

## **REGION 5 REPORT**

Submitted to: Libertarian National Committee, Feb. 15, 2016

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This report will provide information concerning activities of the Libertarian Party state affiliates in Region 5 that have occurred since the LNC meeting in November. I shall provide an updated report at the LNC meeting in Phoenix should additional information become available.

I am pleased to report that I have been able to represent the LP in various ways since the previous LNC meeting. For example, I continue to serve frequently as a guest on a two-hour political talk show that airs on weekdays on WINA radio (1070 AM in Charlottesville, Virginia). In addition, I have been interviewed twice within the past two months on Russia Today TV (RTTV).

### **Delaware**

Scott Gesty ([gesty4congress@aol.com](mailto:gesty4congress@aol.com)) is the chair of the Libertarian Party of Delaware. He reports that the annual LPD convention will take place during the weekend of March 12. He noted that several LPD members are planning to attend the national convention in Orlando.

### **District of Columbia**

Ryan Sabot is the chair of the Libertarian Party of the District of Columbia. I have not received a report from him.

### **Maryland**

Bob Johnston ([bob.johnston@live.com](mailto:bob.johnston@live.com)), chair of the Libertarian Party of Maryland, provided the following report. His report includes a brief report from vice chair Eric Blitz:

The Maryland Libertarian Party will have a candidate for the US Senate, four of the eight US House seats, and the three Baltimore citywide races in 2016.

The filing deadline used to be July 1 in Presidential years for non-primary parties, but last year the legislature moved the date up to the first week in February.

The candidates are:

- US Senate - Arvin Vohra

- US House 1st - Matthew Beers
- US House 2nd - Kristina Kasprzak
- US House 7th - Scott Soffen
- US House 8th - Jasen Wunder
- Baltimore City, Mayor - Doug McNeil
- Baltimore City, President of the City Council - Susan Gaztanaga
- Baltimore City, Comptroller - Jon Bombach

Mr. Beers, Ms. Kasprzak, Mr. Wunder, and Mr. Bombach are running for the first time.

The Maryland Libertarian Party convention will be held on Saturday, March 12, from 1 - 9 pm at Squires Italian Restaurant in Dundalk, MD. Speakers include Dee Hodges of the Maryland Taxpayers Association, David Boaz of the CATO Institute, and Dr. Mary Ruwart, libertarian writer and activist.

From Vice-Chair Eric Blitz:

At the beginning of the session, the party participated in the coalition effort to successfully override the Governor's veto of last year's marijuana paraphernalia decriminalization bill.

We also supported the successful override of the Governor's veto on limitations on civil asset forfeiture.

We are a primary coalition partner for the passage of an end of life options act (personal control of medical decision to end life for terminally ill patients with less than 6 months to live).

Eric Blitz will be on the select panel testifying in support of that bill, as well as a marijuana legalization bill and a public transparency bill relating to police misconduct and the resolution of citizen complaints.

We are working on a lobby day event and legislative briefing sponsored by our coalition for the marijuana bill.

The party will also try to provide supporting testimony for a marijuana legalization constitutional referendum, a SWAT team bill, a bill decriminalizing certain gambling offenses (making them civil offenses rather than criminal, consistent with our broader opposition to over-riminalization), a bill to establish an independent redistricting commission (anti-gerrymandering), a bill regulating government drones for surveillance purposes and requiring warrants for most uses, a bill slashing the criminal penalties for CDS possession, a ballot access bill that would qualify our party so long as it maintains 10,000 registered voters (we currently have 16,834), a bill placing a 5 year moratorium on the personal property tax for small businesses, and many other smaller bills.

We are also active in opposition to a bill that re-criminalizes marijuana possession/smoking in public.

## **North Carolina**

J.J. Summerell ([jjsummerell@worksiteinsight.net](mailto:jjsummerell@worksiteinsight.net)), chair of the Libertarian Party of North Carolina, provided the following report:

1. We have 16 candidates, including Lon Cecil for Governor, yours truly for Lt. Governor and Sean Haugh for US Senate. That gives us an L on the top ticket races.
2. As Chair and Lt. Gov. candidate, I am looking closely at the NC redistricting process. Friday a Federal panel of judges ruled 2 of our gerrymandered districts unconstitutional and requested the NCGA redraw the districts before 3/15 primary. Ballots are printed, early voting has begun and we have a mess. Tom Ross, an acquaintance through Davidson and flag bearer for the NC Democrats, has just been spurned by the Republican administration and fired as head of the UNC system. He has just announced he will be taking a temporary position with the Sanford Institute at Duke to pursue the redistricting process. This issue should stay front and center in NC for several months and, hopefully, give us many opportunities for raising the profile of the LPNC.
3. The Platform Committee is doing its work prior to convention. We are working to make the platform more mainstream and pragmatic.
4. John Vincent has come onboard as Communications Director. He is doing a fantastic job and has much experience in media and communications.
5. NC is very interested in exploring a UMP (Unified Membership Program). It makes perfect sense that our state and national membership and fundraising efforts should be complementary, but there seem to be an inexhaustible list of barriers. It appears that neither the R's or D's have such a program, which tells me something.
6. 7 March 2016 at 9:00 PM we are hosting a LP Presidential Primary debate. It can be accessed through the lp.org site.
7. The LPNC convention is 22-24 April.

## **Pennsylvania**

Shawn Felty ([snkfelty@netzero.net](mailto:snkfelty@netzero.net)) is the chair of the Libertarian Party of Pennsylvania. He reports that the LPPA annual convention will take place at the Renaissance Philadelphia Airport Hotel on March 19, and that at least four candidates for the LP presidential nomination will participate in the convention.

## **Virginia**

Bill Redpath ([wredpath2@yahoo.com](mailto:wredpath2@yahoo.com)), chair of the Libertarian Party of Virginia, provided the following report:

The LPVA 2016 Convention will be on Saturday, March 5, at the Hilton Garden Inn near the Richmond Airport (the same location as our 2014 Convention), with a reception at the hotel on Friday evening, March 4. The Saturday convention will occur from 9AM to 5PM (?). Convention business, including election of new officers and selection of National Convention delegates, will be conducted in the morning, with speakers in the afternoon. All people seeking the LP presidential nomination have been invited and will be allowed to speak in the afternoon. Several potential nominees, including 2012 Presidential nominee Gary Johnson, have indicated that they will attend.

The LPVA will soon be conducting its presidential petition drive. The drive requires 5,000 valid signatures, with 200 from each of Virginia's 11 congressional districts. The petitioning period is from January 2 to August 26. We have been delayed in its start, because of litigation over the geography of the majority minority congressional district that is the 3rd CD in Virginia. A three Federal judge panel recently changed the boundaries of five of the 11 CDs over this issue, but I don't think state voter databases have been updated yet. The problem is that Electoral College electors must be listed on the Virginia petition, with at least one elector from each CD. If we didn't have a CD with an elector, the whole petition for President could be ruled invalid and thrown out. There may be forthcoming litigation on this issue with the Commonwealth of Virginia.

It is my expressed goal to do the 5,000 signatures on a volunteer basis. Whether that happens or not, it is certainly my intention to complete this petition drive without financial contribution from the LNC, as has been the case for the last several presidential elections.

There are many local offices up for election in Virginia this year. Statewide offices and the Virginia General Assembly are elected in odd numbered years. There is no US Senate race in Virginia in 2016. The LPVA has received indications of interest in running for US House from two persons (in the 3rd and 5th CDs) so far this year.

## **West Virginia**

Michael Wilson ([michael.wilson@lpwv.org](mailto:michael.wilson@lpwv.org)), chair of the Libertarian Party of West Virginia, provided the following report:

We have been very busy with candidate recruitment and planning of our state convention, which is noted below, but one of the most significant items we have been working on is modification of Ballot Access laws in WV, and we are making headway.

Through the initiative of the Libertarian Party of West Virginia (LPWV), a bill has just been introduced in the West Virginia House of Delegates, HB 4356, which would expand the opportunity for smaller political parties to obtain or retain political party recognition. Under present law, in order to be a recognized political party, a political group must run a candidate for Governor who obtains over 1% of the votes cast in that election contest. If the party's candidate obtains or exceeds that threshold, the party becomes a recognized party for the next four years, at which time it must once again run a candidate for Governor and clear 1% of the vote. The Governor's race is the only election that counts and it comes once every four years. Party

recognition enables the party to run candidates for office without having to petition their way onto the ballot and the Secretary of State office tracks the number of, and makes available for purchase lists of, voters who affiliate with that party in their voter registration.

The Libertarian Party first achieved recognized party status in 1996, but then lost it until 2012. The Mountain Party (affiliated with the national Green Party) has held party status continuously since 2000, although the Libertarian Party has, since 2012, far exceeded the Mountain Party in its number of registered voters. The Constitution Party has not to date succeeded in obtaining party recognition status.

HB 4356 would extend the 1% threshold for party recognition to five other statewide offices - Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Auditor, and Commissioner of Agriculture. If passed, it means that a party candidate for any of the six statewide races who achieves or surpasses the 1% barrier would enable that party to gain or retain party status for the next four years. The bill also provides yet another mechanism for acquiring party recognition: if the group or party has 5,000 or more voters who affiliate with that party in their voter registration. As of January 1, 2016, there were 2,701 registered Libertarians in West Virginia.

The bi-partisan sponsors of the bill are Republican Delegate Pat McGeehan and Democrat Delegate Isaac Sponaugle. The bill has been assigned to the House Judiciary Committee."

Additionally, we are moving forward with our State Convention, scheduled for May 7, in Flatwoods, WV at the Sutton Days Inn Convention and Conference Center. We have a great lineup of speakers, candidates and training sessions featuring Wes Benedict, Carla Howell (tentative) and Jim Lark

We have secured candidates for Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, State Auditor, Commissioner of Agriculture, two of the three U.S. House races (the third is a soft yes at the moment), five candidates to date of House of Delegates, and a couple of county races have also registered.