

Let Freedom Ring!

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A Letter from Our Founder

[John Brickner founded the Pioneer Valley Libertarian Association.]

Dear Friends and Activists for Liberty:

Many years have passed since my last communication with you. The goals and motivations of my family life have taken priority over my political and activist's lifestyle. However, a recent article in the December 2004 issue of Let Freedom Ring has motivated me to express my thoughts and comments.

George Phillies wrote in the article on State committee Meets: "Carla Howell spoke . . . we have tried local organization and it has not succeeded". I can only ask, who are "we" and how do you measure success? In second half of the '90s I founded, organized, and chaired the Western Massachusetts Libertarian Party (WMALP) because no one else was doing it. Additionally, great Libertarians such as Jeff Chase (then MA State Committee member) and Carl Vassar (then Chair of the Libertarian Party of CT,) were aware of abilities within me I was unaware of and enlightened me. I must also add its continuance both under my leadership and beyond was greatly facilitated by other great Libertarians including but not limited to George Phillies.

This group continues the work of successful local organization today under the name PVLA. If I am not mistaken it is the longest lived regional/local (L)libertarian organization in the state. I have watched the PVLA grow much as I have watched my own children grow. Its continued success beyond my own leadership was determined by a turning point when the membership decided to become more than an official organization of the Libertarian Party of Massachusetts. At the time, I did not support such a decision. I have long since changed my mind and support the PVLA as it stands.

You might ask, how does one create and sustain a successful "local organization" where the efforts of the state Party cannot? Given the above, I may be qualified to answer the question.

It started with a list, generously give to me by the still Membership Secretary of the State Party,

[LNC Meets] (Continued on page 2)

Liberty for Massachusetts

A new pro-liberty political activism group is forming in Massachusetts. *Liberty for Massachusetts* is organized to move Massachusetts in the libertarian political direction by means of legal political activities including supporting local organization, encouraging candidates to run for office, doing other politics via referenda and other means, public and internal outreach, raising money via 527 and PACs, and recruiting members and help them do politics.

Liberty for Massachusetts is open to Massachusetts residents who support moving Massachusetts in the libertarian political direction and want to get involved in doing real, practical, effective politics. The Organizing Committee has already discussed the many opportunities opening up this year, including Cambridge City Council elections, open state legislative seats where there are resignations, and other elections around the Commonwealth. A ma-

[Liberty for Massachusetts] (Continued on page 6)

A Message From the LPMA Membership Secretary

[David Roscoe LPMA (and, until its end, LAMA) Membership Secretary for most of the past two decades]

Hello all.

This is the long-delayed message that I planned to write after the State Committee meeting on 2004/11/09. Because I needed to go to another meeting that night, I needed to go away in the middle of heated discussion of some of my recent actions. The purpose of this message is to explain my actions and my intentions. It is in the following parts:

- * THE HEATED DISCUSSION AT THE COMMITTEE MEETING.
- * FACTIONS IN THE LPMA.
- * WHY I SATISFIED REJECTED MAILING LIST REQUESTS.
- * WHY I CREATED AND PUBLISHED NEW POLICIES OF THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY.
- * THE COMMITTEE'S POWER OVER MAILING LIST DISTRIBUTION.

[A Message from David Roscoe](Continued on page 3)

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(Continued from page 1) [Our Founder Speaks]

Dave Roscoe. I sent out a personal letter to everyone on the list then followed up with personal phone calls. My overall response was about 6% or I got an initial six core individuals to show up for our first meeting. This later expanded over time.

We then got active and did things. Archives will show we spun off the Northampton Libertarian Town Committee, wrote and got published letters to the editor, we passed out literature, obtained signatures to put people into office, spoke at various rallies, appeared on cable access TV, and most importantly we held office. One thing we didn't do was get in the way of the activists or prevent them from **doing** things for the cause. We facilitated the activists every way possible. This concept of facilitating the activists is how Carla Howell, Muni Savyon, and other activists brought Harry Brown to New England

We also lead from the front. When you want to start additional local organizations, you have to start one and facilitate those who would also start one. When you want people to run or hold local office, you must run or hold local office and facilitate those who would do also. The same goes for writing letters to the editor, obtaining signatures, public speaking and everything else you can **do** for the Party. You must lead by example, and assist those who would do the same.

Oh, and don't let me forget you must keep in touch with the needs and desires of your membership. This is how the WMALP became the PVL. Failure to do so will alienate them and soon you will not have an organization. I wonder if failures at these activities could be the problem at the State Committee level?

I feel in my own limited way this answers the how to create and sustain a local organization but what about the success part?

When Carla Howell ran as a Libertarian for State Auditor she garnered (if my memory serves me correctly) some 24% of the vote in the precinct of Wales, MA. The surrounding precincts also produced a significantly higher than state average vote percentages. To my knowledge, this was the highest precinct percentage in the state.

How did Carla do this? Carla did this by having an active regional/local Libertarian organization in the area. She had an activist in the precinct who held multiple local offices, wrote and got published letters to the editor, obtained signatures locally, passed out literature and appeared on local cable TV as a member of the Libertarian Party promoting her candidacy.

[A Message from Our Founder](Continued on page 3)

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George Phillip's books *Stand Up for Liberty!* on the Local Organization Strategy for the Libertarian Party, and *Funding Liberty* on the 1996-2000 Presidential campaign anomalies, are now available in paperback and ebook format. For more information <http://www.3mpub.com/phillies>

Editorial

In 2003, the Committee for Small Government of Carla Howell and Michael Cloud raised \$48,820. During 2004 it raised \$13,882. (Source: http://www.mass.gov/ocpf/homepage_data.htm and through dynamic links to the Committee for Small Government OCPF Filings.) According to the OCPF filings, almost all of that money was paid, as consulting fees, to Carla Howell and Michael Cloud.

In particular, in 2003 the committee gave \$17,950 to Michael Cloud for consulting fees and \$25,000 to Carla Howell for consulting fees. In 2004, the Committee gave \$4000 to Carla Howell for consulting, and \$8500 to Michael Cloud for consulting. That's over \$55,000 to the principals for consulting, out of less than \$63,000 raised.

In 2004, the Libertarian Party of Massachusetts has had major expenses. It published its newsletter. It ran its state convention. And it gave the bulk of its Treasury, \$4750, to the 2002 Senate Campaign, now long since ended, of Michael Cloud.

At the most recent State Committee Meeting, Michael Cloud was elected Vice Chair of the State Party .

Last spring, control of the LPMA State Committee ended in the hands of Carla Howell, Michael Cloud, and a slate of 13 State Committee members. Since then, the State Committee has been a model of inactivity. State Committee support for our Presidential candidate was nonexistent. When the Badnarik State Coordinator, Richard Watras, asked for contact information on Massachusetts Libertarians, he was eventually told that he could do a blind mailing through a bonded mailing house. The State Chair refused to allow him to have actual names and addresses of members, so they could be phoned to see if they would like a lawn sign. At this point, Watras submitted his final report.

In the end, Michael Badnarik received fewer Massachusetts votes for President than Harry Browne had received in 1996 or 2000. The Libertarian Party of Massachusetts has ceased to exist as a major party. The Party State Committee has lost its State recognition. It may be reincarnated as a private group supported by the UMP dole from the Libertarian National Committee.

Many of the Commonwealth's real libertarian activists, the people who are actually doing political work, have concluded that it is time for a new organization. **Liberty for Massachusetts** is that organization. *Liberty for Massachusetts will not compete with the LPMA, because it will do different things than the LPMA does.* LfM will : Recruit and help candidates. Stimulate local organization. Do political acts: demos, petitions, referenda. Establish groups that raise money for politics. Educate the public. Build a real libertarian movement in Massachusetts.

Libertarians around the United States might ask their LNC representatives, given that it must recognize some new group as its affiliate in Massachusetts, whether it should:

(1) **Recognize a group whose prior incarnation did not do politics,** (2) **Recognize a group being formed by actual activists,** or (3) **Wait or see rather than taking action it might later regret.**

(Continued from page 2) [A Message from Our Founder]

Additionally, I dare to say given Carla's great speaking abilities and personal charisma, would she have accepted the invitation to appear personally and done so, she would have won the precinct.

Vote totals, vote percentages, and having Libertarians in office is how you measure our success in politics.

Finally, I personally challenge every member of the State Committee to lead from the front on a local basis. Hold local office, found and organize a local organization, be a local activist and facilitate those who would do the same. Failure to do so will give you what we currently have in a Libertarian Party of Massachusetts. But, to do so just might give us a political party making something happen, making success happen, and putting Libertarians in office.

John C. Brickner,
former Nationally recognized State Chair
former State Committee Member
founding Chair of the WMALP
and possibly Massachusetts's longest Libertarian in office
currently holding the highest office in the Commonwealth

(Continued from page 1) [A Message from David Roscoe]

- * THE COMMITTEE'S OPTIONS WITH REGARD TO THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY.
- * OTHER POLICY PROBLEMS
- * HOW SECRECY AFFECTS BEHAVIOR
- * COINTELPRO POSSIBILITIES.
- * OPEN COMMUNICATION AS A POLICY
- * AVOIDING UNPLEASANTNESS

* THE HEATED DISCUSSION AT THE COMMITTEE MEETING.

During discussion of my Membership Secretary's report at the committee meeting, a committee member made some accusations of me. Those accusations included:

- * that I was unLibertarian;
- * that I violated LPMA members' privacy;
- * that I violated LPMA property rights;
- * that I intended to control distribution of the mailing list;

It was strange, because those accusations were made in anger, an emotional state in which I hadn't recalled seeing him before. After showing him that some of his accusations were false, he seemed genuinely surprised.

Apparently he had not read the page at http://libertarianwiki.org/LPMA_Membership_Secretary that I created that explained my intentions, a page that I had mentioned repeatedly in e-mail to the committee. I wondered what other members had not read that explanation and were similarly misinformed. If you have not read that page, please do so now.

FACTIONS IN THE LPMA.

To save some time later, here I define 2 terms.

There are 2 factions in the LPMA. I will call them Faction-X and Faction-Y. Faction-X is the weaker faction. It has representation on the State Committee, but not a controlling majority. Faction-Y is the stronger faction. It has had a con-

trolling majority on the committee for some time. Faction Y also controls communication channels within the party, such as the newsletter, the party web site server, and the communications through the party e-mail server. Faction-X has been generally the more active faction, at least recently, in spite of its smaller size.

Each faction is generally unhappy with the actions of the other. Each faction has been trying to cause the other faction to change its ways. But they have been using different methods.

Faction-X's has been trying to show that its people and methods do more effective libertarian activism than those of Faction-Y. This includes publicizing what it believes are shortcomings of Faction-Y and some of its people.

Faction-Y's actions have been mostly trying to make it difficult for Faction-X to get things done and to communicate its ideas. These actions include:

- * reducing Faction-X's access to party communication channels, or eliminating them completely;
- * denying Faction-X access to the LPMA mailing list, or making access difficult generally;
- * and recently, proposing changes to the bylaws that would eliminate formal support of ward, town, and city committees.

Unfortunately, maybe in an effort to appear fair, the actions taken by Faction-Y to hurt Faction-X have been hurting the entire LPMA.

WHY I SATISFIED REJECTED MAILING LIST REQUESTS.

First I will explain why I overrode the decision of the Chair and filled the 3 rejected requests for mailing list data.

* I believed that the list distribution policy was being used for purposes other than the benefit of the LPMA, and was actually harming the LPMA.

* I believed that filling the requests rejected by the Chair would not harm the LPMA.

* I knew that I did not want to be Membership Secretary under the old policy, so I wasn't afraid of being fired.

* I wanted to get the committee's attention and show that I was serious about changing policy.

WHY I CREATED AND PUBLISHED NEW POLICIES OF THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY.

I was unhappy with what was happening in the LPMA, both with regard to the work of the Membership Secretary and in general. I wanted policies to change, so I decided to start with the Membership Secretary. I designed new policies and published them at http://libertarianwiki.org/LPMA_Membership_Secretary.

WHY I CHANGED POLICY REGARDING THE MAILING LIST.

Under the old policy, responses to requests for mailing list data were usually slow in coming, and were usually denied for no good reason. The procedure for getting oversight by the State Committee had been slow also, had been difficult to use, and did not change the result.

The new policy that I wrote is titled "LPMA Mailing List Data-

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base Use" and was published at http://libertarianwiki.org/LPMA_Membership_Secretary#LPMA_Mailing_List_Database_Use. The policy streamlines request approval, makes approval the normal action, as it was years ago, and as I believe it should be, for reasons I gave in earlier e-mail. Note that the new policy gives to the State Committee the power to deny or limit requests. I believe that the committee should have this power. But to prevent abuse of this power, I added some conditions.

* The committee must act within one week. This prevents denials by delaying.

* And the committee must act with a roll call vote. This should limit denials to only those requests that deserve to be denied, and the votes for which the members are willing to defend in public.

THE COMMITTEE'S POWER OVER MAILING LIST DISTRIBUTION.

The State Committee has ultimate control of the use of the LPMA mailing list. If one of its officers has the power to decide who gets data from the mailing list, and the committee is not satisfied with those decisions, then the committee can either take away authority from that office or replace the person in that office. This is true whether the power is with the Executive Director, the Chair, the Membership Secretary, or another officer, and whether or not that power is legitimate.

I presently have the power to make those decisions. But it is an illegitimate power, because it was not granted by the committee. I have it because I am Membership Secretary and have physical possession of the mailing list. But the committee can change that at any time.

THE COMMITTEE'S OPTIONS WITH REGARD TO THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY.

As I understand the situation, these are the committee's options: 1. The committee can accept my policy. This is the option that I prefer, because I believe it benefits the LPMA most. But Faction-Y is probably against this because it would benefit Faction-X.

2. The committee can try to convince me to change my policy to something more acceptable to the committee. I am willing to consider changes to my policy, but I doubt that there is any significant change that both I and the committee would accept.

3. The committee can terminate me as LPMA Membership Secretary. This would allow a return to the old list distribution policy, but it would result in questions with embarrassing answers.

4. The committee can try to make things unpleasant for me. This punishes me for doing something that benefited Faction-X, and possibly discourages me into giving up, and maybe causing me to resign as Membership Secretary.

It appears to me that a little of both options 2 and 4 have been chosen so far.

OTHER POLICY PROBLEMS

The old policy for distributing mailing list data is only one of the problems in this party. Over the past several years, party officers have made increasingly bad decisions. I wanted to understand why this was happening, and to reverse it.

HOW SECRECY AFFECTS BEHAVIOR

People generally don't hide the good things that they do. They hide the bad things that they do. If people can hide what they do, then they will probably make more poor decisions. If people can't hide what they do, then they will probably make fewer poor decisions. I know that this is true for me, and I believe that it is true in general. In the past few years, I have witnessed or heard of the following increases in restrictions on LPMA communication:

- * Increased moderation or censoring of e-lists.
- * Virtual or actual shutdown of e-lists.
- * Increased moderation or censoring of calendar postings.
- * Restriction of distribution of mailing list data to willing activists.
- * Exclusion of staff from e-mail distribution lists.
- * Exclusion of staff from [subcommittee meetings].

As these restrictions increased, so did the ability to hide poor decisions. I won't describe any poor decisions here, except to observe that some of them rival the ones made by the huge government bureaucracies that we are trying to dismantle.

COINTELPRO POSSIBILITIES.

The federal government has a long history of trying to neutralize, by various methods, organizations that have significant successes in challenging the establishment. Such operations by the FBI went by the name "COINTELPRO". If COINTELPRO people are involved in the LPMA's present problems, then they must be proud of themselves. By many measures, disruption of the LPMA has been a success.

- * Membership is down and continues to decrease.
- * The organization is in financial difficulty.
- * Member activists fight among themselves instead of

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working toward their stated goals.

Other LP state affiliates and the national party are having similar problems. The recent failure of LPUS to deliver usable mailing list database dumps to their state affiliates for several months is an example.

OPEN COMMUNICATION AS A POLICY

Regardless of who is responsible for the bad things that have been happening in our party, it is clear to me that most of them would not have happened if more people had known what was going on.

I believe that to promote good activism and prevent bad activism, it is best to have unrestricted communication, both between activists, and with the not-so-active organization members that financially support the activists. If there was free and open communication within our party, most of our party's problems would solve themselves.

I have concluded that the best thing that I can do now to benefit it and the libertarian movement, is to work toward maximizing meaningful communication between party members, by any and all methods available.

I want open communication to be official party policy, but it seems that the majority of the committee disagrees. Until the opinion of the committee changes, it will be necessary to use communication channels not controlled by the committee. The wiki page that I published, especially the sections at http://libertarianwiki.org/LPMA_Membership_Secretary#LPMA_Mailing_List_Database_Use and http://libertarianwiki.org/LPMA_Membership_Secretary#Internal_Problem_Resolution identify some communication channels that I intend to use. I intend to go further if necessary. If I can't convince the committee to change its communication policies, then maybe other people, a lot of other people, can. If necessary then I will add my voice to those publicizing the colossally poor decisions that are being made by decision makers in our party.

AVOIDING UNPLEASANTNESS

You might have noticed that I have not been using persons' names and have not been very specific about past poor decisions. This was intentional. I am certain that most of you want to avoid a lot of public unpleasantness. To show that I want the same thing, I have discussed these poor decisions in general terms only. I'd rather not discuss the unpleasant past. I prefer that we concentrate on a more pleasant future. And with your cooperation, we can. Each libertarian activist that has made poor decisions can avoid future unpleasantness by choosing one of the following options.

* If he can change his ways, and do only good things for the libertarian movement in the future, then he can remain a libertarian activist.

* If he can **not** change his ways, then he can stop being a libertarian activist.

It's your move.

I'm done.

...David Roscoe

LPMA Membership Secretary

What Next?

Some of us got on the ballot. I just missed getting on the ballot by a few signatures. Some others I know were discouraged from running by the work of gathering so many signatures. Just about everyone who ran lost. In any case many of us are thinking about what to do next.

Not so at the state committee, they are still paying off those campaigns of yesteryear, much in the way the US government is paying off World War II. Assuming that there are limited resources whatever is presently spent on the past, is not there to be spent on the future. What is even worse, resources such as membership lists are not being shared with other Libertarian campaigns. At the LNP they want a fee for such lists. They must have spent all their money on the junk mail that they sent me.

Those who find fault with the failed ways of the past are deemed to be spreading descent and of not being team players. We have heard that before.

The strategy will probably be repeated. Knapp called them cargo cult libertarians. They think if they collect money and hire professional signature takers, and some TV spots it will help them get elected. Whatever they get their paltry budgets will be as much of a match for the duopoly as the straw model planes of the cargo cult are for modern aircraft. There is always a signature crisis in state wide campaigns.

I did get a couple of people to vote for Badnarik. Despite the spending on advertising they had never heard of Badnarik or the Libertarian Party. Yes it was only a few votes, but they did it because I asked them too. It did not cost anything.

Jehovah's Witnesses are not the riches church. But they are the most visible on the streets. The second most visible are the Mormons. The advertising is mostly in the form of leaflets for their foot soldiers who walk the streets door to door. In my neighborhood they travel in pairs, an English speaker and a Spanish speaker. If they encounter someone who speaks Russian or Vietnamese, they have leaflets in those languages and they will put the address on the list to be visited by someone who speaks that language.

Contrast the results that the above mentioned groups get with those that the Libertarians get with the advertising expenditure. For one thing, their literature is geared toward median and low income groups. Most of the Libertarians of high profile are in the upper income groups who are experts at culminating with themselves. There may be enough people in that group to elect a dog catcher.

Robert Joseph Underwood **PVLA Member**

Candidate quality and support

Don't forget that our broadside of candidates is a key item for our present level of credibility. While this may seem miserable to some it's a lot more than any other third party genuinely has. One of our big problems is how to build upon it properly.

The key is to get the best candidates you can to fill the slots so

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you don't have either paper or candidates, or candidates who turn out to be as good as a name or paper candidate.

If you can't get an active candidate who can actually pull it off, then a paper or name candidate is still better than no candidate.

We need support mechanisms for three different angles, but I have been unable to be the person to set this up, especially as I have never gotten any actual help with it.

We have three types of candidates who serve three completely different roles. Each needs different types of support.

The Top-of-the-ticket candidate sits at the top of the ticket without a snowball's chance in a blast furnace of outright winning, but is the one that will get 90+% of the attention. This candidate needs to be strong, credible, and as visible as possible. Michael Badnarik did a very good job of this and to a lesser extent so did Harry Browne. Don't forget that many people have used the performance of a top of the ticket candidate to rate the size of the party, thus all the garbage that the Green Party was the third largest party (I'd like to see them turn around and call the tattered remnants of the Reform party as the third largest now). In too many cases, how our Top-of-the-ticket candidate fares defines our credibility, as they're too lazy to look or too manipulative to want anyone to see any other details.

Our Broadside candidates are the ones that fill as many spots on the ballot as we can possibly fill, especially for offices with entrenched incumbents who will win anyway barring acts of pre-meditated murder. The first priority of this candidates is simply to get them to show up on the ballot. The second is to get them to appear in candidate listings and surveys presenting the Libertarian message. The more visible we can make these candidates without detracting too many resources from the other types, the more mileage we will get from them. If we skimp on the broadside, our third category of candidate takes a big hit, and we can't afford that.

If possible, our heavily active candidates should fall into this category or the top instead of the broadside: Specific Targeted Races. These are the ones where we have an actual opening to get someone elected to partisan office. It is perhaps the single most important role of the other two types of candidates to elevate the chances of these candidates to win. These candidates must be active, must be willing to serve, must have the energy and resources to pull it off.

...Howard L. Wilson

Gay Marriage

In answer to the Question "is your libertarian organization doing something to help," in reference to evangelical Christian ads against gay marriage:

The Libertarian Party in Massachusetts ran several Candidates for the legislature. Some candidates did not make it though the petitioning process. As far as I know, none would have voted for anything that would have prohibited gay marriage. Given the numbers of people who say they support gay marriage, it should have been pretty easy for a Libertarian to be on the ballot in

every district. This was not the case.

Euphoria over the Goodrich case, and general apathy contributed to the lack of signatures to get some people on the ballot. It also discouraged other would be candidates from running. So since the people who say they want gay marriage did little or nothing for the Libertarian Party at petitioning time, the Libertarian Party is simply not in a position to effect legislation now that they have failed to gain most elective offices.

Maybe we can wish each other luck next election. I would suggest that an ounce of work during the petitioning season is worth more than a pound of tears after the election has been lost almost by default.

...Robert Underwood **PVLA Member**

(Continued from page 1) [Liberty for Massachusetts] jor intent of going good politics is the long range view: the time to be recruiting good candidates for 2006 is now.

Liberty for Massachusetts will have an extensive program of affiliations with local, regional, and topical special-interest groups. It has already offered affiliations to the Cambridge City Libertarian Committee, the Worcester County Libertarian Association, and the Pioneer Valley Libertarian Association. Affiliates are expected to have a significant record of activism, and are allowed to elect their own representatives to the LfM governing body.

Liberty for Massachusetts has at it score the statewide *Mutual Aid Committee*, with 6 officers (Political Facilitator, Operations Facilitator, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Editor, and Chair), and 16 regional representatives to be elected from regions via mail ballot of all members. The core of the organization are the *Working Groups*: Bodies that will do real work on local organization, elections, political action, membership activities, outreach, and fundraising. To ensure that the entire membership can participate in steering the organization's future, the names and mailing addresses of all members are available to all other members. To ensure that the organization can maintain a steady long-term course, motions to merge LfM into other groups need the approval of 7/8 of the entire LfM voting membership. LfM will also offer out-of-state newsletter subscriptions.

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