

Questions for the Chair – Drexler Responds

QUESTION: What is your vision for the LPIN? Specifically, describe what you believe the organization looks like in 2020 in terms of membership, political influence, budget, and operations.

Many years ago, you would often hear former LPIN Chairman Mark Rutherford explain to the organization's volunteers that it is not enough to strive to be like the older political parties. We must be better than the other parties in order to grow our own efforts. We must pay attention to more details of our own business, communicate with membership more regularly, show investors in our party a healthy return on those investments and expand our stake on issues relevant to our own base.

Currently no political party is championing issues central to small business. No political party consistently trumpets defense of property rights issues – or civil liberties, government transparency, adherence to the rules governing our state's officials. The LPIN of 2013, let alone 2020, will have regained ownership of those issues and clearly define those basic tenets by our actions.

With our current membership levels hovering around 400 for the state, this is down substantially from a high water mark in the mid 2000's. Our budget is just two-thirds of what it once was. With vote totals in some races over 100,000, there is no reason we should not be in position to double our membership and budget in short order. For 2020, much depends upon the direction we take the organization in 2013. Throughout my time with the party, I have adhered to an incrementalist approach – anything to move our agenda forward. This slow growth forward is no longer acceptable. We must adopt a bolder strategy and begin leaping forward instead of crawling.

QUESTION: What are the most important things we should be doing to attract new membership? Retain our existing membership? Name a few things related to membership that we should a) keep doing, b) start doing, and c) stop doing.

Membership is flat. To be fair, in the late 2000's after the dissolution of the national Unified Membership Program (UMP), membership was de-emphasized by design. Having to pay to belong to a political party seemed counter to what the Libertarian Party stands. An emphasis on small business outreach replaced the emphasis on joining what many viewed as a social organization. Our vote totals have increased and the term "libertarian" is now seen more in mainstream press outlets. However, in Indiana where registration is not by party affiliation, membership remains the primary means of identifying our support base. A renewed focus on membership is critical at this time. I would like to explore "Double the LP."

Membership retention and growth is a direct result of communications. People want to feel connected to the message. People want to know what's happening. I have spoken with several long-time LP members and they have not had regular direct contact from the party in years. We must expand our reach beyond social media and return to traditional outreach including print publications, expansion of our email newsletter and the critical task of calling on people in person or by phone.

QUESTION: Describe the ideal relationship between the roles and responsibilities between the LPIN and its affiliated counties. Name a few things related to affiliate support and relations that we should a) keep doing, b) start doing, and c) stop doing.

The LPIN should be setting the playing field through party branding and messaging for our affiliates, general membership and candidates. *Liberty 101*, the online school and courses developed largely by former Executive Director Chris Spangle, is the single best resource I have seen developed by any Libertarian Party organization. This resource and expansion of tools similar to this is the kind of product the LPIN can provide to the affiliates to better enable them to perform their volunteer work.

While I am a fan of affiliations, I strongly believe we should emphasize formal affiliation only when viable. Affiliating for simply affiliation sake creates a level of bureaucracy that takes away from the limited volunteer time for political activism. The LPIN can continue to grow membership and identify supporters to feed into fledgling county organizations. LPIN should be a clearinghouse for membership information, communications/media and marketing.

Of course, the LPIN should also serve as the primary point for ensuring county and candidate filings are done in a timely manner. Taking on administrative tasks to ease that burden on local affiliates is a core function of the LPIN. Making sure our officials are aware of deadlines and how to process those forms is critical.

QUESTION: What role should the LPIN have in relation to the LNC and the national LP? What would you do as Chair to ensure that this role is fulfilled?

I would hope the role of the national party is similar to the states as I suggest the LPIN is to its affiliates and membership. My role as LPIN Chairman would be to concentrate on the efforts on the Indiana party. I would communicate openly with our District Representative to the LNC, but my involvement with the national party and that of our state party in national party affairs would be limited by design. We best influence national party policy by growing membership and having a larger voting voice at national conventions.

I respect the interest and volunteer efforts by many people within the LPIN that choose to serve on committees at the national level. However, organizationally that participation has not benefitted our state party in membership growth or strong national policy decisions.

QUESTION: There is always debate regarding the quantity versus the quality of candidates. What are your views on this debate? As Chair, what steps would you take to implement your views in candidate recruitment, selection, vetting, etc.? What role would you ask county affiliates to have in this process?

In my years with the party, I have seen an emphasis on both quality candidates and a quantity of candidates. I am a fan of a hybrid approach of that model. We must have high-profile, electable candidates on the ballot. Those candidates will largely garner the media attention, the affiliate and state party marketing support and carry the party branding forward through their campaigns.

However, it is critically important that a voter new to considering our party's candidates see a presence on the ballot worthy of offering that support. A single choice for a single candidate gives the impression that we are not serious about moving our message forward. A political party runs candidates. While the success of a party is measured in more complex ways, a function of the party is to run candidates.

One of my very first leaps into the Libertarian Party came as a result of a candidate call-out in an email newsletter blast by Kurt St. Angelo. His "Big Book" emails offered a great compilation of reading materials and news stories. I was that "paper candidate" when I first ran for Marion County Auditor. Today, I am running to be State Chairman of that organization.

Vetting of candidates is done at conventions by the delegates. As Chair, I would insist that each individual candidate be considered separately. I am not a fan of voting for a group of candidates by acclamation. It removes our ability as a party to ascertain an individual's positions and has led to some uncomfortable situations over the last few years. In 2011, the LPIN Central Committee adopted a vetting form to be used with all candidates. I would ask the SCC to reconsider use of this form and apply it to only those vacancy appointments to be considered by a candidate screening committee to be chaired by the SCC Vice Chairman.

QUESTION: Describe our biggest strengths and weaknesses as it relates to communications with a) the internal organization (staff, SCC, county chairs), b) membership and donors, c) the media, and d) the general public of both libertarians and non-libertarians. What do you propose we do to address the weaknesses?

This is an enormous question that could only be answered adequately in volumes of print. In a nutshell, I believe LPIN communications over the past several years have fallen short at all levels except for the use of online social media where we have excelled in the country. Unfortunately, that is just one medium for communication and increasingly not shared by libertarians. While largely driven by our economic constraints, social media alone is missing an entire base of membership, organization volunteers, donors and potential supporters.

We must be more present. As Chairman, I would be out around the state as no party chairman in our history. Direct contact with members is critical. Showing our affiliates we are present is enormous. Phone calls to donors, updates to critical legislators and in-person meetings with members of the media, even as courtesy visits, is critical.

QUESTION: Over the last few years, we've had annual income of approximately \$40k. With an annual budget of about this amount, what do you believe would be the ideal breakdown of expenses? Use categories of staff, operating infrastructure (office supplies, technology, phones, rent, etc.), outreach (booths, advertising, etc.), political support (direct contributions to candidates, electioneering, etc.), affiliate support (existing and new affiliates). Add your own categories if necessary. How would your ideal budget change if we grew to \$75k a year?

\$75,000. It wasn't too many years ago when we were not too far from that mark. In a day when the word "libertarian" is being used more and more in print and media, to see our state organization fall to the funding level it has is unacceptable. However, donations are driven by perceived value. We must do a better job of building value and much of that comes through communications. Communications are handled primarily by staff.

Whether it be \$40,000, \$75,000, \$100,000 or more – staff expense will continue to eat up the largest share of our budget. 60% of the budget is a reasonable expense for staff. With increased funding comes the increased need for communications. Indeed, more staff hours.

The balance of those expenses would be a mix between providing staff the tools to perform work efficiently. Eating up five hours of hourly work for a job that can be done in one hour given the proper investment in tools is simply good business and something we have not adequately addressed in the past. Too often we have created a ton of busy work or seen what should be a simple task become a half day of work because of limitations in technology or access to resources.

Finally, I want to see the LPIN incent affiliate organizations through a series of competitive programs. Stealing a page from the Libertarian Party of Ohio, matching grants are often provided to upstart county affiliates – making their own investment of \$200 now \$400. While small dollars, those differences empower the affiliates and do more to grow the party than what the state can do from a top-down leadership style. As well, incentives within regions to reward "best practices" on a regular basis should be factored into the budget. I estimate we could easily set aside 5% of our budget for such expenses and the return for this marketing approach would be many times over.

QUESTION: Under what conditions would you support a growth in staff? What would be your priorities in adding new roles?

I have been a longtime proponent of moving to a multi-position staff as we have recently. The job of the party is a diverse set of tasks and difficult for one person to manage while still trying to maintain some semblance of a personal life. We must be respectful of staff personal time. I fully support the current decision to have two part-time positions – Business Manager and Communications Specialist.

Budget permitting, the next logical position is one of Political Director.

QUESTION: Over the last several years, we have had multiple Executive Directors. What do you believe are the biggest lessons learned over these experiences?

Having served as the Interim Executive Director for the LPIN in 2006, I know the job well. We have fallen short many times in providing staff the consistent and necessary direction and adequate tools to effectively perform required tasks easily. It's no secret we operate on scant donations, but it does not mean we cannot prioritize resources that allow staff the tools to work more efficiently.

In 2006, I requested the SCC adopt the Constant Contact e-newsletter technology, our USA-Epay credit card processing and integration and an online database for better managing membership and donor information. Each was approved. By 2013, while Constant Contact and the credit card integration process remain intact, each is largely underutilized. The database program purchased and intended to be shared with affiliates was never implemented. Today, we finally have gained approval for the use of eTapestry for better coordinating membership records and donor information. It should also eliminate our need for USA-Epay and streamline those efforts. It should not have taken an additional seven years to get to this point.

QUESTION: Describe your vision for how the organization should function from a roles and responsibilities perspective between the Chair, SCC, staff, and committees.

I am not a fan of meetings. That is no secret. I much prefer a direct communication style. Our by-laws specify the roles of each person in the organization. The State of Indiana allows us to write these rules for ourselves. It's my position that we follow these.

I recently met with leadership from the Georgia LP. I like their model and would like to see if it's something we could explore in Indiana. They make their Chairman the frontperson for the organization – media relations, spokesperson, outreach. The Vice Chairman oversees much of the day-to-day functions of staff. Staff is to be directed by the board. The board is not to be directed by the staff. A strong Executive Board within the SCC will achieve that.

QUESTION: What are your goals for fundraising in the next two years? What three or four key things should we do to achieve these goals?

For too long, the LPIN has been non-existent on political issues central to the state's policies. Candidates have largely done a solid job of positioning themselves on issues, but the state party has largely been silent on legislative matters in the Statehouse. A few individual efforts come to mind that should be commended – Phyllis Klosinski, Mike Kole, Evan McMahon, Ray Wolff and Paul Gable – have each worked to change policies with little to no party support behind them. I am sure there are others and apologize for not singling out those individuals.

The point? We must show we are relevant for people to invest in our party. We must communicate our positions with membership, donors and media. When we took a party position on Right-to-Work legislation, the response was tremendous. When we spoke up for civil liberties and the defense of the rights of an individual, we gained support. The support exists, we must tap into it and be bolder with messaging.

First, we must stop the hemorrhaging. To do that we must reach out to individual donors, thank them for their support and let them know to expect more from us. Second, we must design a program that provides value in tiered giving. We moved down this path in 2006, but by 2007 it was abandoned. Ultimately, it will take some brainstorming by SCC members to determine what is realistic and affordable to provide, but we must break the current model and retool our 1994 Society program. In its inception, the 1994 Society donor program quickly became a model for other states. It needs a fresh look.

That fresh look should put us back on the trajectory toward doubling membership growth and monthly contribution. \$3,000 in monthly pledges would allow us the budget to achieve quite a bit.

QUESTION: What were the three biggest successes and three biggest failures of the Rupert for Governor experience? What do you believe that the LPIN should or could have done to either prevent or help mitigate the failures? How would this shape your actions as Chair?

QUESTION: What were the three biggest successes and three biggest failures of the Horning for Senate experience? What do you believe that the LPIN should or could have done to either prevent or help mitigate the failures? How would this shape your actions as Chair?

I have taken the liberty to combine these two questions. I largely find this way of thinking quite offensive and a primary contributing factor to our moribund party efforts. I was not involved in either Rupert Boneham's nor Andy Horning's campaigns. I was working this past year as Midwest Regional Director for the Gary Johnson/Jim Gray.

Here's what I do know. By design – with the exception of the Secretary of State's race – campaigns are to be run independent of the party. Support from the party to any candidate should come in the form of having created the best playing field possible for that candidate's success. Alerting a candidate to filing deadlines and directing volunteers is also critical.

Sure, it's smart politics to dissect a campaign whether we've won or loss simply to build upon that experience. But, to categorize something as "failures" paints the volunteer efforts of the candidate and campaign team in a light that does nothing more than create divisiveness.

In 2010, I recruited Mike Wherry to run for Secretary of State. Mike's credentials were amazing – attorney, engineer, U.S. Navy veteran. I eventually stepped up to manage his campaign. We won nearly 100,000 votes and close to 6% of the vote. We did not get "atta-boys" or "good work" from party leadership. In fact, we got a number of people telling us what we should have done better or even current state leadership claiming that we succeeded because the winning GOP opponent had his own set of problems. It didn't matter to those critics that the winning candidate garnered some of the highest levels of support in the state despite his problems. No, it didn't matter that Mike and I traveled to every corner of the state, reached out to media, ran radio advertising across the state and answered as many surveys or questionnaires as we could. No, our own leadership wanted to focus on why we got lucky and make excuses for what we saw as hard work.

Similarly, both Horning and Boneham ran active campaigns. I have never seen the crowds at events lining up to speak with a candidate as I have with Boneham. When I helped put together some interviews and events in northern Indiana, I recall walking down the street in Elkhart and a carload of people spotted Rupert walking along the sidewalk. The driver literally pulled the car over at the very first stop and the driver and passengers ran to see him. This wasn't a one-time occurrence, this was everywhere.

Andy Horning owns debates in our state. His message of championing liberty, adhering to Rule of Law and upholding the Constitution is unwavering. Sure, he's not a fan of party politics. Who among us really is? Over the years, Horning has arguably brought more people into the libertarian fold than any single person in our state.

Both gentlemen bring their own ideals to what is an incredibly small, but increasingly diverse, libertarian tent at the moment. I personally like that.

We get bogged down in determining what defines success. To many in the party it is raw numbers – an electoral win is the success. To others, moving us toward a freer society regardless whether it's us as the messenger or simply as the catalyst to that change is paramount. Those divergent camps don't always see eye to eye and in the process of dissecting our efforts lose focus on the bigger picture we share. Personally, I like Horning's measure of success. I like knowing that our efforts and presence has the ability to change policy whether it's through our own direct efforts winning elections or simply through our participation. I really like that we don't have to change our principles to make that difference.

So, no. I may not have agreed with either campaign's decisions along the way. But, the successes each showed in their efforts can be built upon. The hard work of these candidates and volunteers needs to be

recognized publicly and thanks given where thanks is due.

QUESTION: What do you believe will be your responsibility as Chair over the next 18 months in support of the Secretary of State race?

Having recruited our 2010 candidate and managed his campaign, I know the importance of the race and our ballot access. Making sure we have a strong candidate in that position and that the campaign is managed will be a priority for LPIN SCC. We have a lot of groundwork to do in 2013 not associated with that race, though. Those efforts will lend well toward the success of our SOS candidate.

QUESTION: If I were to be elected Vice Chair, how would you seek to leverage our mutual strengths and weaknesses to most effectively achieve the vision for the LPIN that you have? What are the three most important things that you would look for me to do in support of your administration?

Whether it is Joe Hauptmann or yourself in the position of Vice Chairman, I would want to sit down and discuss the committee structure and establish a sensible approach to managing committees. We have established committees in the past and they have failed for lack of participation, certainly not direction. If it's unrealistic to manage sweeping goals for a committee, possibly we revisit targeting committee assignments into manageable tasks.

As well, I like the idea of exploring the Georgia model with heavier reliance on the Vice Chair to oversee staff.