

# Starting From Nothing: Starting Up a New Local LP Chapter in Your County or City

Edited by Marc Montoni & The "Commit a Political Act Today" Caucus

**R**eady to start a local Libertarian committee? These **BASIC** steps are the path to create your new local LP. More in-depth information on each step is provided on following pages.

1. **NOTIFY STATE PARTY OFFICERS:** Let the state party officers & the Affiliate Parties Chairman know that you wish to call a charter meeting to establish a new Libertarian Party affiliate committee in your area.
2. **LOCATION:** Find a venue (local libraries usually have meeting rooms, and they are usually free); and set a time.
3. **INVITATION:** Provide a camera-ready announcement/invitation, and LPVA will print, label, stamp, and mail to the LP members in your chosen city/county. Alternatively if you have a high-quality high-speed printer and can get a better result than we can, by all means, print them and ship to me, and LPVA will do the rest.
4. **PROMOTION:** Begin publicizing your events via Facebook, the state party Events Calendar, Craigslist, and any other venues you can find. The **SECOND** meeting (the "charter" meeting) is where you seek to maximize attendance and invite all Libertarians who reside in your coverage area to attend.
5. **BYLAWS:** Figuring out what you want in your bylaws should take **no more than two meetings** to finalize. **LPVA can announce both meetings for you.** See the page on **Adopting Bylaws.**
6. **MEMBERSHIP:** Adoption of bylaws actually "creates" a formal group. Once you have bylaws, everyone needs to officially join the group to be a valid member.
7. **MAILING LIST:** Once you have a formal organization established with officers, bylaws, and members, \*then\* the LPVA can start releasing its database to the group chairman or his designee. We will do so quarterly as long as your group cooperates and sends us list feedback at least quarterly in return. LPVA will release only those names and addresses that are within the county or city listed in the bylaws adopted by the group.
8. **GUEST REGISTER:** Take attendance on the sign-in sheet (attached) so I can follow-up on membership status with everyone.
9. **PETITION:** Collect names on your affiliation petition. You need at least 10 signers who are LPVA members to be formally affiliated.
10. **BANK ACCOUNT:** Apply for an IRS TIN (you can do this quickly via their website) and with it, open your bank account.
11. **BEGIN ACTIVITIES:** Recruit candidates for office: <http://snipurl.com/ElectionCalendar>
12. **CONSISTENCY:** Regular meetings are essential. Don't give up and don't stop mailing meeting notices / invitations to your entire list every couple of months. If you don't continue pushing for attendance, or if you decide you only need to remind people via email, they will begin drifting away.

## Who can attend the first two formation meetings?

The first **organizational meeting** is a meeting to form a new local LP instead of a meeting of an existing group; the only rules you have to follow are the ones you make up.

It's your meeting, and you control the hall.

You may control who shows up to the **\*\*organizational\*\*** meetings (you can say, for instance, "invitation only" or something similar).

Once your meetings morph into meetings of an "official" Libertarian committee, however, you no longer have the discretion to make any LP members ineligible to join.

If they are members of the state or national LP, and within the group's covered county or city, then no one should be prevented from paying dues or otherwise doing what is required to be a local party member. The state LP will not extend affiliation to local chapters who are unreasonable with their eligibility requirements.

Be fair at all times, and respect the rights of others to speak and participate.

## Agenda for the FIRST Organizational Meeting

1. Elect temporary officers (these will serve only until the charter meeting at which bylaws will be adopted).
2. Adopt a resolution to form a new organization.
3. Appoint a "rules committee" to draw up bylaws.
4. Adjourn.

## Rules Committee Hashes Out Bylaws

You may find it useful to obtain examples of bylaws for organizations of the same type as the one you're forming. Here are a few that

have been in use in various affiliates in Virginia:

<http://LPVA.com/HTML/bylaws.php>

Then spend some quality time talking as a group about how you want your organization to operate.

## The Second Organizational Meeting: Adopt the Proposed Bylaws

Once your rules committee has hammered out the desired bylaws, it is time to hold the **second organizational meeting**, where you will adopt bylaws.

This vote is pretty significant because, as soon as you adopt bylaws, you have a brand-new, shiny, out-of-the-box organization, and the bylaws are in effect immediately upon their adoption. Because they are new bylaws of a brand-new organization, only a majority vote is needed to adopt them -- but note that after they are adopted, **no changes can be made without previous notice and a two-thirds vote!**

Once you've adopted bylaws, they define who is eligible to join the local committee, and how. And because from the moment you adopt bylaws you need to be an enrolled member to vote on anything, your new organization stands in **immediate recess** to enroll members.

Everyone in attendance should at that moment start taking care of their paperwork & dues. This should only take a few minutes if everyone was prepared for it.

In Agenda form:

## Agenda for the SECOND Organizational Meeting

1. Call to order.
2. Consider adopting formal bylaws.
3. Group stands in immediate recess upon adoption of Bylaws.

Once everyone has finished ante-ing up their dues and whatever else is required to be a voting member of the committee, **immediately call into session your Charter Meeting.**

NOTE: Some local LP affiliates require their members in good standing to maintain membership status in the state & national LP. This requirement is to be encouraged, because different people respond to different activities but every touch reinforces their relationship with the LP as a whole.

## **Basic Agenda for the Charter Meeting**

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The Interim Chairman (the same individual who presided over the two Organizational meetings) calls the Charter Meeting to order.
2. **ELIGIBILITY:** People eligible to participate are the members who joined during the recess.
3. **REGISTER:** Attendance sign-in - eligibility for participation is limited to people who are current Sustaining members of the national LP, and/or current members of the state party. I have used this sign-in sheet with great success:  
  

[snipurl.com/MeetingLog](http://snipurl.com/MeetingLog)
4. **CREDENTIALS:** The meeting Secretary should report to the meeting how many are in attendance and eligible to participate.
5. **BUSINESS:**
  - Elect permanent officers, according to the details your bylaws outline. These can be an "Executive Committee" or "Officers".
  - Consider endorsement of any announced candidates for public office.
  - Other business
6. **Adjourn**

## **Following-Up After The Charter Meeting**

1. Send to the state Libertarian Party your local committee's documentation. This should include:

- Petition of ten or more members who live in the coverage area specified in your adopted bylaws. At least one individual should reside in each jurisdiction.
- A signed copy of your bylaws, as adopted.
- A list of your officers FULL contact information, to include name, postal mailing address, and email and phone(s).
- A list of the people registered as in attendance at the charter meeting.
- A list of the full membership, including names, addresses, email(s), phones. We can also use Facebook page, website, and other contact methods.

When we receive the above, your Chapter is ready to fly!

## **Quarterly and Annual Follow-Up**

**KEEP IN TOUCH WITH YOUR MEMBERS:** Once your group is established, make sure you make regular contact with your local members. Check out the links provided below in this document for hints on growing a vibrant, successful group.

**STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR STATE LP:** Don't forget to stay in constant touch with your state party, and **SHARE YOUR LOCAL CONTACT DATABASE!**

**IT AIN'T ABOUT YOU:** It is important to remember that the Libertarian Party is bigger than you. It is bigger than anyone's personal ego. In short, it's NOT about YOU. It's about building a large enough Libertarian Party that eventually the old major parties are eating our dust. And the only way to build a larger LP at all levels is if data is shared both upstream and downstream.

**SHARE YOUR DATA:** When local LP activities generate new leads, those new leads belong to THE Libertarian Party, not "the local party". They belong to the ENTIRE Libertarian Party.

**INFORMATION MUST GO TWO WAYS:** So don't be provincial. If you refuse to share the local party's contact database with the national & state LP, then information flow will shut off to your local LP.

We have had local affiliates with officers who claim that they cannot share their members' data with the national or state LP's because they were "promised privacy", or that their data "wouldn't be shared".

It's a nice theory.

But in all the time I have been running local LP's and as many people as I have added to the LP database, and as many members (new and renewing) as I have signed up, I have some expertise in this area, and frankly my experience tells me that's just a lame excuse.

Bottom line:

## **IT ISN'T YOUR DATA.**

**It belongs to the Libertarian Party as a whole.**

**If you have a local contact database, SHARE IT with your state & national party!**

**In Virginia, if you share your local database with the state LP at least quarterly, you will receive quarterly updates from the state LP in return.**

If you find a new contact, add that person to the LP database by entering their data at:

<http://www.LP.org/request-info>

## **The Value of Belonging**

There is much value in your state and national Libertarian Party affiliation. Local Libertarian committees receive:

- ✓ Contacts to Libertarian leaders across Virginia – people who are well versed in libertarian philosophy and action.
- ✓ A seat on the Affiliate Parties Committee that supports development of local parties in every city, county, and town.
- ✓ Access to your area's mailing list from the state and National databases.
- ✓ Financial support for local affiliate projects such as outreach booths, local candidates, and other activities.
- ✓ Libertarians all over the state help every other Libertarian in the state when we complete ballot drives for statewide candidates -- giving YOUR local members people to vote for.

**Good luck!**

**But above all: DON'T RELY ON EMAIL!**

**(unless that's the only method of contact they provided!)**

## Part 2: Once they're at your Meeting...

1. **At your meetings, have a small selection of LP lit available on your table.** Maybe five issue flyers, a copy of David Bergland's "*Libertarianism In One Lesson*", a bumper sticker or two, and some quiz cards. I usually say "these are free but donations to help me re-stock are always welcome. Please hand them to a friend when you're done with them."
2. **Always, always, always circulate a "guest register" sheet on a clipboard.** *Use the sign-in sheet I have used for years with nearly 100% success. It is available here:*  
  
[snipurl.com/GuestRegister](http://snipurl.com/GuestRegister)
3. When you get home, put that sheet in the mail to the state database manager! He or she will look for new phones, emails, postal addresses, and other useful information, and will see to it that this updated information makes it back to you within your next list update. PLEASE do not forget to do this! Information flow MUST be two-way, or you will build very little in the way of a permanent organization.
4. Send first-time attendees a short note thanking them for attending and mention how pleased you were to meet them. Try to remember snippets of any discussions you had with them, and follow-up with those snippets. For example, at one meeting, a fellow asked about the Libertarian Party's election history in Virginia. I promised to send him a printout reviewing our past campaigns. I printed the page from our website and folded it up into the thank-you note.
5. **Diligently maintain your contact list of members, former members, and prospects.** Try to also record information pertinent to local organizing, skills, campaigning, etc. Keep in mind this data belongs to the LP and therefore you should periodically send copies to your state party.

6. **Activity begets activity.** Recruit new members, recruit candidates for office. Encourage all of your local contacts to volunteer for local, state and national candidates as well as for local party-building activities.
7. **Attend LP congressional district committee meetings; attend State Committee meetings.**
8. **Provide brief reports on your group's activities** to the Affiliate Parties Chairman or the state committee; and be sure to cc your congressional district or regional chairman.
9. **We're a political party -- so commit political acts!** Attend local government meetings, and invite everyone else on your LP list to join you at the meeting. Don't be afraid to speak!

## Part 3: Constant Outreach

Tips from Richard Rider, California LP

1. Letters to the editor -- maybe the most important tactic we can use. I have a media packet available to those interested in learning more about this invaluable tool. Best bang for the buck, particularly with a computer fax setup to broadcast letters (see below).
2. Do all taxpayer ballot arguments, and stay active in both local and state initiatives and propositions.
3. Make talk show calls. Many local radio shows that allow political discussion often go begging for callers. Write up a few talking points so you have some idea of what you want to say once you're on the air.
4. Consider organizing a public access TV show produced by local LP.
5. Establish a speakers bureau for schools & civic groups.
6. Submit oral or written testimony in public comment periods before county/city/town councils.

7. Fax & email broadcast system to deluge media and politicians with Libertarian propaganda, letters, newspaper articles, libertarian publication articles, etc.

8. Establish a regular local LP newsletter; send it to all current, former, and prospective Libertarians, media and potential allies.

9. Work with other groups on allied issues (GOA, taxpayer groups, etc.)

10. Maintain a manned phone line with quick response to info requests. Getting it in the mail that same day is MOST impressive to new inquiries; and helps them decide to join right away. The longer you take to respond, the more you promote the impression that you don't care about them. A phone line is great also for soundbite queries from media.

11. Local email list participation / email network.

12. Mailings, mostly to lapsed members & registered Libertarians who are not yet members.

13. Arrange with your local library to set up a batch of Libertarian books in the library and make sure they are cross-referenced under "libertarian". Check out books occasionally so that they will not pull books off the shelves for non-use.

14. Provide information on variety of subjects from Libertarian viewpoint by keeping available a file cabinet full of references organized by subject. Especially helpful on the drug issue. Allow researchers to come to office and make copies of needed source material (for a copying charge). Or bookmark a good libertarian link library, such as Stephan Kinsella's:

<http://libertarianguide.wikispaces.com/>

15. Contact friendly letter-to-editor writers and send them info while offering to help them distribute their letters via our fax system.

16. Run candidates for partisan offices to educate the public and offer an alternative. Fill as many races as possible. Big bucks campaigns not cost effective. We occasionally pull a candidate to help an exceptionally good con-

tender from an older party (normally Republican). As soon as you have a "hot prospect" to run for office, have him fill out the LP's "statement of interest" candidate page:

<http://Campaign.LPVA.com/>

17. Sponsor an April 15 post office tax protest.

18. County fair outreach booth with political survey board and questionnaires.

19. Monthly supper club with guest speakers. Try to get coverage of event in local media, or at least an announcement.

20. Monthly LP nature hike.

21. Get prominent members appointed to city and county boards, influencing the boards' decisions and legitimizing the LP.

## Part 4: Resources

Here are a few more resources:

### Additional Copies of this guide:

### Success 99 Helpful Hints:

<http://www.lpva.com/Archives/Tips/s99/first.html>

<http://lpva.com/Archives/Tips/s99/ten.html>

### Building membership:

<http://lpva.com/Archives/Tips/LP-RESOURCES-ActivistToolKit-MontoniMarc-NewInquiryLiason.pdf>

### Speaking at Board of Supervisors meetings:

<http://lpva.com/Archives/Tips/BoSMeetings.php>

### Don't rely on email:

<http://snipurl.com/DontRelyOnEmail>

### Local Organizing manuals:

[http://lppa.org/documents/org\\_man.pdf](http://lppa.org/documents/org_man.pdf)

[www.LibertarianTrainingCenter.com](http://www.LibertarianTrainingCenter.com)

(several training manuals from Indiana LP)

**Black Book of Politics:**

<http://lpmndc.org/images/PDF/IPDI-CRMreport-final.pdf>

*Marc Montoni, a Libertarian from Richmond VA, has served as the Membership Chairman for the Libertarian Party of Virginia for many years; and in that position has personally recruited roughly 800 members through 2014.*

*See his blog at: <http://FreeVirginia.blogspot.com>*