

LIBERTARIAN LIFELINE



California Primary Election Fraught With Problems

Alameda County Registrar of Voters Bradley Clark reports that voter turnout in last month's primary election was the lowest in decades. Barely 38.5% of registered voters in California bothered to go to the polls on March 26, the lowest turnout for any election in the state since 1940. In Alameda County, some voters were even denied their right to vote by the failure of the Registrar to provide complete ballots.

Democrats and Republicans had no problem casting their ballots, but voters who are affiliated with other parties, such as the Greens, the Libertarians, the Peace and Freedom Party, the Reform Party and the Natural Law Party, were presented with a "generic" ballot at a voting machine, one that did not even list the names of the candidates seeking election. These voters were instructed to match the numbers on the machine with the numbers of the candidates listed on the Sample Ballot mailed to them three weeks earlier. In the event that the voter did not bring the sample ballot to the polling location, precinct staff were supposed to provide a copy, but in many cases, these ballots were unavailable. Consequently, approximately half of the ballots cast for these parties were blank, the voters having only been able to select candidates in non-partisan races and mark their decisions on statewide propositions and local initiatives.

The decision not to print ballots for these parties was a cost-saving measure, a laudable objective to be sure, but it also demonstrated a remarkable lack of respect for the more than 31,000 conscientious voters in Alameda County who choose to align themselves with parties which have a true ideology to support them, rather than millions of dollars of campaign money.

In a land where all citizens are presumably created equal, the registrar demonstrated an appall-

ing failure to provide for the basic need for a fair and democratic process.

In a meeting called by representatives from the Libertarian Party, the Green Party and the Peace and Freedom Party, Registrar Bradley Clark explained that the Votomatic system used in Alameda County has the capacity to include a maximum of twelve columns of holes on a typical paper ballot. But because two new parties have qualified for ballot status in California this year, the Natural Law Party and Ross Perot's Reform Party, ballots would have had to accommodate a minimum of *thirteen* columns if all of these parties were to have the names of their candidates printed on the Votomatic pages. Citing the California Election Code, which mandates the inclusion of County Central Committee candidates on all ballots, even if these candidates are running unopposed, Mr. Clark made the decision not to include any of the names of candidates for the minor parties at the Votomatic machines, but only printed instructions for the voter to match the number beside the name of the candidate printed in the Sample Ballot with the number on the Votomatic. While this seems clear enough, the decision was made too late to have these instructions printed in the Sample Ballots, and it was not thought necessary to notify in advance the officers of the political parties affected by the change.

While the problem did not affect the outcome of any LP race, it *did* have a significant impact on the Green Party and the Peace and Freedom Party. Many voters who, for some reason were unable to match the numbers for their candidates, simply voted for the non-partisan races and the Statewide propositions, and left the rest of their ballots blank. The number of blank ballots cast by Green voters at the polls on March 26 was 47% of the total (as compared to 16.5% blank ballots filed by absentee voters), and the Peace and Freedom Party experienced a 45% blank ballot return. *A startling 46% of Libertarian ballots were blank!* David Kadlacek, Co-Chair of the Peace and Freedom Party, retrieved figures from the 1992 California Primary, which indicated that the number of blank ballots cast in the March 26 primary far exceeded any similar numbers recorded from the last presidential primary, held in June 1992.

Obviously, this fiasco involved more than just a

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communication problem between the Registrar of Voters and the officers of these parties; there was a clear failure on the part of precinct inspectors to properly supervise poll workers. Mr. Clark insisted that the two-hour training session attended by all poll inspectors covered these procedural changes in detail, but the complaints from angry voters who were denied their right to exercise the most basic duty of citizenship in a democracy attests to the deficiency of the supervision of election clerks.

Most disturbing of all, it appears that voters who do not register as Republicans or Democrats constitute such an insignificant and powerless minority that their right to equal access under the law is unworthy of equal consideration.

How do we prevent such a problem from occurring again? We could encourage Libertarians and other voters who are concerned about how the system is run to volunteer their services as election officers on November 5. All that is necessary is to return the pre-addressed response card (included in the front of the Sample Ballot) to the Registrar's Office indicating that *you would like to work at the polls. After all, this is your*

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News & Events deadline: 15th of the month. Send to Editor, 240 Sybil Avenue, San Leandro, CA 94577 or call (510) 351-0973.

Submit on paper, diskette, or internet e-mail to:

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government and you have a vested interest in seeing that elections are properly and *fairly* administered. As is all too often the case, if you want something done right, you pretty much have to do it yourself. The more competent the staff at the polls, the more likely such problems can be rectified satisfactorily. While it is unlikely that a similar problem will recur unless both of the new parties retain ballot status through the year 2000, we have been given assurances by the Registrar that in the future, party officers will be consulted well in advance should he ever again encounter such a dilemma.

All of this demonstrates just how ridiculous it is for all parties to follow the same regulations. Libertarians have a better idea for a way to save money on elections. We'd like to save California taxpayers a minimum of \$1 million in administrative costs every single election. Why not let individual parties choose their candidates by their own means, under the provisions of their own bylaws? The rules that govern the operations of the Democratic and Republican Parties (established as a result of decades of political corruption and legislative manipulation to ensure their continued power structure), are not necessarily appropriate when applied to smaller, grassroots parties. Since most of our candidates run unopposed for nomination, it makes no sense to have them participate in a wasteful and meaningless primary election.

The LP of California would like to choose its candidates by caucus, rather than by primary, but current law requires all political parties to use the same system, regardless of how much it costs. Implementing such a change in the California Election Code would require the introduction of legislation to revise the rules mandating that all parties participate in the primary process. We hope to persuade our state senators and our Alameda County representatives in the California Assembly to sponsor such legislation.

We urge the Registrar of Voters and the Secretary of State to recognize the inequality of our present system, and allow each individual party to operate under the provisions of its own bylaws.

The Democrats and Republicans would very likely retain their present practice, as it has been designed to keep them in power, but other parties would then be free to choose their candidates in their own fashion and at their own expense, at no additional cost to the taxpayers. □



News



Information

NetDay96



Search



Feedback

The chances of myself and President Clinton doing exactly the same thing at exactly the same time on any given morning (I mean something other than the usual routine -- waking up, scratching the cajones, craving coffee, etc.) must be somewhere around astronomical. But improbable as it may seem...it happened. Because of NetDay96.

Clinton and Gore were in Concord on Saturday, March 9, 1996 to provide a photo opportunity for their reelection campaign by pretending to help wire a high school as part of the NetDay96 effort, and only a couple of television and newspaper reporters bothered to point out that the entire project came about from the initiative of private industry, not a government program. NetDay96 happened *in spite of* Clinton and Gore, not because of them. Yet, for the sake of an election year stunt, they got entirely too much credit for spearheading an effort they had precious little to do with.

But what the hell? NetDay96 was an astounding success all over the state. I learned a lot about network wiring that day, as well as a lot of other things. There were so many volunteers at Roosevelt Elementary School that we had a lot of time to stand around and talk tech with each other while stringing Plenum Category 5 wire through the school's ceiling and down the walls. It wasn't particularly difficult work, but it was immensely satisfying.

In 1994, the San Leandro Unified School District attempted to pass a \$25 million bond issue to do over ten years what NetDay96 did in just one day. Although they had many other practical uses for the money, the school district administrators tried sell the bond issue to voters by emphasizing that it would be used primarily to upgrade the technological infrastructure of the district to enable them to wire schools for the internet. As with many other matters involved, they routinely overstated how much this "technology" actually costs, but the voters didn't buy it. In the wake of the bond issue's defeat, the district claims to have developed a "five-year plan" to get the schools fully wired and web-capable. They say that they want to do this *slowly*, to "make sure it's done right."

In the information age of today, doing things "**slowly**" is a euphemism for, "we don't have a prayer of ever doing a thing about it, because in five years, we'll be out of here and it will be someone else's problem." The very word "slowly" has a completely different meaning in cyberspace--and it is hardly ever used! In cyberspace, 14,400 baud is pretty damned slow. ISDN is here now with transfer rates greater than 64,000 baud,

and the potential for newer and more efficient means of transmitting data are going to make 28,800 baud look like the *slow lane* on the information superhighway in the next year or so.

A public school bureaucracy is a huge, lumbering behemoth that is most comfortable sitting still and doing nothing. It takes a tremendous amount of energy (or "huge sums of money") to get it to move even a fraction of an inch toward progress. The rest of the world races past, plunging headlong into the future, while our children's education is caught in this slow, tangled web of red tape. NetDay96 was a case of fed-up parents saying, "We're mad as hell and we're not going to take it anymore." The school district's bureaucrats apparently haven't realized that technological progress does not happen **slowly**, and school administrators who insist on doing things slowly are going to be left far, far behind as the world continues to spin.

The problem with school board members, school administrators, and unfortunately a good number of the school's teachers, is that they have no earthly idea of what they're getting into when they talk about getting wired to the internet. It is obvious from their statements to the media that they simply haven't done their homework.

After NetDay96, Patricia Dixon, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction for the SLUSD, commented in the *San Leandro Journal* that it was a good start, but it's only the first very small step toward their five-year-let's-take-it-**slowly**-plan. Hey, man, NetDay96 didn't cost you idiots a penny! Just where the hell do you get off diminishing the importance of what happened that weekend? Even the people who paid for it, the schools' corporate sponsors, forked over only \$375 for the wiring kit, a drop in the bucket compared to the incredible goodwill such a gesture fostered. Sun Microsystems even went so far as to donate a network server to San Leandro High School. Sun's John Gage, architect of NetDay96, justifies this magnanimous gesture by pointing out that California's high tech corporations are going to be the direct beneficiaries of having the educational system graduating net-literate students from high school, and therefore the responsibility for preparing the schools for this revolution should rightly be theirs.

The most formidable challenge, Ms. Dixon claims, is the "huge sums of money" the district will need to purchase the hardware and software necessary to surf the World Wide Web. Bull excrement. Absolute unmitigated bull excrement. This is another gigantic clue that these clowns simply don't have a clue themselves.

They don't know what the hell they're talking about.

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MISTER BOFFO Joe Martin

Mail permission is required



"Let me put this in terms you'll understand... if your tax isn't paid on time, we take the original bill and... 'SUPER SIZE' it."

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April 15 Tax Day Events

Members of the East Bay Region Libertarian Party will be making ourselves conspicuous again at selected U.S. Post Office locations on April 15, 1996. This year, however, since distributing Libertarian literature has never seemed to generate significant interest in the party, we will instead be using this opportunity to gather signatures for the **Californians for Compassionate Use Initiative** (i.e., the ballot initiative to legalize the use of Marijuana for medicinal purposes). The deadline for submission of the petitions to the Secretary of State's office in Sacramento falls on the following week, so we felt it would be particularly appropriate to use this opportunity to help push this effort in its final days to ensure that it appears on your ballot in November. The campaign must collect a minimum of 700,000 valid signatures to qualify, so the more we turn in, the more likely our chances of success.

For more information on where to show up and how you can help, or to obtain petitions for signatures, call the East Bay LP at (510) 531-0760. □

From the Chair

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

by Jeffrey R. Sommer

An Open Letter to General McCaffrey

Dear General:

I see that President Clinton has appointed you to be "Drug Czar," and if your expression was less than enthusiastic, who can blame you? You looked like you had just been made Captain of the *Titanic*, and with good reason. It is a lose/lose proposition all the way around, as I'm sure you are aware.

You are a soldier, sir, trained to fight and win against America's enemies--a highly honorable profession, and one that you have succeeded at famously in the last war. Now you are being asked to fight, not people, not governments, but a global market. It is a fight that cannot be won through governmental coercion. All that has been accomplished by the War on Drugs has been the dismemberment of the Bill of Rights and the growth of a police-state mentality in America.

It is not possible to establish a "Drug-Free America," unless you strip its citizens of any remaining shreds of privacy and dignity, and create the sort of totalitarian nightmare that George Orwell could only hint. Success in this would be a thousand times greater a danger to the Republic than cocaine dealers on every street corner. You cannot do this job honorably. No one can: it is an unwinnable war, and in my opinion your best option is to resign the post quickly and recommend -- loudly! -- that the position be abolished. That would take guts; but I believe that is the sort of audacity for which you are noted.

Respectfully yours,

Jeffrey R. Sommer, Chair
East Bay Region
Libertarian Party of California

FEELING LONELY?

by Marion McEwen

Are you the only Libertarian who votes at your precinct? Do you often wonder if there are any Libertarians in your neighborhood or where you work? The Party knows how you feel and we have set out to change that. If there are only one or two Libertarians in your neighborhood, there may be more soon.

The East Bay Region of the California Libertarian Party is orchestrating a voter registration drive. We will be using volunteers and professionals. Our goal is to have a minimum of 5% of the registered voters in Newark and Walnut Creek before the November election. We hope to reach our goal in Newark before Independence Day of this year.

This process is not easy. Remember that we can not specify that we are only registering Libertarians but must offer prospective voters the opportunity to register in any Party they choose. As we register new Libertarians we will increase the registration in all Parties so we will increase the number of new registrants we need to meet our goal.

Real life is tough. It gets tougher, when you think about what it will cost us. We have figured out a range of prices depending on the method used for gathering the registrations. We don't know which one will be the most effective so we will try several. The most cost effective would be for all of us to register four or five of our friends and neighbors unless of course we all pay ourselves for our time and effort. But forget that. No, don't forget that you are the best reason your friends and family will have for changing their registration to Libertarian. Other methods of registration will cost between \$1.75 and \$4.00 per new voter.

Most of us do not carry registration cards around with us. But, for a penny less than \$17.76 you can help increase LP registrations. Buy 10 new registrations with your donation today. Use the Membership form on page 7, the donation box is at the bottom on the right. Thank you for making a difference.

MEMBERSHIP

There are two types of membership in the Libertarian Party. The first is for those who want to be active and make a statement about their beliefs. Those of you who fit into this category will sign the Pledge and pay the level of dues of your choice. You

have the option of running for public or Party office and voting on Party business. The second type is for people who feel comfortable with some or most of the Libertarian Party and want to show their support but do not wish to sign the Pledge or jump into politics feet first. The second type do not vote on Party business.

When filling out the membership form please indicate what level you are choosing and return the completed form to our return address.

Nothing is more important to promoting a free society than your membership in the LP. Your dues allow us to continue producing the newsletter and reaching out to the public. Additional donations increase the outreach projects and our effectiveness at increasing the public's awareness of our positions. Every action we can take as individuals and as a whole bring us closer to real liberty in our time. □

"Democracy is the worst possible system... except for all the others"
— Winston Churchill

"Democracy arises out of the notion that those who are equal in any respect are equal in all respects; because men are equally free, they claim to be absolutely equal."
— Aristotle, *Politics*

"Democracy, which is a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder, and dispensing a sort of equality to equals and unequals alike."
— Plato, *The Republic*

"Two cheers for Democracy: one because it admits variety and two because it permits criticism. Two cheers are quite enough: there is no occasion to give three."

— E. M. Forster

from "Two Cheers for Democracy" a chapter in *What I Believe* (1951)

One of the greatest things about the internet is the incredible *freedom* of it. The whole culture that created the internet celebrates how this technology can free the user to go anywhere to find anything. The hacker dictum that spawned this revolution and formed the foundation of the internet was, "information *wants* to be free." (See Stephen Levy's 1987 book *Hackers*). The fact is that once you're wired, just about anything and everything on the net is more or less *free*. Clever software designers are releasing new programs on the net every day, encouraging people to download them free of charge to help spread the technology faster. The development kit for Sun's new programming language, Java, is available to anyone who wants it for nothing, and the HotJava web browser is likewise absolutely free. Netscape, the most popular web browser in the marketplace, is *shareware* -- you download it for free, use it for a trial period, then you pay for it if you like it. The license agreement even says it is *free* for K-12 classroom use.

And as for hardware, anyone who jumped on the high tech bandwagon in the early or mid-1980s is still cringing over the thought that they paid \$3,000 or more for a Compaq Deskpro 286 in 1985, or \$500 for a 9600 baud modem in 1989. Today's basic internet-ready computers cost a fraction of what most private industries paid for yesterday's obsolete technology, and even a smaller fraction of what most mainframe computers cost as recently as 20 years ago, and yet they are far more powerful. And the trend shows no sign of slowing. A revolution in microchip hardware design occurs on average *every 18 months!* The 66Mhz 486 screamer system of two years ago is today's Studebaker (i.e., awkward and anachronistic, but functional nevertheless) now that 133Mhz Pentiums are becoming the common system of choice, but that old 486 is still a perfectly adequate system for cruising the net. And now, you can pick one up for about \$800 or less!

The argument that this technology costs more money than schools can afford is completely bogus. That's why NetDay96 happened. Many of the parents of children in these schools work with this technology every day, and became frustrated with the administration's foot-dragging. The bureaucrats came up with all kinds of excuses as to why they couldn't possibly find the resources to do this on their own. It was obvious that hell would freeze over before the school bureaucracy ever got around to this, so it was up to the parents to take the initiative and do the job. Most of us work in the real world, have to meet real deadlines, and have to demonstrate the tangible results of our work if we expect to be paid for it. School bureaucrats apparently get paid whether they accomplish anything or not. It was the parents who took the bull by

the horns, plowed through all the bull excrement that was placed in the way, and decided that if you want something done right, you pretty much *have* to do it yourself. We know it doesn't take "huge sums of money" to do this, because many of us are doing it for ourselves or for our employers in the real world.

If any of the bureaucrats who are impeding the progress of our children had ever bothered to go shopping for a home computer, they might have some idea of how little these things cost today, and if they had any vision at all, could predict that the costs are going to continue to drop. If any of them had ever surfed the World Wide Web, they'd have some knowledge of all the free stuff that's available to them and would know how very easy it is to become an on-line publisher by means of this remarkable medium. Forget school yearbooks, come take a look at my school's Web page...

The kids already know this. That's why they're so excited about it. If you've never awakened on a Saturday morning to find your nine year old son sitting at your computer downloading pictures and sound clips from *Toy Story*, using IBM's WebExplorer under OS/2 Warp, you have no idea how thrilling the internet is to children. Until that happened, I'd never been able to figure out any activity that could lure him away from television and the insidious seduction of Saturday morning cartoons.

Yes, NetDay96 was only the beginning, but many more schools will need similar efforts to provide this resource for their students. Only two schools in San Leandro participated in NetDay, yet there were so many parent volunteers at Roosevelt Elementary School that the work was done by 1:30 p.m. We could have wired even more schools that weekend if we'd had the hardware available. We certainly had enough enthusiasm to have continued until we'd done every school in the district.

Don't take the word of school bureaucrats that this can't be done without "huge sums of money." Do your own homework, contact NetDay organizers and seek out a corporate sponsor for your own child's school. It doesn't cost an arm and a leg, only a bit of your time and some volunteer hours. We're going to need NetDays organized every weekend for months before even half of the schools in California who need this technology actually get it.

A somewhat modified version of the preceding rant was published in the March 22, 1996 edition of the *San Leandro Journal*. It generated a sharp response from school board member Joyce Starosciak (who for some reason seemed to think I was criticizing the schools for *not spending enough money*), plus a letter of support for my position from a schoolteacher who preferred to remain anonymous to protect her job, and a very cordial meeting with Deputy Superintendent of Schools Bob Nehls, who said the District was interested in hearing some more of my ideas.



Let Decent People Defend Themselves

The following letters coincidentally appeared in the Hayward *Daily Review* on February 22, 1996 in response to editorials published the previous week. Jay Palmer is a long-time member of the LP.

I would like to disagree with your editorial against allowing law abiding citizens to carry concealed weapons.

There was a time when hysterical fears about every traffic incident turning into a gunfight or the rebirth of Dodge City carried some weight. But over 22 states have enacted concealed carry laws, and the predicted bloodbath has failed to materialize.

Quite the contrary -- after the passage of Florida's concealed carry law, the murder rate in Florida dropped, even while it was going up in the rest of the country. The criminals all have weapons; it's time to allow decent people the means to defend themselves.

I can't help but think the jogger on Peralta Street would be alive today if he had been armed against those vermin. What other measures could he have taken that would have saved his life?

The problem is that under the current state of law, the issuance of permits is left to the discretion of the local sheriff. The local authorities are extremely reluctant to issue such permits unless the person has political clout, like Dianne Feinstein or ex-supervisor Don Perata.

As a result, the average citizen is left defenseless in the face of an increasingly armed threat.

It is long past time we had uniform standards for the issuance of concealed carry permits, and AB638, which recently passed the Assembly, does just that. Californians who are interested in being able to defend themselves should urge their state senators to support this measure, which faces a difficult road in the Senate.

Jay Palmer
San Leandro

Legalize Drugs?

Of course! It would save the government (that's us) billions of dollars; the dealers would have to go into some other evil business like, say, telemarketing or tobacco production; and we could stop building and filling new jails. Besides legalization, we should immediately turn loose those doing time for possession of formerly illegal drugs.

William Buckley and his fellow proponents in the *National Review* are dead right to recommend legalization. Generally, the people who are against it are 1) Narcs of various types who would lose their jobs; 2) Dealers, ditto; and 3) the dumb politicians on both sides of the aisle. Why don't these venal, poll-reading feeders at the public trough do something right? The drug problem started in a small but significant way in 1937 when the first federal laws were passed against drugs. That resulted in a small vested interest -- the narcs (narcotics pursuers) -- which has never stopped growing. Now our "drug war" involves many nations and billions of our tax dollars each year.

Joseph P. Disch
Pleasant Hill

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(For those joining the LP)

I hereby certify that I do not believe in nor advocate the **initiation** of force as a means of achieving social or political goals.

Libertarian Party

of California

20993 Foothill Blvd., #318
Hayward, CA 94541

Signature _____ Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State & ZIP _____

(Optional)

Phone: _____ FAX: _____

email: _____

- ☐ Basic LP Membership
(includes *California Liberty + Lifeline*) \$25
- ☐ Household Membership
(for joint households) \$35
- ☐ National LP Membership
(add \$20 per person)
- ☐ Subscription only to
Libertarian Lifeline \$10
- ☐ Donation (Thank you!)

Please make checks payable to:
Libertarian Party of California

CALENDAR OF EVENTS **APRIL**

Tuesday, April 16, 1996: Alameda County LP General Meeting. Ricky's Sports Lounge and Steakhouse at 15028 Hesperian Boulevard in San Leandro (near BayFair Mall). Formal business will begin between 7:30 and 8:00 p.m. For more information, please call the LP Party Line at (510) 531-0760.

Saturday, April 13, 1996: Greg Lyon for Congress Fund Raising Dinner. Join our candidate for the 10th Congressional District at 6:30 p.m. in the Lafayette Park Hotel on Mt. Diablo Boulevard in Lafayette (take the Pleasant Hill exit from Highway 24). Cost is \$50 per plate or \$96 for two. For more information or to RSVP, call the LP Party line at (510) 889-1544.

Saturday, April 13, 1996: Celebrate Thomas Jefferson's Birthday with Terry Savage. Join our candidate for the 13th Congressional District at an afternoon barbeque picnic in honor of the Libertarian Party's patron saint, Thomas Jefferson, to be held at 3021 Via Montez in San Jose. For more information, call the Savage for Congress Campaign at (408) 262-7161.

Tuesday, April 23, 1996: Contra Costa County General Meeting. 7:30 p.m. at Fuddrucker's, 1975 Diamond Blvd., Concord, CA, located in the Willows Shopping Center (take the Willow Pass exit off of Highway 680). For details, call the LP Party Line at (510) 531-0760.

Sunday Afternoons, 5:30 p.m.: The Libertarian News Hour is heard every week on Free Radio Berkeley, 104.1 FM, hosted by East Bay LP Chair Jeff "Zippy the Yippie" Sommer. Tune in from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. every Sunday to hear the latest word from the frontiers of freedom. Free Radio Berkeley is the upstart pirate broadcasting operation that last year challenged the FCC for its First Amendment right to exist and **won!** To talk to Jeff on the air, call (510) 655-7146.

Sunday Evenings, 8:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. On-Line Chat with Greg Lyon, Libertarian Candidate for Congress. America On-Line subscribers are welcome to join a weekly chat room with Libertarian Party Congressional candidate Greg Lyon every Sunday evening at 8:30. Just log on and go to LYON4CONGRESS.

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