

Tow away the Automobile Tax!

Join the effort to reform and eliminate Vehicle License Fees
by Steve Marsland

San Mateo Libertarians have joined in the state-wide effort to collect signatures to first restructure and then eliminate vehicle license fees. Sponsored by Republican Assemblyman Tom McClintock (the most libertarian of the Republicans in the California Assembly), the [measure](#) calls for a number of reforms:

- Fees would be paid only on the portion of the vehicle's cost that exceeds \$10,000.
- Requires further reduction and eventual elimination of the fees if state general fund revenues are estimated to increase as specified.
- Beginning in 2000, requires the amount equal to the amount of vehicle license fees that would have been collected under the January 1, 1999 law be deposited in the Retail Sales Tax Fund, for distribution to cities and counties.
- Authorizes class actions and suits to invalidate illegal taxes.

Basically this measure first makes the license fee more progressive (on higher-value vehicles only), then eliminates it while forcing the state to return funds to counties and cities which the state "took" earlier to meet its budget deficit. Cities and counties should then have the funds to decide their own futures, without constantly begging for handouts from the state government.

"This initiative is proving very popular with people--it is easy to get signatures," explained Steve Marsland, county party chair. "Right now party volunteers and officers are circulating to friends and neighbors. In June we will begin to launch a more serious effort designed to gather many more signatures. This needs to be reviewed and finalized by our party leadership in our June meeting."

If you are interested in participating in this effort, please contact Steve Marsland at 650/738-5926. Take a hand in reducing your own taxes!

Success '99 a major success!

by J.R. Prohaska

Success '99, the touring Libertarian Leadership training seminar, came to San Jose May 16 and 17, and I'm glad I was able attend both days. The training started off with the observation that both strong local organization and campaigns are important, that there is essential synergy between them. I myself was more interested in tips on building local organization, but I found that the sessions tended to favor issues relating to candidates and campaigns.

The 5^{1/2} things needed for successful LP organizations are AEIOU: Activities; Excellence in all aspects; Infrastructure to get memberships processes day in and day out, update contact information, plan meetings, pay bills, etc.; Outreach through an organized media outreach plan; and, U--you! There is a Y--but for that you'll either have to ask me or attend an upcoming Success '99 seminar!

I found the seminar notebook to have a tremendous amount of helpful material for volunteers in local organizations, both for organizing and for running effective campaigns. A handout is available online: those interested in recruiting or being a candidate should look at the Candidate Recruitment Manual at <http://www.lp.org/lit/crm/>

Besides the opportunity to meet and talk with the Executive Director of the Libertarian National Committee, I especially enjoyed the opportunity to sit next to David Bergland, our National Chair and former candidate for President. I was greatly cheered by his perspective on the LP's past ups and downs and the current strong momentum as we head in to 2000 campaign season.

I will be bringing my notebook and notes to the next business meeting and plan to discuss ideas I gathered at the seminar.

Kosovo--What might a Libertarian President do?

by Larry Israel

Kosovo. Ethnic cleansing. Milosevic. Holocaust. Whoops, how did that last one creep in there? Stay with me for a moment, and I'll explain.

We all have been reading about what's going on in Kosovo and surrounding countries. And, most of us have such distrust in anything Bill Clinton says or does (or, for that matter, his minions, carefully selected for their gelatinous backbones and BSE-infected cranial matter) that it is increasingly difficult to get a clear understanding of what the choices are in the Balkans.

But, having said that, imagine that before the bombing was initiated, a Libertarian had somehow succeeded to the Presidency. He (or she) gets a comprehensive briefing from the CIA, State Department, Ron Brown's ghost, and Ken Starr. We will presume (against all odds) that the information given in this briefing is factually accurate, and not unduly biased by the sod-heads passing themselves off as "statesmen" in Washington these days. What, then, are the possible actions to be taken by our newly-installed Libertarian President?

The knee-jerk reaction is "nothing." We are Fortress America, and should be comprehensively isolationist. The U.S. has few, if any, strategic interests in the Balkans. While we abhor one group of people killing another, especially for the putrid reasons which prevail in the Balkans and in Kosovo in particular, it seems a part of human nature that such abhorrent behavior continues. We can hardly be the

world's policeman, if for no other reason than the pragmatic one that there are simply not enough resources to cope with the myriad demands that would be laid on us.

Is this all there is to be said about the matter, especially if we are to strictly adhere to root Libertarian principles?

Perhaps. But as a Jew born just before WWII, I have a not-quite-racial memory of the Nazi Holocaust, and what it did to people of my group, my culture, my heritage (as well as Gypsies, Catholics, homosexuals and many other disfavored non-Aryan peoples). It seems clear that but a bit more backbone by the Western nations in the 30s, and perhaps even during the war itself, could have significantly mitigated some of the more horrendous consequences of Nazi policies.

More liberal immigration policies would have allowed many Jews to escape in the 30s. A different military attack policy during the war itself could well have changed some of Hitler's inhumane policies. A clearer condemnation of what was going on might have had some political effect. None of these actions would have violated Libertarian principles.

There is a Libertarian-acceptable principal which, I believe, could justify foreign involvements. Clearly, common defense is one of the few functions of government on which Libertarians can generally agree. However, as with most simplistic statements, the principle must then be applied to the specific situation. What constitutes "common defense"? Must the threat be immediate, or can government action be appropriately responsive to perceived long-range threats which might, at least arguably, lead to a future need for armed defense? And who decides? Clearly, we do not elect legislators at any level with the clear understanding that they may, without our further consent, compel us to die in defense of other than a fairly immediate threat.

As with many matters attracting public attention, there is no ideal solution. It appears to be in the nature of the human condition and the human spirit to "care"...to care about other people and other lives. Perhaps it is just an extension of our seemingly innate caring for family, which readily extends to a larger family of friends and community. But "caring" for what happens in the world seems a slim thread on which to base public policy, especially when the kind of solution on which our esteemed (*not!*) President is currently embarking involves, at its core, coercion of others in a variety of ways (taxes, the threat of military conscription if a voluntary army doesn't get the job done, etc.).

Unfortunately, there is really no Libertarian-consistent disposition or conclusion except to say that government must tread lightly, consistently and with a reliance on principles which have been clearly articulated and widely agreed. I would add further that there should be opportunity to "opt out" as well, although implementing that in practice is likely to be a Sisyphean task. But our principles are neither clearly articulated nor widely understood, let alone agreed.

And if I were our Libertarian President, what would I do? Well, I would...whoops, excuse me, the phone is ringing, I'll get back to you later about that.

May meeting notes

by J.R. Prohaska

The following meeting notes combine the pre-business meeting talk/dinner with Mark Tuniewicz and the business meeting itself.

Dinner and speech by Mark Tuniewicz

At the May discussion dinner, we were thrilled to host special guest Mark Tuniewicz, the Treasurer of the Libertarian National Committee. Also attending was Scott Lieberman, who is an alternate representative to the Libertarian National Committee from the California/Nevada region. We had a lively rolling discussion about local organizations and increasing their vitality through campaigns and special projects. Mark encouraged Libertarians to get involved in local government through various boards and commissions. This gives you a chance to work real-life community issues and to show others how libertarian principles and approaches can provide satisfactory solutions to problems people consider important.



Frank Adam, Mark Tuniewicz, Scott Lieberman
(photo: Jack Hickey)

Mark drew upon his experiences in the LP of New Hampshire to answer a variety of questions ranging from how to recruit successful candidates to campaign software tools and recent developments in the National Committee.

Mark said he was definitely planning on being back in the Bay Area for a conference in 2007, but we so much enjoyed having him as our dinner guest that we will work on getting him back much sooner! While we met in the larger back room, this month we will most likely be back in our cozy alcove there at Hobe's starting at 6:00.

Membership-building letter

In Officer Reports, Membership Chair J.R. Prohaska with help from Steve Marsland has drafted a membership building letter which he plans to circulate for comments and then send out before the June meeting. Publicity Chair Jack Hickey reports that he is participating on an LPC committee to develop a campaign manual. The committee will meet June 11, and Jack is especially focused on how to use voter registration data.

Success '99 mini-report

Frank Adam and J.R. Prohaska reported on their attendance at Success 99 training in San Jose the previous weekend. They enjoyed the opportunity to interrogate David Bergland, Chair of the Libertarian National Committee and 1984 LP Presidential Candidate, and also Steve Dasbach, Executive Director of the LNC, about current plans and activities to achieve some pretty awesome goals for the year

2000.

"Keeping the Promise" car tax repeal petitions

Lacy distributed "Keeping the Promise Alive" petitions for repealing the car tax (see story [above](#)).

100 Libertarian candidates in the year 2000

Scott Lieberman is spearheading an effort to ensure that the LP has 100 candidates running in California in the 2000 elections, and he is looking for ways to encourage Libertarian volunteers to commit to running for office. He mentioned the Libertarian Campaign Volunteer manual as an excellent source of information for those considering running a campaign. Please contact Frank Adam, our Campaigns chair for more info.

Judicial Committee opening

At next month's business meeting we will elect a new member of the Judiciary Committee (to join Christopher Schmidt and J.R. Prohaska) as Sam Severs resigned from the committee.

Next meeting of the LP of San Mateo County:

Wednesday, June 16

Hobee's Restaurant ([Directions to Hobee's](#))

1111 Shoreway Road, Belmont; just off Ralston, on the bay side of Highway 101

Dinner and informal discussion (optional): 6:00--7:30pm in the reserved dining room

Business meeting: 7:30--8:45pm in the dining room alcove.