

LSLA News

September 2017 Issue

Thanks to the considerable assistance of LSLA Secretary Kim Ruff, this issue of LSLA News, the newsletter of the Libertarian State Liberty Alliance, is going not only to our members, the State Chairs, but also to a considerable list of other activists. The computer software and the links at the bottom of the cover message should allow you to unsubscribe, if you wish to do so. If that does not work, please contact your LSLA Chair, George Phillies, phillies@4liberty.net.

This issue includes the lead five parts of our extended article on running for local office.

LNC Affiliate Support Committee

The Libertarian Party's National Committee generously gave the LSLA the right to appoint three of our members to the LNC Affiliate Support Committee. Currently one of those members is your national Chair. My slot on the LNC-ASC would better be filled by a current State Chair. **Please speak up if you would be willing to serve on the ASC and help the LNC to support its affiliates.** You can email me at phillies@4liberty.net.

LSLA Officers

Chair—George Phillies
Vice Chair—David Demarest
Treasurer—Bo Brown
Secretary—Kim Ruff
Political Coordinator—Michael Pickens

Members: The members of the LSLA are the Chairs of the state parties, D.C. Party, and other affiliates.

Libertarian Leadership Academy

...candidate support from

LSLA Political Coordinator Michael Pickens

Libertarian Leadership Academy's missions focus is teaching effective campaign strategy to political candidates, support staff, and activists. Hours of exclusive content and weekly webinars help up-and-coming Libertarians tackle the biggest issues we face and how to overcome these issues.

We bring years of proven experience in activism, politics, and marketing to the entire Libertarian community in a compact, interactive format that we can all use to improve our communities, municipalities, and our nation.

The online Libertarian Leadership Academy is a collection of training courses created to cut the learning curve for any Libertarian candidate or advocate looking to win elections.

There are courses on leadership, building a campaign team, fundraising, vision and strategy, and so much more. We also put on weekly live interactive webinars.

By joining the academy you are not only getting all of the training you need to be successful in the political arena, you are also supporting our efforts to recruit, empower, and mobilize thousands of new Libertarians from around the country.

<http://www.libertarianleadership.org/join-the-academy.html>



LIBERTARIAN
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LSLA 2018 National Convention

The 2018 LSLA National Convention will be held in Colorado in conjunction with the Colorado Libertarian Party state convention. The current plan is that they anticipate a one day convention, on a weekend, and we will use the other day of the weekend. Please join us in advancing to Colorado, the birthplace of the Libertarian Party. More details will follow when available.

2018 LSLA Business Meeting

The LSLA has traditionally held its biennial business meeting at the Libertarian Party National Convention. In 2018, that event will be in New Orleans. We have not yet firmed up details on this. Mindful that a fair number of State Chairs are unable to attend the LNC NatCon, one alternative would be to have the meeting, with all voted and elections held by mail ballot after the National Convention is over.

Get Involved In Politics

A series of steps to help persuade your members that they, too, can get involved in politics. (State Chairs will have already seen some of these). These articles were written for Massachusetts. You are welcome to forward them to your members, but you will need to adjust them at some points to correspond to local election laws. I suggest forwarding them one or two steps at a time.

Getting Active in Politics: Your First Step

If you are not in Massachusetts, you may need to adopt the details to your local legal arrangements. For example, in Massachusetts town and city governments are the only level below state government—county government except in a few places has long since been abolished.

Political Organizing, One Step at a Time

Are you a volunteer? Are you willing to invest, if not your blood, at least a bit of your time and energy?

The future will not come overnight.

The good sun will rise, one ray at a time, if we all take steps to bring it above the horizon.

So what should your first step be? Some of you may be a bit ahead of my curve here. I'm starting at the very beginning.

Step one: Get the lay of the land. You will need a small notebook, a pen, and a little time. A camera is no substitute.

Find out where your town or city hall is located. And find out when they are open. If you have no other answer, the Secretary of the Commonwealth's very good web pages may help: www.sec.state.ma.us/election/election/election.htm.

Walk by when they are open. Go inside. You'll have to look around a bit. Your objective here is to find ways you might get involved in your town or city government.

First, you are looking for a list of boards and commissions. There may well be a bulletin board. Otherwise, ask the Town Clerk where to look. Take notes. Find boards and commissions that sound interesting. Write down meeting times and places if available.

Second, drop by the town clerk or board of elections. Ask for a list of elective offices, and the schedule for the next elections. Also, ask if there is a list of vacancies or appointment dates on appointed boards. Saying you are happy to pay for a copy likely makes you more welcome. If you are challenged, you can honestly say you are writing a letter to the editor or a blog post.

Third, take your lists home. Yes, in some places you could have found this information on the web. A web search from home misses the point here. Step Two: Go to a council or board meeting. See what is happening.

Last month, I urged you to find a list of elected and appointed boards in your community. When you do that, you will have a schedule of meetings.

Your next step is to choose a committee you might find interesting, and start appearing as a spectator for the meeting. After all, if you are going to run for office, you should learn what you are in for. Also, you should learn what the board does, and how it goes about doing it.

You do not need to attend every meeting, though making most of them would be a good idea. At some point, you may well be noticed by any reporter covering the meeting, at least for boards likely to be covered by reporters. It is perfectly fair to drop the hint, should they ask you, that you are becoming more involved in politics, and may therefore be considering running for office, or helping a friend to run for office.

At the same time, you should also learn what your board really does. Under modern conditions, an internet search may be of some help.

Remember, you are not absolutely committed as to what you do next. You are looking over the terrain, looking before you leap.

Get Involved in Politics: A Third Step Second Thoughts Are Now

Last episode, we described finding a board or office, or perhaps two of them, that you found interesting. If you are following this path you've done some reading on what the board does, attended a meeting if you could, and tried to learn what they were doing. Now you have to ask: Can you get involved in what you are seeing? Could you be effective if you got involved?

Many appointed boards have terms. If there are no vacancies waiting to be filled, and the next vacancy is well in the future, becoming an appointed member is not a possibility. If you are looking at an elected board, you need to see the election schedule. That's the full schedule, not when election day happens. There is some date at which you have to file papers, can first take out nominating petitions, or whatever, and you need to be prepared well before then.

You also need to ask yourself if you can do reasonably well by being a member of the board you are watching. If most of the topics the board treats are beyond your depth, you might be elected to the board at some future date, but you are at risk of doing a bad job, which is not good for your political future. Remember, though, most boards are composed of regular people not much different from you; if they can do well, you can, too.

Your next step, then is to decide if you have found a

good board, and to find out how you might get onto the board. If either answer is in the negative, you need to stop and try again.

Oh, yes, in some small towns in parts of America, there are lots of minor elective posts, like Cemetery Commissioner. Some of those jobs may be vacant. Alas, it is only in small towns that these posts exist; for many Americans, this alternative route to elective office is not available.

The step you heard this month is more an introspective step than a do-something step. It's better to take this step now, rather than trying to get involved in your local government in a way that will not work, at least for you, and possibly waste months and months of your time.

Step Four to Getting Involved in Politics Know Your State Election Laws.

But first, what you need to know now about running for office in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts has two sorts of offices, partisan and non-partisan. "Partisan" means that each political party can run one candidate, and independents can run. "Non-partisan" means that anyone can run, all under the same rules.

Massachusetts has major political parties and minor political parties. The terms of art--what they are called in the laws--are "political party" and "political designation". Massachusetts currently has three major parties: Democratic, Republican, and Libertarian. All other "parties" are actually "political designations"; for example, the Green-Rainbow and Pirate parties are minor parties, that is, they are political designations.

If you are currently registered as a Democrat, Republican, or Libertarian, and you want to run for partisan office next year as a candidate of a major party, you must run with the party with which you are currently registered. For most readers, if you are registered Democratic, and next year if you want to run as major party candidate, you must run as a Democrat. If you are a member of the major party, and want to run as a candidate of a minor party or as an independent, you still have time to change your party. For example, some readers may want to run as

"Progressive", which you are allowed to do even though it is not currently a political designation, if you change your registration now you can do so.

If you are currently a member of a political designation or are an independent, you still have time to register with a major party or to choose a political designation and register with them.

Now you have to find a path to reaching office. If the office is appointive, you need to find a vacancy or beat out an incumbent. You need to convince the people doing the appointments that you are a good person worthy of reward, as by doing positive things for your community and ingratiating yourself with the people doing the appointments.

For example, if your community has a facebook page, make positive contributions to it. If it lacks a page, start one. A more demanding effort is an electronic newspaper covering community events, notably the board on which you want to sit. If the people doing the appointments are running for office, and no one you agree with more is running against them, work on their campaigns. Your work will advance you toward your position, and not incidentally let you see how real politics is done.

Step Five to Getting Involved in Politics ...Forming a Local Group

You've found a niche in your local government. You've found an office for which you might run. Now you have the next challenge, getting into office. In most of America outside New England, there are a modest number of elective offices and a large number of people who run for them.

There are a series of steps here, namely (i) getting on the ballot, (ii) getting elected, (iii) doing the job well, and (iv) getting re-elected. Some people would add a fifth, namely abolishing your office, but in general that's not even going to be an option let alone a possibility.

To carry out any of those steps, a lot of work needs to be done. For really small-town minor offices, you can do it all yourself, but on a larger scale the work involved moves from considerable to insuperable. What you need is a little help from your friends, friends you have organized in advance and formed

up into a political club that will not only help you run for office, but do the same for all of them who want to run. You need a local organization, a society that will help you do the dog work of running for office: petitioning, fund raising, distributing literature, holding signs at polling places, and all the other tasks demanded of effective political candidates.

You need to be a bit thoughtful here. Our friends are still thin on the ground. If you form a group limited to your town, you may have too few members to keep everything together in an organized manner. You need a group that covers enough area to have enough people that meetings are all attended, but not so large that coming to meetings is a major chore.

So what do you do to organize a meeting? Find a sensible neutral meeting site, a modest restaurant with a back room, a library with meeting hall, in places with pleasant climates a park with covered pavilions. Scout it out, make needed reservations for four or six weeks off, and advertise through libertarian channels. If you have the cash, organize it as a Meetup.Com site which gets you extensive local publicity and a cross-connect to Craigslist.com. If you can reach 100 people, 3 or 5 of them might show up. If you have 20 names on your meetup list, you may pick up two or three of them.

Don't expect a group to start immediately, and don't expect it will be effective immediately. You need a lot of repeat advertising to bring people to meetings, and you need a few test runs before it becomes apparent which members will do good work and which members talk a lot but never deliver. There are lots of possible steps here, but forming a local group is clearly the important next step.

Territorial Organizing

Mindful that residents of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Marianas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are American citizens, we have begun a program to organize Libertarian political activist groups in each of those places. Facebook organizing seemed to be a first step. There is at present a libertarian political discussion group on Puerto Rico that we have tried to contact. Naturally, this effort began just before hurricanes started rolling through the Caribbean, so progress has been delayed.