

San Mateo County

August 2005

# Libertarian



[lpsm.org](http://lpsm.org)

[ca.lp.org](http://ca.lp.org)

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*LPSM (100 members, 1730 registered) is the county's only organized opposition to tax hikes. Since 1990 we've helped stop about \$500M in new taxes  
LP-CA (90K registered) has ~70 office-holders, and contests far more seats than the Greens: 24-11 US House, 12-1 CA Senate, 35-4 CA Assembly  
LP-USA (22K, 235K): most candidates (1800), unique voters (3.3M), presidential ballot access (48 states to 36), elected officials (>300) of all 3<sup>rd</sup> parties*

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## LPSM Defeats School Tax

Libertarians in San Mateo County defeated a parcel tax of \$17 million in the Redwood City School District on May 3, saving each property owner \$425 over five years. Owners of apartments, commercial, or industrial property would have paid even more — up to \$12,500 over the same period.

The parcel tax proponents claimed that the district “has cut its budget in each of the last five years” and would be forced to reduce class sizes if voters didn’t approve a tax increase. In fact, the District employed 150 more teachers than it had classrooms, plus an additional 350 ancillary employees, including 100 clerical and administrative workers, to tend only 17 schools. While financial data for the last two years are not yet final, the District’s budget for the previous three years showed an aggregate increase of 25%. After the election, the district trustees restored the programs which they had threatened to cut - admitting that they had the money in a reserve fund all along. Moreover, in an attempt to paint their estimate of next year’s revenue as a large cut, they inadvertently admitted to much more revenue in 2004-2005 than claimed during their campaign for the parcel tax.

How did we win? With ballot arguments, newspaper interviews, letters to the editor, and e-mail to voters — all of this spearheaded by our Chair, Jack Hickey, and Secretary, Christopher Schmidt (pictured above right). The ballot arguments are at [www.SmartVoter.org/2005/05/03/ca/sm/meas/V/](http://www.SmartVoter.org/2005/05/03/ca/sm/meas/V/).



### Calendar

- Th Sep 15, 2005 Supper Club/ Business Meeting
- Th Oct 15, 2005 Supper Club/ Business Meeting
- Th Nov 17, 2005 Supper Club/ **Nominating Caucus**

**Join us** for food and fun at the Belmont IHOP, 510 El Camino Real, ½ mile N. of Ralston. Agenda:  
6:30pm Discussion & dining (all welcome)  
7:30pm Business (dues-payers only)

## National LP Reduces Dues To Zero

In early August, the Libertarian National Committee voted to set membership dues for the national party at zero, ending the United Membership Program that shared revenue with state parties based on how many dues-paying members they had.

The move to the zero-dues structure will take effect on Jan. 1, 2006 and UMP will begin phase-out on Sept. 30, 2005. New members will receive a welcome package but will not receive a subscription to LP News. Current members whose memberships are set to expire after Jan. 1, 2006 will receive LP News for the remainder of their current subscription. Membership in the LP will still count toward the member's home state delegate allocation at the LP's national conventions.

A party statement said "The shift to a zero-dues structure will essentially move the National Libertarian Party from an organization heavily focused on membership to an organization that is focused on winning elections above all else." The Democrat and Republican parties do not require dues, while the Greens require \$48/yr, or \$24/yr for low-income members..

The move comes after a vote by the LNC in February to raise the annual renewal dues from the current \$25 to \$50 without increasing the revenue-sharing that currently gives LPC about \$5 of that \$25. Prior to 1998, the LP and LPC each required separate dues of \$25/yr. The dues changes were pushed by two groups of reformers who disagree on whether increased funding or increased membership is the best way to magnify the party's impact on practical politics.

## Platform Reform Eyed

Platform reform is also picking up steam. In 2003 the Indiana LP called for a platform overhaul, and in 2004 the LP platform was reorganized to distinguish transitional actions from ideal solutions. Presidential contender Aaron Russo and California Senate candidate Jim Gray questioned the tort-based environmental plank during the 2004 campaign. Platform committee vice chair George Squyres questioned anarchism and the immigration plank in a February *LP News* piece, and has inspired a platform reform group seeking input on the web at ReformTheLP.org. Locally, your editor's 2004 campaign for Congress was partly aimed at getting the LP to fix what he calls five "bugs" in the platform. See [marketliberal.org/FixLP.html](http://marketliberal.org/FixLP.html).

## LPC Convention News Counties Replace Regions

The first of two big bylaws changes at the February LPC convention was to replace numbered local party "regions" with the county parties. (For example, we are now formally LPSM, and not LPC Region 41.) The change was to help ensure compliance with the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, by diminishing the possibility that the state party could be considered responsible for reporting on the campaign finance activities of local LP organizations.

## ExCom Is Now At-Large

The second big bylaws change was a consequence of eliminating regions: the five Executive Committee seats chosen respectively by the five largest regions are now to be chosen at-large, just like the other five seats that aren't reserved for the state party officers. (The five largest regions had been Santa Clara, Orange, and San Diego counties, as well as the East Bay and San Fernando Valley regions.)

## ExCom Divided on Strategy

The ExCom elections highlighted a difference over party strategy between groups that might be called inclusivists and purists. Purists elected to ExCom were Ted Brown, Bruce Dohner, Paul Ireland, Rick Nichol, and Ed Ronquillo. They align with Vice Chairs Mark Selzer and Lawrence Samuels.

Inclusivists elected to ExCom were Bruce Cohen, Kevin Takenaga, M Carling, Mark Whitney, and Richard Newell, who align with Chair Aaron Starr and Secretary Daniel Weiner. Inclusivist Allen Hacker was recently elected by the ExCom to replace Ed Ronquillo, who resigned.

The latest contest between these competing strategic visions is an effort by the purists to have the LPC adopt a resolution reaffirming the LP's total opposition to U.S. involvement in Iraq. The resolution is aimed at Starr, Weiner, and Cohen, who the purists say are the only ExCom members to support the invasion of Iraq. So far, it seems unlikely that this effort will split the inclusivist camp.

Meanwhile, ExCom subcommittees have been busy. The web site has been revamped, a branding committee is up and running, and a team is condensing practical wisdom from LP campaign coordinators across the state into a candidate planning workbook. Even the state headquarters office space has been organized and updated.

## Grand Jury Flip-Flops On Healthcare District

The Sequoia Healthcare District still collects \$5M/yr in taxes, despite having sold in 1996 the Redwood City hospital which the district was created to build and operate in the 1940s. Since then, two civil grand juries, the Palo Alto Daily News, and district board member (and LPSM chair) Jack Hickey have all argued that the board should be dissolved and its funds returned to county taxpayers. Incumbents MacNaughton and Kane cite their re-election as a mandate not to dissolve the District. Hickey disagrees, citing a last-minute contribution of \$20,000 from a Colorado corporation.

In May a new civil grand jury issued a yet another report on the district. It concluded that "the SHD continues to represent and serve the healthcare interests of the District" through its spending programs.

However, the District spends only about \$2.5M per year on health care for the indigent. The rest of its spending is for the benefit of 1) its own staff, 2) nurses, and 3) the hospital it already sold. Of its \$68M in assets, the District has promised \$25M to the seismic retrofit of the hospital – an expense that the grand jury admits "is not the responsibility of the SHD". SHD spending on the divested hospital dwarfs all its other spending.

The grand jury also asserted that even if the district were dissolved, its share of the 1% county property tax would by state law be redistributed to other county agencies and not refunded to taxpayers. However, these agencies would then either require less support from other taxes, or could deliver more useful services than support of a hospital that has already been privatized.

The grand jury report is on the web at [sanmateocourt.org/grandjury/2004](http://sanmateocourt.org/grandjury/2004).

## LP Executive Resigns

LP national executive director Joe Seehusen resigned in July, after the LNC had voted in May to give him a second two-year contract. A possible reason is the LNC temporarily freezing staff raises pending transition to the Raiser's Edge database.

Seehusen restored the national LP to financial solvency and reversed four years of declining membership. He engaged the LP in national policy by having it join a coalition to repeal the estate tax and by issuing an Iraq Exit Strategy white paper. Some purists had quibbled that the IES was not absolutist enough, and the LNC thereafter reinstated a panel to review party communications for platform compliance.