. We are the inheritors of a dream of our Party's founders, that we can achieve a better, freer, more humane world and that we could make it happen despite the obstacles put in our way.

To be Chair has been an honor and privilege, to bring my skills to realizing this dream, to build a functional, effective, viable political party that stands for Libertarian principles and wins elections to move public policy in a Libertarian direction. From my professional life in building up successful organizations, I know an essential prerequisite is that we treat each other as adults and together sustain a culture of empathy, kindness, and professionalism. In the back corner of my mind, for some time, has been an unease that this culture was going or gone, and I regret that I have now come to realize that it is gone from this Committee and from the loudest and most powerful voices in our Party.

The lies and threats leveled at myself and many good Libertarians and friends—lies about my actions with regards to New Hampshire, and threats against any Libertarian who tries to defend the Party—have made clear to me that we are now firmly set down on a path I cannot continue to support.

At its root, the biggest problem I see in the Libertarian Party, at nearly all levels, is that toxic people are tolerated. One or two rotten apples spoil the bunch. Toxic people exhaust or drive out good people. Our mechanisms for removing such individuals and addressing such bad behavior are designed to be effectively impossible, and culturally, too many people who should know better passively tolerate it rather than confront it. It turns off donors, repulses allies, and makes team projects unviable. This Committee, when confronted with this problem, has chosen to react to it the way a government teachers' union responds to a complaint about a bad teacher – endless process, excuses and rationalizations, feigned ignorance, and ultimately nothing but injustice for the victims.

I'm now convinced that many in this party *want* that toxicity. They thrive on it, it gives their life purpose, it makes sure there's always an enemy to fight. Not the Republicans and Democrats, not the actual threats to our liberty, but rather invented enemies closer to home and within reach of their vitriol. That toxic culture has recently been harnessed in the service of a grouping with a declared goal of taking over the party and making it as repulsive as possible to everyone except themselves. Much like Michael Tager's bartender story, Stage I is a few respectable people with odd ideas for messaging, Stage II is an organized push for projects unrelated to or counterproductive to getting Libertarians elected, Stage III is everything in chaos as we lurch from one self-imposed crisis to the next, and Stage IV is the purges and all previously-asserted concerns about due process and fair play thrown out the window.

I am cognizant, and frustrated, by the knowledge that a vast majority of LP members support where I would like to take the Party, including a supermajority of our elected officials and longest-serving activists and supporters. But governance of our Party is not decided democratically by all our members or by those who put in the most work electing Libertarians, but instead by those who are most organized to turn out bodies at state and national conventions. The national committee's actions, and inactions, are now driven by fear of this well-organized group.

In time, the advocates of these destructive tendencies will burn themselves out, turn on each other, and then leave. It has happened more than once before in our 50-year history, leaving principled Libertarians to pick

up the pieces and rebuild. But in the meantime, good people will be driven out of the party by those who wish to perpetuate this cycle, and most especially by those who now see it unmasked but will do nothing to stand up or speak up against it. I will not chair a party that knowingly and has now affirmatively chosen to stay affiliated with the toxic garbage that was being spewed by the New Hampshire party and similar bad actors in other states, the violent threats emanating from these people, and the deliberate destruction of the party's ability to appeal to voters and win elections.

Therefore, I resign as Chair of this committee, and from all subsidiary positions, effective upon the declaration of the results of the pending email ballot on disaffiliation.

I know there are many individuals who came into the freedom movement through the Libertarian Party and are now questioning their continued involvement. Many supported me, sustained me, and worked with me to build what we thought was possible. I would like to extend my personal offer: if you would like to find a path and a career doing libertarian things in one of the many good libertarian organizations outside of the Party, I will help you do that. Let me know, and I will help you make the connections and find the organizations that will welcome your involvement and provide a way for you to help accomplish great things for liberty. I know it might seem a daunting prospect to find your way as a professional libertarian at one of these organizations, but I know people from all walks of life and all skill sets who have done it. If you are motivated, principled, and dedicated, I will help find a place for you.

I wish success and safety to all those who remain to fight the good fight. I am confident that the values of empathy, kindness, and professionalism will one day again command the support of the leaders of this party. On that day, Libertarians will be worthy of the trust and support of the American people, so that the party can live up to its true purpose: a world set free.

Thank you,
Joe Bishop-Henchman
20th Chair, Libertarian National Committee