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From the Chair

A few words from Chair William Hunt.

In an increasingly fluid world, it can be difficult to stand firm in your beliefs. Personally, professionally, and politically it is almost always easier to keep your head down and go with the flow than to cling to the banks of your convictions.

The effects of the government's response to this pandemic will be long-lasting. Sooner or later, you will face a situation where compliance with an arbitrary mandate is at odds with your personal convictions. Have you thought about where that line is for you personally?

Being forced to provide proof of vaccination as a prerequisite for participation in the business or pleasure activity of your choice is antithetical to our ideals of freedom and liberty. This has been my proverbial line, and until the last few months, I have been lucky to avoid any significant negative consequences from that decision. Over the last few weeks, however, I have been forced to make some difficult choices.

As a regular panelist on a local news program, I was invited to appear in late January. Among the pre-show logistics emails was a postscript explaining a new policy that was put in place. The gist was: per the governor's executive orders, proof of vaccination status was required to enter the premises/studio. My unwillingness to provide proof of my vaccination status has thus disqualified me as a panelist during a time when the Libertarian perspective is sorely needed.

As an insurance professional, I am involved in training individuals interested in getting their state insurance licenses. I am by no means in favor of the state-mandated professional license required to get your insurance license, but as long as it remains a requirement, I want to help new people find the same opportunity I have found in my profession. The Community College of Rhode Island had invited me to teach an *online* class for students looking to sit for the state licensure exam. It wasn't until after going through the rigorous background check and onboarding process required to qualify for the position, that I was informed that not only was proof of my vaccination required but a compulsory booster shot was now also included in the school's definition of "vaccinated."

I am by no means comparing my sacrifices to those life-altering decisions many have been forced to make as a result of these government mandates. Instead, I am calling for Libertarians to stay true to our individual principles and make efforts to not comply whenever possible. You may have not had to make serious decisions about your family or your livelihood (yet) but I am asking you to acknowledge these arbitrary mandates and how much they inconvenience you and alter your market decisions every time you experience them.

As the pandemic itself is coming to an unceremonious and anticlimactic end, it can be tempting to compromise your principles because you think things are going back to normal. You may capitulate to a "Mask Required" sign to avoid making a scene or having to go out of your way to another store. You may have chosen to be vaccinated of your own free will (Libertarians

fully support that decision as well); do not comply just because you meet the current requirements. Definitions and dictates have proven to be subjective; your convictions and your principles are your only reliable guide.

Feel your neighbor's pain; stand in solidarity with their plight. Do not be satisfied with the limited lifting of executive orders, or the "new normal" where you only get a fraction of your freedoms and liberties returned to you from a paternal state. Do not get distracted by a new war with an old enemy halfway around the world. Those who are responsible for the worst death and destruction wrought over the past two years are trying to change the narrative and hope their complete negligence is forgotten—do not forget.

"The past was alterable. The past never had been altered. Oceania was at war with Eastasia. Oceania had always been at war with Eastasia." - George Orwell, 1984

-Billy Hunt
Chairman LPRI

Policy Report

News of note from the legislative session.

COVID-19 Restrictions

Most Rhode Islanders no longer have to wear masks in public. Gov. Dan McKee [allowed](#) the long-standing executive order dictating the state's public mask mandate, which required masks to be worn in the state's businesses and venues, to expire on February 11. The mask mandate for school children remains in place until March 5.

McKee's emergency powers, which the legislature voted to limit to 180 day periods last year, were set to expire on February 14. But lawmakers [voted](#) to extend them for another 45 days on March 31. The move means that McKee could reverse his mask decisions anytime between now and the end of March.

Elections

On January 27, the State Government and Elections Committee in Rhode Island's House of Representatives voted to table for further study a [bill](#) that would get rid of party primaries. The bill would replace party-driven primary elections with preliminary general elections. The top two vote-getters from a preliminary general election would face off in state-wide general elections. Rep. Arthur Corvese, the bill's sponsor, has sold it as the answer to "unfair" general elections where state office is won by a plurality, rather than a majority, of total votes.

"As we've seen here in Rhode Island, it's possible to win even the governorship with

much less than half of voters' support. That's not much of a mandate, since a majority of voters actually voted against the candidate who won," said Corvese via a [press release](#).

On February 18, McKee signed into law the bill reapportioning the state's House, Senate, and congressional districts. Rhode Island's constitution requires districts to be reapportioned every 10 years, following the federal census.

Other News

- McKee delivered the annual State of the State [address](#) on January 18. The governor used the address to announce several spending initiatives included in his fiscal year 2023 budget proposal.
- That budget [proposal](#) includes plans for more than a billion dollars in federal relief funding.
- The legislature is [considering](#) a ban on single-use plastic bags, an idea that was first introduced in 2013.
- Patrons at restaurant bars who order a full meal will once more be able to enjoy happy hour specials if a [bill](#) to revive happy hours passes the legislature. Rhode Island banned happy hours in the 1980s over drunk driving concerns.

From the Floor

A space for LPRI members to have their voices heard.

Can libertarians play a role as a viable third party?

With the Republican party rapidly descending into a fringe Cult party and the Democrats primarily captive of radical progressives, is there actually a role for a viable 3rd party like Libertarians to appear as 'moderate' and responsible folks? Perhaps not quite as 'anti' government as their founders are but as a reasonable voice that minimizes government role and encourages free market solution approaches?

-Jim

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Have something to say about recent political events? We want to hear from you!

Send us your opinions, comments, and other miscellaneous musings about libertarian topics: communications@lpri.us. Use "From the Floor" in the subject line.

Libertarians Won't Survive Open Primaries

Proposed electoral reforms show the importance of growing the party right now.

If HP 6622, a bill that would end party primaries, advances through the legislature and becomes law, libertarians won't stand a chance in elections.

As currently drafted, the bill would allow all voters, regardless of party affiliation, to participate in a primary general election. The election would work as follows, according to a [press release](#) from the legislature:

For each office up for election, the top two vote-getters in the primary would be listed on the general election ballot. In cases where there are multiple seats to fill, as is often the case for city and town councils and school committees, the number of candidates who advance would equal twice the number of available positions. So if a town were electing three council members, the top six candidates in the general primary would advance to the general election.

In a state as heavily-Democratic as Rhode Island, that likely means Republicans, let alone third party candidates like libertarians, would have a difficult time making it to the general election.

And then there's the question of what legislation like this would mean for third parties looking to become recognized. Current Rhode Island law requires parties to receive 5% of a general election vote for either president or the governor. While presidential elections wouldn't be affected by HP 6622, gubernatorial races would. How would we get to 5% if we couldn't even get a candidate to a state-wide election? The bill doesn't address this.

Third parties are familiar with the barriers the established parties erect to stymie competition. This bill looks like yet another effort by the Democrat-Republican duopoly to keep us off the ballot and keep our voice in state politics marginalized.

We can't rely on Republicans to fight bad legislation like this: we need to make sure our voice is heard. We need to make sure libertarians aren't disenfranchised by being excluded from the ballot. Our message can win: but only if we can get it in front of voters.

We need your help to do this. The party needs members who are willing to volunteer and help fight bills like this from becoming law.

What are some of the perks of becoming a member?

- Only members are eligible to vote at our annual convention. In election years, votes on whether to award the party's endorsement to libertarian candidates for state and local office are held at conventions. Elections for Executive Committee officers occur at conventions, too.
- Only members can hold party offices. Members of the Executive Committee and directors and members of other committees that are part of the party's official

structure, such as the Outreach Committee, Communication Committee, and Policy Committee, must be dues-paying members. If you have any interest in party leadership, or serving on a committee within the party, you must first become a member.

- Only members can serve as delegates to the Libertarian National Committee's nominating convention for presidential candidates. The number of delegates LPRI receives at the LNC convention is also determined by the number of members who live in RI and are enrolled with the LNC, and by those who are registered LPRI members. Growing our membership helps give us a larger voice at the national level.

So, help us in our ongoing bid to #TurnRIGold. Yearly membership dues are only \$40. Visit <https://lpri.us/membership-account/membership-levels/> to sign up to become a member.

It's our 45th anniversary as a party, and we're looking for 45 new members to join us in spreading the message of liberty in Rhode Island politics.

If you're already a member, there's still plenty you can do to help the party. 2022 is an election year and we'll need volunteers to help us with campaigning and ballot access.

[Click Here to Volunteer](#)

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