

November election results

Victories few, but there's bright hope for the future

by Bernie Jackson

November's elections went well for the Libertarian Party of San Mateo County. Our national and state legislative candidates were among the state's top third party contenders. On the ballot propositions, California voters agreed with two-thirds of our recommendations including two of the three landslide results.

Legislative candidates

Mike Moloney, who took on incumbent Tom Lantos in the 12th congressional district, posted the highest vote percentage of California's 65 third-party congressional candidates running against both a Republican and a Democrat. The vast majority of such candidates did not achieve even half of Moloney's nearly 5% return. These results parallel Moloney's success in June's open primaries, where he again was California's top third-party vote getter.

"I knew there'd be a major political upset this year," said Moloney, "but I thought it would be Mike Moloney in California, not Jesse Ventura in Minnesota." In any case, Moloney is satisfied that he accomplished everything possible with the street-corner sign-waving campaign he ran for over 18 months. The good news is that Moloney's unusual strategy certainly caused his chart-topping results; strangers regularly recognized him as he went about his daily business, though he spent under \$3,000 and did not advertise in any way. This indicates that conventional campaigns can increase their returns with some street-corner activity. The bad news is that even a strong grass-roots campaign stirred up only 4.9% of the vote. A wide chasm separates third-party domination from electoral victory. Whether bridging that gap requires gradually building a critical mass or exploiting external events that trigger voter disaffection, we will need many more experiments like Moloney's.

Steve Marsland also performed well for our region, in California's 19th state assembly race against incumbent Lou Papan. Of California's 59 third-party assembly candidates running against both a Republican and a Democrat, Marsland received the ninth highest vote percentage of 3.9%. In June's open primary, his return was second highest.

Marsland tried a different grass-roots strategy. Instead of catching the everyday voter on the street corner, Marsland has been networking with the pillars of his community. He has befriended influential members of the Pacifica Rotary Club, some of whom are now volunteering for his campaign (including his ongoing effort for the year 2000). Marsland reports that he now has over 100 people involved in his campaign, counting donors, families who will host coffees, and other volunteers. He has fine-tuned a speech called "I am a Libertarian," a positive concrete description of libertarian principles, and he has delivered it several times to various audiences.

After Marsland gave his speech to the Pacifica Rotary Club, over half of its members volunteered to post his signs in their yards. So far, Marsland has largely confined his efforts to Pacifica, including walking a test precinct door-to-door. He is hoping to build a strong campaign organization that will allow him to cast a wider net in 2000. A test mailing conceived of by Christopher Schmidt and sent to several carefully-selected precincts will help Marsland formulate plans for direct mail.

Ballot Propositions

California voters agreed with six of the Libertarian Party of San Mateo County (LPSM)'s nine recommendations on November's ballot propositions, two of them by a landslide.

71% of the voters passed Proposition 1 (tax reassessment exemption for cleanup), and 74% rejected Proposition 9 (electric utility bonds), both in accord with LPSM's position. Three propositions went our way in moderately decisive fashion (more than a 10% margin, but less than 2-to-1): Proposition 5 (Indian gaming) passed, Proposition 7 (air quality board) failed, and Proposition 8 (state school mandates) failed. Proposition 3 (presidential primary ballots) also followed our recommendation, failing by a slim 7% margin.

Three of our recommendations lost, but none by a landslide (meaning 2-to-1 or greater). Proposition 1A (school bonds) passed with 63% of the vote, and Proposition 6 (horse meat prohibition) passed with 60%. Proposition 10 (tobacco tax) passed by the skin of its yellow teeth, with 50.6% of the vote.

The LPSM took no position on Propositions 2 (transportation funds), 4 (animal trap ban), and 11 (sales tax revenue sharing), all of which passed. Proposition 4 was especially interesting. The few but populous counties that passed this ban on certain animal traps and poisons were mainly centered around the San Francisco and Los Angeles metro areas, while the more rural counties opposed the measure. It's the ballot initiative process at work: California's animal trap policy has been decided by those citizens farthest removed from animals and traps.

		San Mateo County				Statewide			
		Yes		No		Yes		No	
1A	School Bond Act	130,922	62.3%	61,157	29.1%	4,881,913	56.7%	2,931,516	34.0%

1	Property Taxes	140,489	66.8%	43,243	20.6%	5,359,936	62.2%	2,182,959	25.3%
2	Transportation	140,392	66.8%	35,566	16.9%	5,512,723	64.0%	1,799,959	20.9%
3	Pres. Primary	81,160	38.6%	98,009	46.6%	3,421,026	39.7%	3,988,158	46.3%
4	Animal Trap Ban	111,171	52.9%	79,868	38.0%	4,481,136	52.0%	3,318,602	38.5%
5	Tribal Gaming	123,991	59.0%	76,020	36.2%	5,086,081	59.0%	3,065,080	35.6%
6	Sale of Horsemeat	109,732	52.2%	82,291	39.1%	4,666,146	54.1%	3,189,552	37.0%
7	Air Quality	85,302	40.6%	99,688	47.4%	3,310,986	38.4%	4,276,247	49.6%
8	Class Reduction	67,884	32.3%	125,631	59.7%	2,910,865	33.8%	4,982,599	57.8%
9	Elect Utility	57,309	27.3%	132,036	62.8%	2,061,857	23.9%	5,703,449	66.2%
10	Tobacco Tax	106,270	50.5%	91,493	43.5%	4,038,347	46.9%	3,957,149	45.9%
11	Sales & Use Tax	102,677	48.8%	73,161	34.8%	3,892,586	45.2%	3,403,671	39.5%

County election results and local candidate coverage

by Robert Giedt

Not surprisingly, election returns for San Mateo County virtually mirrored the results statewide--only on Proposition 1A did the county residents actually deviate more than 5.5% from the state on a ballot issue. In other regional action, State Board of Equalization (District 1) candidate Kennita Watson pulled in over 400,000 votes statewide in her bid for that office, but fell short with a 22% share of the total. Jon Peterson also took in over 180,000 votes statewide for Treasurer with a 2.4% share overall.

Some thoughts on our new proposition laws

by Robert Giedt

In the wake of the November elections and the massive "dumb bomb" that landed on California on election Tuesday, I thought I'd throw out a few facts and opinions about the crazy propositions that passed in our Golden State. Note that these aren't official LP opinions, nor are they even official statements from the San Mateo chapter. If you do have any comments, please direct them to me at spaceman@best.com and I'll be happy to discuss them with you.

Building a better debtor's prison

Fifteen point two billion. Doesn't sound like a large number when you see it written out that way, does it? Even the words 15.2 billion don't sound imposing. It's only when you write it out in its unadulterated form of 15,200,000,000 do you really see the magnitude of the figure. That's what the taxpayers of California will have to pay over the next 25 years thanks to Proposition 1A--the school bond measure. Not that anyone bothered to ask the countless numbers of unborn children (and those under voting age) who will be saddled with this bucking bronco of debt far into the next millennium. Californians yet again blindly went to the polls and saw the words "bond measure" and "improve the schools" and gave it their debtor's stamp of approval. Just as another point of reference, consider this next fact; the money Prop 1A will cost over its lifetime is equivalent to nearly four times the gross national product of Jamaica. The number is positively staggering. But there's still time to leave the state before your wallet runs dry! I hear Oregon's nice this time of year

Have horse, will felony

The perfect example of wealthy special interests flooding an election occurred in Proposition 6, the "horsemeat felony" proposition. One woman with more money than she knew what to do with has just driven a non-horse steak (sic) into the hearts of your right to choose. Guess this is the epitome of "money talks, horses--walks." By the way, I'm heading out of state on vacation soon, so if you have any orders you'd like to place...

Haves versus the Have nots

As Libertarians, we tend to decry the all-or-nothing aspect of "winner take all" elections in favor of proportional representation. Now as we all know, California is a very culturally and politically diverse state. What's good for the northern counties in the state may not be in favor for the folks in the south. Nothing could be more evident than in the proposition returns for November. Based on the results, it's a wonder why the northern counties don't break off their section of California and create a 51st state. The answer is quite simple, they wouldn't get enough votes for it.

The rural northern counties of Del Norte, Humboldt, Trinity, Siskiyou, Shasta, Tehama, Glenn, Colusa, Sutter, Yuba, Butte, Sierra, Nevada, Plumas, Lassen and Modoc were almost unanimous in their rejections of certain ballot measures, but were swamped under by the more populous Bay Area and Los Angeles counties. Nearly all these counties were opposed to Prop 1A, Prop 4 (animal trap ban), Prop 6 (horsemeat ban), Prop 10 (tobacco tax), and Prop 11 (sales and use tax)all of which passed. It's a telling statement that this geographic subregion was united in their defeat, despite their small population. Who are we townies anyway to regulate the actions of a completely different culture? The answer is "the majority," and in modern American politics, the majority rules.

November meeting notes

by Christopher Schmidt

The following are some highlights from November's business meeting.

Third party performance in November's Calif. elections

Bernie presented some statistics on the performance of 3rd party candidates in November: 8 of the top 10 assembly candidates were Libertarians (Steve among them), but only 2 of the bottom 10 were (and both of them faced 3 or more opponents). Mike held on to his title of "top performer" among 3rd party candidates for congress. Joe Dehn almost exceeded the median, despite splitting the vote with 3 other contenders.

Marsland campaign organization

Steve talked about the growth of his campaign organization now comprised of about 100 volunteers. Reflecting on the evolution of his "I am a Libertarian" speech, he commented on the importance of presenting one's agenda positively: "If you say ten positive things and one negative, many people will focus on the negative." Others affirmed his observation and we kicked the problem around a little.

Frank A. commented on the value of celebrity status, noting that the press actively seeks political commentary from Barbra Streisand, for example. Subsequent to the meeting I added a link from the LPSM home page to the *Advocates for Self-Government's* libertarian celebrities web page.

1999 meeting location and future agendas

We discussed meeting locations for the coming year and decided to try out *Chef Peking* in Redwood City, starting with our Annual Meeting in January (at which officers for the coming year will be elected). We're considering a more structured topical roundtable (dining optional) in the hour before the business meeting.

Candidate selection procedure for elections

We briefly discussed our candidate selection procedure, looking forward to the 2000 campaigns and how we can get a jump on them.

Amendment proposed to operating bylaws

I proposed an amendment to our bylaws that would permit the executive committee to transact business by telephone, fax, and electronic mail between regular meetings, providing that all executive committee members are in the loop. The amendment will be voted on at the December meeting.

Libertarian Toastmasters?

J.R.P. said he thought it might be time for a Libertarian Toastmasters in our area. He'll present a formal proposal at a future meeting.