

LSLA News

LSLA News is the occasional publication of the Libertarian State Leadership Alliance, the Association of Libertarian Chairs. This is the August 2017 issue. LSLA News is sent to all Libertarian Chairs, the LSLA ExComm, and other Libertarian activists.

Political Facilitator Michael Pickens reports:

I have started a course on how to start a local group. I have 4 videos complete. They are up on the Libertarian Leadership Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/LibertarianLeadership/videos/1172841639480115/>

Getting Involved in Politics

The last two episodes “Getting Involved in Politics” were in the last issue of the newsletter.

Get Involved in Politics: A Third Step

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.

Successful politics, summarized from a Speech by George Phillies in Worcester, Massachusetts

This speech was actually given 20 years ago, but most of it are still significant. Some parts refer to state laws that have since been changed,, not to mention political tactics that will work better in other states.

My focus tonight is how we as Libertarians may hope to advance the Libertarian Party here in Massa-

chusetts. I open with a phrasing stolen from one of Massachusetts' great cartoonists, Walt Kelley: 'We have met the Libertarians of Worcester County, and *they* is *us*'. There's no other party group out there waiting to give us our candidates, get their names on the ballot, or run our advertising. There is only us. Whatever happens will happen to the extent that we make it happen.

There are many levels of political activity, all valid, all important. We have fliers and posters. Without confrontation, a libertarian can post a flier in his local coffee house or Veteran's Hall, or leave a few brochures with the free magazines in her local 24-hour store. On a higher level, you can say 'I heard this Harry Browne fellow on television last night, and he had some interesting ideas.' You don't have to say they're right, just that they were interesting. Of course, at the other end, you can run for public office.

Who are we? We are the Libertarian Association, an educational group. Out there, in a sense, is the Libertarian Party, which in 1995 was a legally-recognized political party. In Massachusetts, you become a Libertarian Party member by registering Libertarian -- but see below. You join the WCLA by showing up and contributing your deeds and words to the Libertarian cause.

In the political arena, the objective is to have a political organization that scores Libertarian Election Victories, and that then puts Libertarian Policies into effect.

The means to this end may be summarized as **A-B-C-D-E**:

- **A**ctivists
- **B**allot status
- **C**andidates
- **D**ollars
- **E**nrolled voters

A successful Libertarian movement needs all of these things. The only practical procedure is to go after them at once. **Activists** put people on the ballot, run campaigns, and get us Ballot status. Major-party **Ballot Status** gives the Libertarian Party political advantages as well as disadvantages in Massachu-

setts. Running people for office requires **Candidates** (the people who win elections) and **Dollars** (the basis of electoral victory in America). **Enrolled voters**, people who have registered Libertarian, get us ballot status, and provide the votes to elect Libertarian candidates.

How is it worthwhile to run candidates, if you think you might possibly lose? Remember the 1964 Presidential election. Of course, Goldwater was defeated in November. The conservatives lost that battle. However, conservatives all came out of the woodwork, discovered how many of them there were, and took control of the Republican Party from Maine to Hawaii. The 1964 election won a war for conservative Republicans. Barry Goldwater won 5 of the next 9 Presidential elections for the Conservative Republicans. (Establishment Republicans lost the other four, though it is not clear that Nixon's pardoner could possibly have been elected, regardless of his political inclinations).

What does ballot status mean for us? (My answers here apply equally to any reader, of any political affiliation.) In Massachusetts, there are two ways to get major party status. First, you can persuade 1% of the registered voters to *Register Libertarian*. This requires perhaps 32,000 registered voters. There may presently be 8000 people with "Libertarian" as their party in Massachusetts. Other third parties are far smaller. Second, you can *get 3% of the vote* for a statewide office. That's how the Libertarians got major party status in 1994: Peter Everett got 3% of the vote for Secretary of the Commonwealth. There are a lot of statewide elections, and in 1998 and every four years thereafter all six state offices are on the ballot. In 1998, to get or keep major party status via election, the Libertarian (or Conservative or Reform or whatever) candidate for one of the six statewide offices must get 3% of the vote. Massachusetts usually has excellent voter turnout; figure that one of these two candidates must get 70 or 80 thousand votes to get major party status.

What is Major Party status good for? First, Major Party Status means that the Major Party can run primaries, and elect ward and town committees. Second, Major Party status makes petitioning requirements more difficult.

Why would one want an LP primary? Why waste

our ammunition on each other? Why in the year 2000 would one want, e.g., Harry Browne on the March Presidential Primary ballot in Massachusetts? In Massachusetts, a primary is open to registered members of that party, and is open to Unenrolled voters (what other states call 'independent' voters; someone who is registered to vote but has no party designation). However, whenever an Unenrolled voter votes in a Presidential primary, that person automatically becomes registered as a member of that party. A successful Presidential Primary (and remember that right before the Massachusetts Primary there will be large spending for the New Hampshire media market, much of which is in Boston and Worcester) could create thousands of enrolled voters for the major party, without the major party having to do anything.

Petitioning rules are complicated in Massachusetts. It is harder to put a major party candidate on the ballot than to put a minor party candidate on the ballot. An registered voter may sign a petition to put a minor party ("party designation") candidate on the ballot. Candidates of major parties may not take signatures from members of other major parties. While the Libertarian or Reform or whatever Party has major party status, members of the Republican and Democratic Parties may not sign the Libertarian, Reform,... candidate petitions. To complicate matters, as a result of Massachusetts' interesting party registration laws, in which you can become a party member by voting in a primary without filling out any papers, about half of the electorate is mistaken as to the party of which they are legally a member. People who think they are Republicans are actually Democrats, people who think that they are Libertarians are actually Republicans, and so forth.

If you run, what opposition do you face? Welcome to Massachusetts, home of the one party system. In round numbers, there are 160 State Representatives, 40 State Senators, and 10 Congressmen. In 1996, more than 100 State Representatives and 20 State Senators ran unopposed. Many others faced only minimal opposition, winning 60/40% to 5:1. These 150+ people who won in a landslide include both D and R party members. Only in about 83 districts was there any race at all. The Democrats ended up controlling slightly under 80% of the State Rep seats. Of 10 Congressmen, 3-4 (usually Olver, Frank, and Kennedy) generally run unopposed; in 1996, only

one Massachusetts Congressman had no opponent. Massachusetts thus affords vast opportunities for Libertarian and other third party candidates to run in two-person races.

Of course, every Libertarian candidate will sally forth, confident of victory in the fall election. However, if you look at the other two major parties, a certain pattern emerges: There are two sorts of candidates, serious candidates and line candidates. A line candidate does the petitions, has his or her name on the ballot, and does nothing else. In a two-way race, a line candidate will typically get 10-25% of the vote. In a 3- or 4-way race, a line candidate will get 2% or so of the vote. A serious candidate does the petitions, appears on the ballot, and runs a vigorous campaign. In Massachusetts, a State Rep district might contain 10 or 15 thousand registered voters; with vigor, a State Rep candidate can meet a goodly fraction of them personally. 'Pressing the flesh' has repeatedly won campaigns in Massachusetts.

Now, as an educational group, what principles can we counsel Libertarians and others to follow to advance their party to victory? That is, what rules do people of any political party follow if they want to win? I note three positive and four negative guiding principles: On the positive side:

- Stay focused. Ask yourself how each activity will help you with the uncommitted.
- Remember Outreach. Be Everywhere! The largest disadvantage that third parties have is that most people have never heard of them.
- Time planning. Do what must be done on time and systematically. The world does not wait for us.

On the negative side, avoid:

- Preaching to the Choir. Convincing Libertarians of the soundness of your cause is not productive. (Asking yourself questions before other parties can may be very productive.)
- Narrow Sectarianism. Ban rigid party lines. Some of you may remember the Democratic Party of 1970, in which the core question was not whether you opposed the War, but in which *month* you had first opposed it. Given how the pro-war faction of the party had in 1968 treated the anti-war faction, this divisiveness is under-

standable. However, that sort of divisiveness can be a disaster for a big party and would be a disaster for a smaller third party, too.

- Internal politics. The most vicious political struggles are those for the smallest prize. In some places, a title is created for each probable candidate.
- Bellicose Appearance and Argumentation: Honey, not vinegar, lures voters. In-the-face campaigning, emphasizing issues on which people disagree with you, loses elections. To take an example from a non-Libertarian (broadly speaking) group, consider the recent coverage of citizen militias, with people wandering around in camouflage uniforms. There are reasons why the Army has Class A and dress blue uniforms. The militia people needed to copy that example, and appear before the cameras in Sunday best rather than fatigue gear. They didn't. They looked bad, in ways that they did not need, as a result. A smart group learns from the mistakes of other groups, even groups you disagree with, not just from the mistakes they made themselves. Look at my Senate campaign picture in my web page at <http://www.wpi.edu/~phillies>. I needed to look like a serious advocate of important views, not like a fringe candidate of an unknown group, so my photographer was told "I need to look like my grandfather's banker" and "Add as many years as you can to my age." He did.

In Summary:

We are the Libertarian movement in Worcester. The LP has a variety of issues on which to educate voters. I've pushed: **the LP is the Party of the dynamic center**. The core issues are **Taxes, Privacy, and the Bill of Rights** - the whole Bill of Rights, not just the convenient parts. The whole Bill of Rights is the 2nd Amendment to gun groups, privacy to groups interested in abortion (proChoice and proLife and gay rights groups), non-discrimination to African-Americans suffering under the War on Some Drugs, parental control of education to home schoolers and Evangelicals and Fundamentalists, ...

Politics is about winning elections. Successful politics is **A-B-C- D- E: Activists, Ballot status, Candidates, Dollars, Enrolled voters.**

What you choose to do is up to you.

LSLA ExComm Minutes, July 29, 2017

Other Attendees: None

Call to Order/ Quorum: Quorum achieved.
Called to order at 8:02pm EST.

07/08/2017 and 07/22/2017 Meeting Minutes (KR)
– Minutes approved without revision or objection.

Treasurer's Report (BB) – N/A; Treasurer absent.

Old Business

New Business

Fixing PHP List / Mailer (GP) – Kim Ruff to consult with various LP IT individuals to ascertain if the issues can be repaired and at what cost. Ruff also to review alternative mailing lists / databases as potential backup.

IT Staff / Support (GP) – Discussed in conjunction with issues related to PHP list. Ruff will discuss the idea of making a long-term commitment to assisting the LSLA with colleagues in the LP who work in IT.

LSLA & LPCO Partnership (GP) – Slated tentatively for March 2018. Must select topics / panels.

Internal Growth of LSLA (DD) – Suggested using LSLA as a clearinghouse for ideas, both to support projects done by others, as well as solicit team leaders for our projects. Discussed offering templates for candidate websites. Also discussed acquiring support staff to increase content and reach of Peace Now / End Surveillance State Facebook pages as part of an overall plan to move the Overton Window and bridge the gap between libertarianism and the general public's perception of both our philosophy, specifically, and politics in our country, generally.

Motion to Adjourn (DD) – Motion passes unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:51pm EST.

LSLA ExComm Minutes, July 22, 2017

Call to Order/ Quorum: Quorum was never achieved. Meeting rescheduled for Saturday, July 29th, 2017 at 8pm EST.