

Meeting Notes Richard Acuff

The first business meeting of 1996's main agenda item was *election of party officers* for the new year. As there was one nomination for each office, the quorum present voted all candidates into office at once. Kate O'Brien is beginning a second year as regional Chair; with Mary Steiner continuing as Vice Chair and Treasurer; while your humble scribe, Rich Acuff, continues to muddle through Secretary duties. Mike Moloney expressed all of our appreciation for Kate's hard work in her first year at the helm.

Our internal elections were followed by the naming of *delegates* for the *Libertarian Party of California's annual Convention* (held over Presidents' Day weekend.) This year Christopher Schmidt and Mike Moloney are the official delegates. They, along with the above mentioned officers (as ex officio delegates), will be able to vote on issues raised during the convention and help shape the future policy and course of the LPC. We have one additional delegate slot open to us which may be filled by alternates (designated as any member of the regional Central Committee-which is to say: any member in good standing from San Mateo County). If you are interested in being a delegate, call Kate O'Brien.

Mike Moloney, showing his enthusiasm for spreading the Libertarian word, proposed the creation of a new position: *Director of Speakers' Bureau*, which he volunteered to fill. Mike believes such a position and title would facilitate getting speaking engagements and filling in on speaking engagements offered to others (such as candidates for public office) who will not be taking advantage of them.

Chris Inama reported that the *East Palo Alto Homeowners Association* has been able to stop a tax grab by their city (at least for now). Seems there was a ballot measure to create a parcel tax that garnered only a little over 50% of the vote. The city went ahead and collected the tax despite the requirement that taxes be approved by 2/3 of the voters. The Association sued to stop the tax, and won. Predictably, and unfortunately, the city is appealing the decision. It seems they've already spent the money... Personally, I think the council members should have to pay it back themselves. That would be a precedent that would get the attention of more than one tax-crazed official!

More good news: a planned *1/2 cent sales tax* increase sought by *San Mateo County* officials has been *withdrawn* because they felt the electorate was 'hostile'. Maybe they're getting the message that most of us feel the county already has plenty of money...

To provide inspiration and food for thought, Mike proposed that we *read and discuss* a portion of the *Constitution* at each meeting. He read the preamble and a lively and entertaining discussion ensued! I expect we'll be back for more. Any Constitutional Scholars out there want to join in?

Our *next meeting* will be *Wednesday February 21*, at Amy Guthrie's office in *Palo Alto* from *7:30pm to 9:00pm*. (See the map on the back page for directions)

March's ballot propositions will probably be discussed. We will likely endorse the recommendations of the state LP (posted at <http://www.lp.org/lp/ca/lpc>) but, after local discussion, we have been known to reach different conclusions. Come join the debate!

Editor's Notes

Because we made our way on to the ballot (Joe Dehn, Jon Matonis, Chris Inama, and I), we have been receiving numerous surveys and requests for position papers. These are a valuable aspect of party-building, as they enable us to reach new audiences (and possibly, newly-identified libertarians!). At the meeting Chris and I talked about some of the mail we've received and how we've responded. I plan to put my responses on a web page later this month. §

...Doesn't it bother anyone in the media that Bill Clinton's "peace plan" for Bosnia is apartheid? They castigated South Africa for decades (I think rightly) for the same system of 'national homelands', but under Bill Clinton's auspices, the only questions seem to be: "Can it work? How much will it cost?" §

In January's newsletter I observed that, of the small parties other than the Libertarian Party, only the Natural Law Party appeared likely to field any candidates in our county. (I had checked with the registrar when only 2 days remained to circulate petitions in lieu of filing fees and only our parties had taken out papers.) It turns out that the Peace and Freedom Party and the Reform Party each were able to put one candidate on the ballot as well.

Statewide, the story is similar: For congress, we have 42 candidates on the ballot (out of a possible 52); Natural Law 34; Peace & Freedom 10; Reform 10; AIP 5; Green 2.

John Taylor Gatto at Foothill College Feb. 11

John Taylor Gatto, author of *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Agenda of Compulsory Education*, Libertarian Party shadow cabinet Secretary of Education, and 1991 New York State Teacher-of-the-Year, will speak at 4pm, Sunday, Feb. 11, at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills. His topic: "What Should Schools Deliver." The talk will be in Forum F-12 at Foothill. Tickets are \$10 at the door or are available from the Peninsula School in Menlo Park.

Posted by Joe Dehn to ba-liberty@shell.portal.com

Arts Commissioner to Speak Scott Lieberman

Kate O'Brien will be the guest speaker at the LP of Santa Clara's February 15 meeting (Thursday). Kate is a member of the Menlo Park Arts Commission, whose members are appointed by the City Council. Ms. O'Brien will tell us how she got selected, what her job is like, and anything else you might like to know about her position.

The meeting will be at Coco's Restaurant, 1209 Oakmead Parkway (at Lawrence Expressway, one block south of 101, in Sunnyvale.). If you want to have dinner or a snack and participate in the pre-meeting discussion, please arrive promptly at 7pm.

Libertarian Richard Rider appointed to CCRC

Libertarian Party Tax Fighter Appointed To California Constitution Revision Commission

On January 31, the Speaker of the California Assembly, Curt Pringle, appointed Richard Rider, 1994 Libertarian Party gubernatorial candidate, to the blue ribbon California Constitution Revision Commission (CCRC). The commission is tasked with reviewing the complex state constitution and recommending major revisions if deemed appropriate.

The twenty-member commission has been meeting since 1993, and it is considering some very controversial revisions such as the abolition of the two-thirds vote requirement for the budget and for new taxes, and the repeal of the Proposition 13 limitations on property taxes. On Monday and Tuesday (February 5-6), crucial meetings of the CCRC were scheduled in Sacramento to discuss issues and possibly adopt final recommendations on a variety of major issues.

Gail Lightfoot, state chair of the Libertarian Party, expressed delight at Rider's appointment. "We Libertarians have been quite concerned with the statist bias of the commission as evidenced by preliminary reports the media has published. Richard Rider is a well known taxpayer activist who will stand firm for constitutional checks and balances so necessary to protect against further encroachments of government into citizens' personal and economic lives. CCRC has needed this position firmly represented on the board."

Rider is perhaps best known for his successful lawsuit against San Diego County that, in a state Supreme Court decision, overturned an illegally imposed \$1.5 billion sales tax. The case, RIDER VS. COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, was rated by California Lawyer magazine as "the blockbuster case of 1992." This landmark case has been used to overturn or prevent billions of dollars of additional illegal taxes throughout the state.

Speaker Pringle picked four new members to replace four appointees of previous assembly speaker Willie Brown. All the new appointees apparently have great concerns regarding the CCRC's stated intent to repeal many of the constitutional checks and balances currently in place.

This shakeup of the board may result in a new direction for the CCRC and a return to the principles of limited government envisioned by our Founding Fathers on the federal level and by the original authors of the California constitution on the state level. Libertarian Richard Rider hopes to lead the way toward a more narrowly defined role for California government.

Rider is aware that he is the only third party representative on the board, but views this as an opportunity rather than a handicap. Rider stated that, "In addition to pursuing my Libertarian desires for less government, I hope to represent the views of all third parties in terms of fair ballot access and representation in government."

Communications Decency Act Guttled C. Schmidt

Readers of this newsletter will recall that last March crusading puritans in the Senate added a noxious rider to the long-overdue Telecommunications Reform Act called the Communications Decency Act. The Decency Act criminalized transmission over telecommunications equipment of anything indecent (left undefined to permit broad interpretation) and made liable everyone involved (senders, receivers, internet service providers, and (initially) telecommunications carriers). Penalties could range up to 2 years in jail and \$100,000.

The House deleted the Senate Decency Act language from the bill and substituted some relatively innocuous language that called for "studying the problem" and deferred regulation for another bill. This radical departure caused the bill to spend many extra months in conference committee (to reconcile House and Senate versions of the bill).

I am happy to report that in the final version of the bill (which I was able to read thanks to the unfettered flow of information on the internet) that the Decency Act has been pretty much gutted. Although the language is that which came out of the Senate, two crucial clauses were added which limit its application to cases of intentional harassment and knowing, intentional transmission to a specific person under the age of 18.

I've seen a number of press releases bemoaning passage and calling it a loss, but I think we who wrote letters of protest to our legislators can congratulate ourselves and count this one a victory. (Admittedly, the prudes helped us immensely by targeting internet service providers and forcing their lobbyists over to our side!) §

Another provision of the telecommunications bill amends the commerce code to add telecommunications equipment to a long list of prohibited conveyances for information about abortion. A contributor to talk.politics.libertarian assures me that this part of the commerce code has long been held unenforceable by the courts, so this addition is pretty much meaningless grandstanding. §

The worst bit of the bill (as passed) is President Clinton's 'V-Chip' for televisions. The drafters clearly knew they were on shaky ground. For example, rather than requiring broadcasters to rate the violence content of their programming, the bill makes it illegal not to volunteer to do so. ('Volunteer' has always had a different meaning in government, hasn't it?!) Another provision denies offenders their right of appeal if they don't do so in a special shortened time frame. Another prohibits transportation across state lines of non-V-Chip equipment that the authors clearly knew they couldn't prohibit directly. Very weaselly; very weak.

Harry Browne 'Just Says No' to Matching Funds

Libertarian presidential candidate Harry Browne has qualified for federal matching funds...but refuses to take them.

"Campaign matching funds are the political equivalent of welfare," Browne said in a statement issued Tuesday. "Republican presidential candidates denounce welfare and subsidies, but every Republican who qualified for matching funds has his hand out for political welfare and campaign subsidies. ... I 'just say no' to this tax-funded subsidy," said Browne.

The Harry Browne for President campaign has raised over \$575,000 to date from more than 4,400 individual donors-drawing from all 50 states.

Qualifying for matching funds takes more than just fund-raising, according to Browne's national campaign director Sharon Ayres. The Federal Election Commission requires a candidate to raise \$5,000 per state in at least 20 states. And that \$5,000 must be comprised of donations of \$250 or less.

"Republicans Steve Forbes, Alan Keyes, and Robert Dornan have failed to qualify for matching funds," she noted, "Forbes because he spent too much of his own money, Keyes and Dornan because they've raised too little."

"We have formally requested a Federal Election Commission (FEC) advisory opinion verifying that Harry is eligible to apply for and receive matching funds even though he won't take them," she said.

Why is Harry Browne asking the FEC to verify that he's qualified for matching funds-when he's refusing to take them?

According to Ayres, it's because "many private and public organizations use matching funds qualification as a criterion for being included in debates or put on presidential primary ballots. For example, last week Delaware changed its law to automatically list on its February primary ballot every candidate qualified for matching funds."

"Even more important," she continued, "is the fact that the Commission on Presidential Debates has specified that qualifying for matching funds will be a criterion for deciding which candidates to include in the October presidential debates."

Harry Browne is a best-selling author whose latest book, *Why Government Doesn't Work* is in bookstores nationwide. It is now in its 3rd printing.

More at <http://www.HarryBrowne96.org/>

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