

# LIBERTARIAN LIFELINE



## How Does the Media Monitor Itself?



Soon after sunrise on April 19, 1993, the world watched in horror as a church burned in Texas, incinerating as many as 76 people inside. Outside, agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ordered their tanks to mop up the debris as it continued to burn out of control. No firetrucks, ambulances or rescue vehicles were anywhere near the disaster to render aid or assistance, nor were any such services requested by the authorities in charge of the bonfire. Not even the Texas Rangers were given access to the site, which was legally within their jurisdiction. While the event was covered by all the major television news organizations, none of their cameras were allowed to approach the scene, and all of their footage had to be captured with telephoto lenses from almost a mile away.

Many journalists were frustrated and angered by their inability to fully cover the story due to the FBI/BATF's illogical restrictions on their access to the event, but only a few were sufficiently angry to follow the story long after the smoke had cleared, the "criminals" were tried, the congressional hearings adjourned, and key players were exonerated.

Dan Gifford of CNN and his wife, Amy Sommer-Gifford, of *A Current Affair*, were two such journalists. While they originally intended to make a one-hour television news documentary on the tragedy, the more research they conducted, more people they interviewed, the more previously unseen videotape they collected, and the more lies they uncovered, the more convinced they became that they had to tell the whole story, and the only way to do so would be to expand the project

into a comprehensive feature film. The end result of their exhaustive work is *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*, a chilling investigation of an American

tragedy that may well be the last word on the subject.

The siege at Waco happened because the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms wanted a big media event the week before their congressional budget hearings. With their future funding in doubt, they needed to stage a spectacular event to demonstrate their worth to the new administration in Washington and particularly their new boss, Lloyd Bentsen. They even tipped off the media about the Waco raid to make sure they had camera crews on-site to capture all the excitement. The actual raid was spectacular all right, but a bloody fiasco.

The ATF opened fire first and Branch Davidians on the phone with a 911 operator tried for 30 minutes to reach the ATF to plead with them to cease fire. Within weeks of the disastrous assault and ensuing standoff, the ATF were replaced by the FBI, who proved no better at resolving the situation, and clearly were only making things worse. Fifty-one days later, the situation had deteriorated to the point where FBI supervisors were becoming concerned that the citizens of Waco were almost ready to attack them to get them to leave.

It may sound like right-wing militia propaganda, but the documentary makes an effective case that it might be closer to the truth than the version fed to us by the rest of the major media. *Waco: The Rules of Engagement* is not an easy film to watch, and viewers should be cautioned that some scenes may invoke revulsion, anger, grief or tears. After watching this powerful film, one can't help but feel that this story bears more resemblance to Wounded Knee and Kent State than Jonestown or Heaven's Gate. □

Please be sure to call the Libertarian Party at (510) 531-0760 to reserve your seat for the special screening of *Waco: The Rules of Engagement* on April 2, 1998 at 7:00 p.m. at the Grand Lake Theater, located at the corner of Grand Avenue and MacArthur in Oakland. While admission is free, seating is limited, so only ticketholders will be admitted. Donations will also be gladly accepted to help us cover the cost of this event.

# Taxing Cyberspace?

While a conference of state governors voted overwhelmingly last month to endorse imposing state sales taxes on internet commerce, President Clinton, in a surprising moment of intellectual clarity, urged a federal moratorium on taxing cyberspace to preserve its unprecedented economic freedom and prevent stagnating its remarkable growth potential.

"There should be no special breaks for the internet," said the President, "but we can't allow unfair taxation to weigh it down and stunt the development of the most promising new economic opportunity in decades."

Politicians at the state level are frustrated by their inability to collect sales taxes on electronic transactions that take place beyond the physical borders of their territories, and are salivating at the prospect of getting their hands on this lucrative new source of revenue. Typical of bureaucrats, they've already come up with plenty of new ways to spend the money before they've even figured out how much they can steal or how to go about collecting it.

The technology of "E-Commerce" is still in its infancy, but the potential for entrepreneurship in the internet is staggering. Many experts are predicting that the internet will be to the 21st century economy what the Gold Rush was to the 19th, but modern bureaucrats are having a very difficult time dealing with the concept of unfettered, unregulated capitalism. Like the old west frontier, the new electronic frontier is wild, unpredictable, and fraught with risk. For every successful internet startup, there are a dozen or more spectacularly brilliant failures. It has always been this way with free markets and the internet of the 1990s is not so very different from Silicon Valley of the 1980s. Remember Eagle Computers? Kaypro? Morrow? The Commodore Amiga? The Atari ST? Competition, creativity and innovation made these companies remarkably successful in the short term, but complacency and an inability to evolve their superior technologies doomed them to commercial extinction. Their failures were only exacerbated by local politicians who desperately wanted a piece of the action.

Today's most successful computer manufacturers are not using such traditional sales channels as Sears, Circuit City, Radio Shack, or CompUSA, but the internet itself to sell their products. Dell Computers, Micron, and Gateway 2000 are all mail-order companies located in states with low or non-existent sales taxes. Their prices are not significantly lower than those of local retailers in California, but because of lower taxes in Idaho and Texas, it is almost always less expensive to buy from these companies and pay the shipping costs than to buy locally and pay the higher taxes. Now even mighty Compaq, based in Houston, Texas, has begun selling computers directly to the public from their website. Struggling Apple Computers began this practice late last year, and is now moving more than a million dollars worth of Macintosh merchandise a week from [www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com).

Clearly, tax relief is one of the primary economic incentives for moving business to the internet. If the governors succeed in burdening cyberspace with oppressive taxes, the promise of the next century could shrivel and die as quickly as it blossomed. Only two of the fifty members of the National Governors Association voted against the internet tax resolution, and fortunately, one of them was our own Governor Pete Wilson. There may be some hope for the man yet. ■

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**News & Events deadline:** 15<sup>th</sup> 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: [TLFLOYD@IBM.NET](mailto:TLFLOYD@IBM.NET) For subscription info, see page 7.

# From the Chair

by Jeffrey Sommer

I've been encouraged by the response to LP projects in February. Despite the fact that the 16th District Libertarians are going to start meeting in a new place, we have never had more willingness to volunteer. My compliments to Walter Springer, who is taking his job as District Organizer with professional seriousness, and activist Lisa Ringer, who is keeping an eye on the Oakland City Council for us.

Also, requests for seats at our showing of *Waco: The Rules of Engagement* are growing rapidly. The enthusiasm of local Libertarians is contagious.

Our project for an advertisement for KOME-FM proceeds also. We thank Mr. Dick Rieman of Top Dog in Berkeley for his generous contribution. But we still need more money. Please give what you can.

We will be meeting at Ricky's Sports Lounge on St. Patrick's Day (March 17) for our Regional get together. There will be more to report then. See you all there!

**Dear Sirs:**

In reply to your request to send a check, I wish to inform you that the present conditions of my bank account makes it almost impossible. My shattered financial condition is due to: Federal law, State laws, County laws, City laws, Corporation laws, Liquor laws, Mother-in-laws, Brother-in-laws, Sister-in-laws, and outlaws.

Through these laws, I am compelled to pay a business tax, amusement tax, road tax, sales tax, county tax, city tax, school tax, gas tax, tobacco tax, property tax, excise tax and income tax. I am required to get a business license, car license, operator's license and truck license, not to mention marriage license and dog license.

I am also required to contribute to every society and organization which the genius of man is capable of organizing. Also every hospital and charitably institution, the Salvation Army, United Fund, Red Cross, Blue Cross, White Cross, Purple Cross, and Double Cross; Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YWCA, YMCA, as well as stations for Wayward Girls, Boys Town, and Boys Ranch.

For my safety, I am required to carry health insurance, life insurance, fire insurance, car insurance, house insurance, burglary insurance, liability insurance, earthquake insurance, storm insurance and old age insurance.

MY business is so governed that it is no easy matter to find out who owns it. I am inspected, expected, suspected, dejected, examined, re-examined, informed, requested, summoned, fined, commanded, and compelled, until I provide an inexhaustible supply of money to every known need or hope of the human race.

Simply because I refuse to donate to something or other, I am boycotted, talked about, lied about, held up, run down, and robbed until I am almost ruined. I can tell you honestly, that except for a miracle that happened, I could not enclose this check. The wolf that comes to my door nowadays just had pups in my kitchen.

I sold them. Here is the money.

Sincerely yours, John Q. Public

# Anarchists Anomalous

by Sam Aurelius Milam III

There's a growing feeling among many people in this country that a revolution is coming, that a revolution is the only way to save our liberties and our way of life. I agree; however, there are different kinds of revolutions.

Many years ago, sometime in the early 70's, I participated in the creation of something that we called Anarchists Anomalous. Our slogan was "Dedicated to the Peaceful Overthrow of Government." The slogan embodied certain subtleties. First, the word "government" was used in its generic sense. We weren't out to overthrow a particular government, but to overthrow *government* as a way of doing things. Those are two very different objectives. To overthrow *a* government will result in the creation of another government. To overthrow "government" means the *end of government*. It can be done in only one way—people must learn to solve their own problems and stop relying on government *in loco parentis*. The other subtlety was that the overthrow would be peaceful. This is significant because a violent revolution will require some sort of structured organization, with people in command; however, a peaceful revolution doesn't require any central organization at all. It consists of people acting as individuals, en masse.

I don't oppose violence in principle. In fact, I advocate violence when it's appropriate. I believe that we should all be armed, prepared, and willing to defend ourselves against SWAT teams and other thugs; however, I believe that organized violence, as a long-term political strategy, will probably not accomplish our objectives. I'm suggesting that people first try to abandon government, rather than revolt against a particular government. Of course, the government will harass us every step of the way. The best defense against that is probably good camouflage. To confront the government will probably only make it stronger, and should be avoided if possible. The best way to oppose government is by not opposing it. We must find ways to evade it and avoid it. If enough of us do that, government and the government will become irrelevant.

Abandonment probably isn't as glamorous as waving our arms and rattling our sabers, and it means that we must all grow up and act like adults. However, I believe it's the best way to do the job. If it doesn't work, and the government continues to enslave us, then we can resort to the last resort—armed revolt. □

The above article originally appeared in *The Frontiersman*, available from [Frontiersman@ida.net](mailto:Frontiersman@ida.net) or 479 E 700 N, Firth, Idaho, 83236



# Energy Independence

by Katherine McKay

In California we now have choice in electricity suppliers. Deregulation of our energy services is a step forward, and will lead to competition among providers with eventual lower costs and increased service to customers. But how would you like to be completely independent of the large networks for your electricity? or even sell power to them? Advances in photovoltaic, water, wind and microturbine technology make this feasible for almost everyone.

One of the long-lasting benefits of the space program to civilian life has been the development of electricity-generating solar panels, also called photovoltaics. As they have no moving parts and are heavily guarded against damage by weather, it is not known how long their lifespan actually is, but the early panels developed three decades ago are still working, and several panel manufacturers warrant their products for ten to 25 years (unheard of for any other product). In other words, any panels you buy may last for several decades, though the other elements in a home electrical system will have to be replaced sooner. I will go into more detail about solar electrical systems below.

There are now tiny water turbines which will generate small amounts of electricity from a stream of water with even a slight downward flow. Since this electricity is produced 24 hours a day and is collected in a storage battery, it adds up. The cost of such a system is about one-tenth that of a photovoltaic system. Anyone with a streamlet on their property (such as a vacation home) should look into this possibility.

Wind generation of electricity is fairly well known, as wind generators have provided power to pump water out of wells in rural areas for many decades, and arrays of the new style of generators may be seen at Altamont Pass and other stations. Since the generators are noisy and vibrate a lot, they are unsuitable for use near houses, but people in windy rural areas can install them some distance from the house and conduct the electricity to the house by wires.

The newest technology for generating electricity for small-scale use is microturbines, which will be introduced this year or next by Allied Signal Aerospace and Elliott Energy Systems and Capstone Turbine Corporation. Other firms, including Mitsubishi, Nissan, Volvo and a division of Ingersoll-Rand, are planning to introduce the microturbines within a few years. These machines are quiet and low-cost, running on a variety of fuels, such as natural gas, diesel, gasoline or alcohol. Although they may be used first in small businesses, household use is expected to follow, according to industry experts. At present the price for a microturbine starts at \$15,000, but as competition spurs innovation and efficiency, the price is expected to drop.

Several other non-electric solar appliances exist. Solar water heaters, which heat water in metal tubing on the roof and then run it down into the house's plumbing system, can be seen on many city roofs. Solar water distillers concentrate the sun's rays to evaporate salty or brackish water (or city water) and then condense the vapor on a slanted glass panel; the water runs down the glass and is caught in a reservoir. Solar cookers concentrate the sun's rays by aluminum wings reflecting into a glass-covered black box to bring the internal temperature of the box to as high as 400 degrees for cooking. All of these can be bought, or can be made by anyone handy with tools and ingenuity. Though I have no experience with the first two items, I have made a well-functioning collapsible solar cooker out of nesting cardboard boxes, a pane of glass and detachable aluminum wings as collectors.

Wind and water generators work only for people in rural areas who have certain resources, but solar applications will work for practically everyone with a roof, except those living in extreme fog belts. They can be used for both houses and recreational vehicles. As a professional artist, I spend one to two months each winter living in my van in the southern California deserts, where I work on my landscape drawings and paintings, and shorter periods in the summer camping in coastal and mountain areas. When I first started using solar panels in 1991, mounting them on the roof of the van, I never saw any other vehicles with the panels; now I see some occasionally. For eight years the panels have provided me with 12-volt DC electricity for a lamp, a small refrigerator and a bedwarmer. This year I have upgraded my system to include an inverter,

which supplies me with 120-volt AC (household) current. I now run my CD player, pencil sharpener and laptop computer off the inverter, in addition to being able to plug in my usual 12-volt DC appliances as well. In fact, this very article and two others have all been written on the computer out in the middle of the desert with no power lines for many mountainous miles.

The photoelectric effect was discovered in the 19th Century, but was first explained by Albert Einstein in 1905. Photons, packets of sunlight, provide the energy needed to kick electrons free from the surface of some metals. On a solar panel, the freed electrons travel in a stream down a wire to power an appliance or charge a battery. They then return through another wire to begin the process again.

Solar panels have gone down in price per watt over the years and have become affordable, if not cheap. When you consider that their lifespan may be 50 years or more, they are cost-effective in the long run. Siemens, Hoxan, Kyocera, Solarex, Uni-Solar and several other companies make panels in different sizes to fit different needs. Most panels are encased in an aluminum frame with a weatherproof glass cover, and are used in arrays of two or more wired together. These can generally be bought for \$6-7 per watt (panels of 10-120 watt outputs are available). Thin unframed panels encased in plastic, which are much lighter and usually used for RV or marine applications, run about \$10 per watt. Small flexible panels, used in boats, also exist which are about \$13 per watt. Normal household systems use the cheaper but heavier framed panels. The newest innovation is a shingle strip containing solar cells, 12" by 7 feet long, which nails onto the roof in conjunction with conventional asphalt shingles, which it resembles. It does not require a mounting structure nor does it invite theft, and it costs about \$9 per watt.

There are now electricians who will set up a photovoltaic electrical system for you, or you can learn how to do it yourself. Be aware that, if you are installing the system in your home, it will have to conform to the electrical code. I did all the wiring for my van's electrical system, and I started knowing less than nothing about electricity (i.e., I had misconceptions). Here is the schematic: The solar panels,

mounted either on the roof or on a frame beside the house, are wired together, and the end wires run to a charge controller, a small box which regulates input of electricity to the battery and prevents it from being overcharged. Wires from the charge controller run to the battery bank. These batteries are not car batteries but deep-cycle marine batteries. I have two in my van, sufficient for my needs, but a household system would require more. From my battery bank, wires run to a fuse box with lines going out to power 12-volt DC appliances, and cables run from the batteries to the inverter, which has two plugs for AC appliances. A voltmeter wired to the batteries tells me how much energy I have left in them. A household electrical system would be sequestered from the living area and would use a larger inverter, so that many appliances can be used simultaneously, and regular household wiring would run from the inverter to plugs in the walls. You can link your solar electrical system with lines from the power company, which can be used whenever your panels do not generate enough electricity for your needs. Alternately, if you generate more power than you use, you can sell the excess to the power company through an intertie agreement. For remote systems, a small generator can be used to back up the photovoltaic system in times of fog and rain.

If you don't want to invest in a complete system, you can mount just one or two panels on the roof, hooked up to one battery, to have in case of emergency, and they can power lights and a few other appliances, though not refrigerators or freezers.

The never-ending flow of energy you are used to from the utility company will not be present in your own stand-alone system. Since you will get only as much electricity as weather permits, and this may vary from day to day, you will have to learn to be energy-conscious by using efficient appliances. Tungsten lights, for example, use 75-100 watts, whereas small halogen lights with as much candlepower use only 20 watts. The biggest energy hog in most households is the poorly-designed refrigerator. New highly efficient refrigerators and freezers now exist, some of which run on AC current and some on DC, which use as little as a tenth of the power that conventional refrigerators consume. They are made by Sunfrost, Norcold and Vestfrost. There are also propane

refrigerators, made by Servel and Dometic. Cooking and heating with electricity are not cost-efficient; they take too much electricity to make them feasible in a solar electrical system and are better replaced by gas appliances.

Several retailers carry solar panels and all the accoutrements of a stand-alone power system, as well as 12-volt DC appliances and energy-efficient appliances. The most knowledgeable people in the Bay Area are the ones at Real Goods, in Berkeley, an offshoot of the main retail outlet in Ukiah. Their Solar Living Center in Hopland, which contains many demonstration displays as well as a retail store, is a delight to visit. Battery Specialists in Oakland carries good deep-cycle marine batteries. Many other places selling batteries do not even know what these are and will continually try to sell you car batteries.

A complete household system (solar panels, batteries, accessories) can run you \$5000-9000, depending on how much electricity you want available. A system for frugal households using conservation measures and gas-powered cooking and heating can be had for about \$2000-2500. A small weekender system for a vacation home or RV might cost \$800-1000. You can get a special power supply (no extra battery required) to run a laptop for \$400. There are formulas which will help you analyze your needs to find out how many panels and batteries you require. Real Goods has kits available with all the necessary equipment for each of these systems.

Edison, who developed and patented many direct-current appliances, envisioned local generation of electricity within communities. His vision was overridden by Tesla's alternating-current system, which has the advantage of allowing electricity to be sent over very long distances without diminishing in power (a drawback of direct current). This is how New York City, for example, runs to a great extent off electricity generated from Labrador's enormous water resources. But the time, and technology, is coming when Edison's vision may win out. Radical decentralization allowed by new technology has already altered our world enormously and will eventually extend to the generation of power by

individuals.

In view of the complexity of setting up your own electrical system and the upfront expense involved, why should you do it? Why not just continue to rely on the utility company for your daily needs? For those concerned about pollution of the environment, generating electricity from sun, wind or water has obvious merit. Leaving aside the possibilities of prolonged power outages during natural disasters or from terrorist attacks, many Libertarians have a yen for independence in all its forms. If you have your own household electrical system, you are free from rising rates. Once you have paid for the system, you may not need to pay anything else for electricity for decades, other than replacing batteries occasionally. You can take your system with you if you move - to another city, to a rural hideaway with no power lines, even to that Libertarian retreat on a Caribbean island! If you like to get away on vacations in your RV, or its smaller cousin, the van, you can have many of the conveniences of home with a home-powered electrical system. Lastly, if you are retired, you might decide to convert to the RV permanently. There are whole colonies of retired people who live year-round in RVs and caravan around the country from one national park to another, moving with their friends and taking courses from Elderhostel. (Plenty also travel alone.) Anyone wishing to escape the tyranny of rent and mortgage without sacrificing many of the comforts of a house would do well to investigate this style of living, and having your own electrical system enables you to live where you please instead of being tied to the electrical hookups in RV parks (which charge rent).

If work permits, you might make the move before you turn 65. Work that can be done from home with a computer and telephone can be done from an RV with a laptop and cell phone powered by the sun. And wireless Internet connections are now feasible. Take your own civilization with you! □

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Resources: [Real Goods Sourcebook](#), 1990 edition

Various Real Goods catalogs and newsletters

"Microturbines," [Investor's Business Daily](#), December 15, 1997

[ARCO Solar News](#), June 1981

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# Marin LP News

The Marin LP had a full delegation representing it at the State Convention and scored a success when its Chair Ms. Austin was elected as an At-Large Representative.

Ms. Austin has been one of the primary forces behind the Northern California Regional Conference, which seeks to provide representation to the smaller but numerous regions here in northern California. "It is really an honor to be recognized by so many delegates as being the one for them," said Ms. Austin. "I hope to bring the Libertarian Party into the 21st century as a party of diverse and intelligent people with one goal in mind, freedom from government control. We need to accept each other as we are, a group of hard-working, peace-loving, freedom-loving people, seeking to find our way in this world of restrictive, invasive government-run society. We need to set our weapons down and unite against the common enemy, injustice and indifference."

If you are interested in speaking with Ms. Austin and the other officers, come join them at the General meeting, or stop by the Petaluma Flea Market and make a day of it.

This month the Marin County Libertarian Party is preparing for our first flea market in Petaluma. The Sonoma LP has agreed to share a table with us in Petaluma, weather permitting. Starting Saturday, March 28th we will be at the Petaluma flea market on a monthly basis.

Upcoming events:

Saturday, March 7th at 1 p.m.: Marin LP general meeting, San Rafael Joe's, 931 4th Street, San Rafael  
Saturday, March 28th, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.: table at the Petaluma flea market

Saturday, April 4th at 1 p.m.: Marin LP general meeting, San Rafael Joe's, 931 4th Street, San Rafael  
Saturday, April 25th, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.: table at Petaluma flea market

Contact information: Chair: Tammy Austin,  
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Phone Number: (415) 339-7887

Mailing address: P.O. Box 10671 San Rafael CA  
94912-0671

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(For those joining the LP as a voting member)

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

Signature(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State & ZIP+4 \_\_\_\_\_

(Optional)

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please make checks payable to:  
**Libertarian Party of California**

I would like to join: ☐ Marin County LP ☐ East Bay Region LP

☐ Recorded in database



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS **MARCH**

**Saturday, March 7, 1998, 1:00 p.m. Marin County LP General Meeting.** Help build the Marin LP by attending the monthly General Meeting at the San Rafael Joe's, 931 Fourth Street in San Rafael. For more information, call (415) 339-7887.

**Tuesday, March 17, 1998, 7:30 p.m. East Bay Region Libertarian Party General Meeting.** This month's LP General Meeting will be held once again at Ricky's Sports Lounge and Steakhouse, located at 15028 Hesperian Boulevard in San Leandro, near BayFair Mall. For more information or directions, call the LP Party Line at (510) 531-0760.

**Monday, March 23, 1998, 6:00 p.m. The 70th Annual Academy Awards Presentation.** Enjoy the show and cross your fingers for Dan Gifford and William Gazecki, whose film *Waco: The Rules of Engagement* competes for the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature (the award category for which *Berkeley in the Sixties* lost in 1990).

**Saturday, March 28, 1998. All Day Fundraiser for the Marin LP at the Petaluma Fleamarket.** For more information, call the Marin LP at (415) 339-7887.

**Tuesday, March 31, 1998, 7:00 p.m. Oakland/Berkeley Libertarians** in the 16th Congressional District will meet to discuss regional issues at the Shangri-La Restaurant at 3336 Grand Avenue in Oakland. *Please note that this is a change of location for this meeting from previous months.* If you show up at the Resources for Independent Thinking on Claremont Avenue in Oakland, you will be very lonely. For more information, contact Jeffrey Sommer at (510) 537-3212.

**Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m. UC Berkeley Libertarians** meet in Room 206 of Dwinelle Hall on the campus of the University of California in Berkeley. For more information on the student libertarian group, contact George Lee at (510) 664-2237.

**Sundays, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The Libertarian News Hour on Free Radio Berkeley.** Tune in every week to Free Radio Berkeley, 104.1 FM to hear Jeffrey Sommer celebrate the First Amendment on the Bay Area's premiere pirate radio station. To talk to Jeff on the air, call (510) 594-8082. To learn more about the micropower broadcasting movement, check out <http://www.freeradio.org>.

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