

The Voice of Freedom

The Libertarian Party of Tennessee
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www.lptn.net
The Party of Principle

LPTN Web Site Number One

(Nashville) - The Libertarian Party of Tennessee announced that its website, www.lptn.net, has surpassed those of the Republicans and Democrats, according to Alexa Internet.

Alexa Internet, an Amazon company in partnership with Google, tracks the surfing habits of millions of users in order to rank web site popularity among the estimated 45 million registered domains. Alexa uses a statistical average that factors in both the number of unique visitors and the number of page views over a three-month period. While measuring and comparing Internet traffic is a difficult task and no system is perfect, the Alexa rank is generally considered the de facto industry standard.

The Libertarian Party of Tennessee redesigned its website just under one year ago, and its popularity may already allow it to claim to be the most visited political party website in Tennessee. According to the November 15, 2003 Alexa rankings, the Libertarian Party of Tennessee is at number 965,338, just past the Tennessee Democratic Party (number 965,358), and far ahead of the Tennessee GOP at number 2,310,000.

The chairman of the Libertarian Party of Tennessee, Ray Ledford, explains the website's increasing popularity: "Our webmaster and designer is constantly working to keep the content new and interesting, but more importantly, our message of individual Liberty is being accepted by more and more people who have begun to feel unrepresented and discarded by the Democrats and Republicans."

The Libertarian Party of Tennessee is the fastest growing political party in Tennessee, attracting liberty-minded citizens concerned with curbing out-of-control government, runaway taxation, and attacks on individual rights.

Share the Voice of Freedom with your friends,
find it online at www.lptn.net!

Liberty Quotes Published

Liberty Quotes, which is a collection of liberty-themed quotations put together by the late Richard E. Pearl, Sr., is now available at 1stbooks.com.

The book lists for \$4.95 for the e-book version, \$12.50 for the paperback, and \$20.00 for the glossy hardcover.

Liberty Quotes was one of Richard's dreams, and was completed after his death by Steve Trinward. All the profits from Liberty Quotes will be set aside in a fund for the grandsons Richard loved dearly.

Buyers of this book will find it a useful reference, as well as a cherished link to a wonderful man and a great Defender of Liberty.

LPTN Convention Announced

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

The LPTN Convention will be held on April 3rd. The location and times have not yet been announced. Stay tuned to lptn.net for more updates.

Michael Badnarik visits Tennessee Libertarian Presidential Hopeful

Michael Badnarik will be in Chattanooga on March 1st and in Memphis on March 2nd. For more information on Michael's events in Tennessee contact Trevor Southerland at TrevSoutherland@aol.com

You can also visit the Badnarik Campaign website at www.badnarik.org
Last weekend in May, See YOU in Atlanta!

(This advertisement has been approved by the candidate.)

From the Chair

Dear friends,

The holidays are upon once again, but the struggle to preserve Liberty continues still. And there's always something new to tell you – we have a new database administrator, there have been some changes in county leadership, our website has outranked those of the other political parties in Tennessee, and some personal news.

In an effort to make our database management quicker, cleaner, and more efficient, we will soon have the LPTN database online. I've named Jonathan Wright, our webmaster, to be our Database Administrator. Once the database is online, county chairs will be able to access the records for their respective counties, and make any necessary changes with the knowledge that National will be notified.

Sadly, two of our county chairs – Joey King of the Libertarian Party of Rutherford County, and Tayloe Nickey of the Libertarian Party of Shelby County, have made the decision to step out of their chairmanships for now. Joey has gotten a third job, and Tayloe just wants a breather. They'll be missed as county leaders, but both counties have great leadership teams – besides, Joey and Tayloe are still a part of the wonderful bunch of Tennessee Libertarians.

Our website continues to improve – both in quality and popularity. The LPTN.net website recently outranked both the websites of the Republicans and Democrats, according to Alexa Internet, and the other third parties didn't even come close.

Ordinarily, I don't like to say anything in this column about me. It's always been my goal to talk about all of you – but I'm distressed and I wanted to share my problem with my Libertarian family. Some of you may have heard that my wife, Helen, and I had gotten happy news in October – a baby was on its way, due in June. Everything has been progressing nicely until an OB visit in mid-November; the baby had died. This was our fourth pregnancy, our fourth miscarriage.

It's hard to think of anything else right now; as I write this column, we got the news just two days ago. On the last ultrasound, I saw legs, arms, and one of the eyes – it looked just as the books said it would. We had nicknamed the baby Yam-Yam, at least until we knew the sex. Now it's the only name the baby will ever have.

There is very little news in my column for this edition, and it's difficult to think of little else except for the loss Helen and I have had. Please let Helen know you're

thinking of her by emailing your condolences at catchick1@juno.com.

And Yam-Yam, you would have been a part of a great Libertarian family. They're good people, and I love every one of them.

I apologize for ending this on such a sad note, and I want to thank everyone for your kindness, and for caring enough about Liberty in Tennessee to have made the Libertarian Party of Tennessee your political home.

Pro libertate,

Ray Ledford

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News Flash: Ray Ledford appointed to LP Convention By-Laws Committee, bringing LPTN representatives on convention committees to three.

In Such Manner . . .

By Ray Ledford

Ballot access. It's a sought after prize by many a "third party," and certainly the concern of every Libertarian Party state affiliate. Essentially, ballot access represents a legal recognition of your state political party by your state government. We all want it because it "legitimizes" us in the eyes of the electorate. Leaving aside for now the question of why would we want the state to "approve" us, I intend to explore one facet of state recognition of a political party and the Tennessee Constitution.

Tennessee state law requires that after satisfying the established petitioning obstacles, a political party must sign an oath that they will not advocate or attempt the overthrow of the government [Acts 1972, ch. 740, § 1; T.C.A., § 2-114.] Of course, the Libertarian Party has its own oath about the initiation of the use of force, but we all know that government can go bad.

The framers of the Tennessee Constitution knew this, too, which is why they began the Declaration of Rights with this:

"That all power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their peace, safety, and happiness; for the advancement of those ends they have at all times, an unalienable and indefeasible right to alter, reform, or abolish the government in such manner as they may think proper.

That government being instituted for the common benefit, the doctrine of nonresistance against arbitrary power and oppression is absurd, slavish, and destructive of the good and happiness of mankind.

(Tennessee Constitution, Article I, Section 1-2)

The Tennessee Constitution clearly defends and protects the right of the people to change or even overthrow the government if it becomes arbitrary and oppressive. What's more, the Tennessee Constitution further protects this and the rest of the Declaration of Rights when it states that "[t]he declaration of rights hereto prefixed is declared to be a part of the Constitution of this state, and shall never be violated on any pretense whatever. And to guard against transgression of the high powers we have delegated, we declare that everything in the bill of rights contained, is excepted out of the general powers of the government, and shall forever remain inviolate." (Tennessee Constitution, Article XI, Section 16)

Let's stop now and look at what I've covered: changing or overthrowing an arbitrary or oppressive government is a protected right in the Tennessee Constitution, and yet a political party, in order to be recognized by the state, must take an oath not to exercise that constitutional right.

Now, how could something so unconstitutional as this be allowed to exist? Well, the same folks who wrote the law are the same folks who represent the only two political parties that have been "recognized" as statewide parties – the Republicans and Democrats. Essentially, they are the government, and they want new statewide political parties to swear allegiance to them – Liberty be damned.

If this oath were to be challenged in court, the best thing that could happen would be that the provision requiring the oath would be deemed unconstitutional while leaving the rest of the laws pertaining to political parties intact. Of course, the worst thing that could happen is that the courts would find in favor of the government – a government that is composed of Democrats and Republicans. But that shouldn't surprise anyone; after all, the courts are a part of the government.

Once again, we are faced with the same question liberty-minded people have asked all throughout the history of Tennessee: "quis custodiet ipsos custodes - who will guard the guardians?" Who will protect our rights and liberties from those in government who would usurp them? Who will defend Liberty from this three-headed Hydra that calls itself "the government?" Who will watch those who now watch us?

Granted, the Libertarian Party is the Defender of Liberty, but ultimately, it will take all of us – We, the People – to guard the guardians.

After all, Tennesseans still outnumber the state government.

For now, anyway.

Update from Hamilton Co.

The Hamilton County LP was very encouraged to hear of two events sponsored by the Campus Libertarians of UTC. One being an organizational meeting attended by 9 students and another an Operation Politically Homeless Booth which was seen by over 1,000 people. Exact numbers on how many took the quiz were estimated around 50 by Trevor Southerland, Campus LP President.

The annual caucus of the local party, where by-laws are amended and officers elected will be January 24th in Chattanooga. To find out more visit www.hcdp.org or e-mail liberty@utc.edu. You can also call 423-635-2595.

All-Out assault on right to engage in politics

WASHINGTON, DC – The Libertarian Party, which is one of the plaintiffs that challenged the campaign finance law upheld by the Supreme Court, has denounced the ruling as an "all-out assault on the right of every American to engage in the political process."

"Why not just outlaw elections and get it over with?" said Geoffrey Neale, the Libertarian Party's national chair. "The Supreme Court has just given incumbent politicians the power to financially cripple their competitors and, in the process, award themselves lifetime jobs."

In a 5-4 ruling that shocked advocacy groups across the political spectrum, the Supreme Court endorsed key provisions of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance law. Specifically, the court upheld a ban on "soft money" contributions from wealthy individuals, corporations and labor unions, as well the law's prohibition on running certain political advertisements within close proximity to an election.

But Libertarians point out that McCain-Feingold was nothing more than an incumbent protection act in the first place – and that the court's ruling was tantamount to outlawing political competition.

"Running for office and communicating a message aren't free," Neale said. "So making it illegal to raise money to buy political ads, and banning the ads during the period when they're most effective, is tantamount to outlawing the message itself. That's a crime against the First Amendment as well as an affront to the democratic process."

Incumbent politicians already enjoy powerful advantages, Neale pointed out, such as name recognition and the ability to attract news media, taxpayer-financed staffs and office space, and the franking privilege. The so-called campaign finance reform act was merely an attempt to eliminate the only weapon that many challengers have: contributions freely given by individuals or groups that share their views, he noted.

Acknowledging that the stated goal of the legislation was to clean up politics, Neale said: "Justice Sandra Day O'Connor pointed out that 'corruption, and in particular the appearance of corruption,' is rampant in Washington – and of course, she's right.

"But a free-flowing, robust political debate isn't the problem; it's the solution. The only way to dislodge an entrenched, corrupt politician is to allow competing candidates, and anyone else who so chooses, to publicly criticize them and offer voters a better alternative.

"By upholding McCain-Feingold, the Supreme Court has merely guaranteed that corrupt politicians will stay in office for a longer period of time."

In March 2002, the Libertarian Party signed on as a co-plaintiff in *McConnell v FEC*, the lawsuit spearheaded by Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell that sought to overturn the campaign finance reform law.

The party argued that the law would have a devastating impact on its activities by eliminating certain sources of revenue and imposing significant regulatory and administrative burdens.

For example, the law prohibits the organization from accepting donations of more than \$25,000 from any individual; prevents it from taking money from organizations that are not "recognized political committees," so it cannot sell ads in its party newspaper to nonprofit corporations or incorporated businesses; and cannot accept funds for memberships or literature from its own state affiliates, unless they also comply with the law's onerous regulations.

However, the party was vindicated by one aspect of Tuesday's ruling, Neale added, when the court struck down the provision of the law banning minors from making contributions to political parties.

(LPTN member Trevor Southerland was the first minor to sue due to discrimination against minors in the Act.)

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