

Republican Liberty Caucus

Free Enterprise, Individual Freedom & Limited Government



REPUBLICAN LIBERTY CAUCUS OF FLORIDA

State e-Newsletter, Fourth Quarter 2006/First Quarter 2007

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1. TABOR the centerpiece of RLC's Day at the Capitol, March 7-8

During the 2006 Florida legislative session in Tallahassee, the RLC played a key role in several issues, most notably in the passage of Florida's strict ban on *Kelo*-style property takings and the preservation of Florida's 8-year term limits on legislators.

For 2007, the executive committee of the RLC of Florida met at the Disney Swan Hotel in Orlando on Jan. 27 to pick its battles for the year. At the top of the list is a campaign to enact a Florida Taxpayer Bill of Rights, or TABOR. TABOR is a statute that would limit the growth of state and county budgets to the increase in inflation and population. To spend more than the TABOR cap would require voter approval.

RLC'er John Hallman is working with the James Madison Institute and other organizations in crafting a TABOR bill. Hallman will lead a group of RLCers to Tallahassee March 7-8 to lobby for the idea for our annual Day at the Capitol in conjunction with FreedomWorks.

RLCers will be arriving in Tallahassee in the afternoon on Wednesday, March 7. Rooms are reserved at a discounted rate (\$84.95 plus tax) at the Best Western/Pride Inn & Suites, 2016 Appalachee Parkway. A (free) briefing will be held at 7 p.m. at the Best Western meeting room. Meetings with legislators will be scheduled 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursday, March 8.

There is no cost to participate. To reserve a room or for more information, call Hallman at (561) 392-4432.

In the meantime, Hallman and Tom Gaitens, both field reps for FreedomWorks, are taking advantage of town meetings that state leaders are currently holding around the state to ask for public input about the state's property tax explosion. RLCers and other concerned citizens will be showing up and asking for TABOR protection from skyrocketing property taxes.

There is no doubt Florida needs TABOR. According to the South Florida *Sun-Sentinel* on Jan. 28, 2007, "the total taxes levied at the local level climbed from \$16.6 billion in 2001 to \$30.4 billion last year, an 83% increase that outpaced the 12% population growth in the same period."

To give an example of how TABOR could protect taxpayers, consider the egregious case of Palm Beach County. There, the adopted \$4.41 billion 2007 budget resulted in a 14% percent increase in property taxes, nearly triple that of combined population and inflation growth (4.0%) and more than double that of personal income (7.5%) growth.

With public fury rising along with our tax bills, now is the time for taxpayers to act. Please help! Here's what you can do:

1. Send a contribution right now to help underwrite the costs of drafting the bill and organizing the campaign to pass it, including the Day at the Capitol. Send a check (made out to FreedomWorks) today to: Hallman & Associates, P.O. Box 216, Boca Raton, FL 33429.

2. Sign up for our Day at the Capitol, March 7-8. There will be carpooling to Tallahassee. This is a very effective — and fun — way to get our message across.

3. Find out the date of your city's town hall meeting, attend and ask your legislators to enact the TABOR legislation. They are familiar with the concept even if the bill is not yet on their desks.

4. Ask your GOP club if they would be interested in a speaker on the subject of Florida TABOR at one of their monthly meetings.

For more information on any aspect of this campaign, please contact John Hallman ASAP at johnhallman@johnhallman.org or (561) 392-4432.

Input is also being sought from RLC members for other pieces of legislation worthy of support. Join the ongoing discussion of these and other matters in our statewide Yahoo Discussion Group (see the icon in the left-hand column of our website, www.rlcfl.org).

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2. RLCer finds 11,000 registered to vote in Florida and New York

RLCer Bill Skinner, secretary of the Republican Club of Central Palm Beach County, compared voter records from Palm Beach County, Fla., and the state of New York and said he found an "open door" for fraud. Skinner reports he found 11,609 matches of first name, last name and date of birth between the two databases.

Skinner's findings were reported in the *Palm Beach Post*, and he called on the *Post* and government authorities to find out how many of these people are illegally voting in both places. Finding no takers, Skinner and his GOP club are going to secure the voting records from the November 2006 elections in both states and do the analysis themselves.

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3. Hallman gives RLC update to Tallahassee's Center/Right Coalition

On Nov. 9, RLCer John Hallman gave an update on the RLC of Florida to the Center/Right Coalition of Tallahassee. The coalition, patterned after Grover Norquist's popular weekly meetings in Washington DC, provides an opportunity for numerous individuals and groups to update each other on and to work together projects of mutual interest.

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4. RLC endorsees fare well in November despite GOP rout

In his post-election report, RLC National Chair Bill Westmiller wrote: “RLC candidates did very well last November. Nearly 80 percent of our candidates for Congress were elected or re-elected, because they focused their campaigns on critical issues of individual rights, limited government and private enterprise. Reps. Jeff Flake, Ron Paul, John Shadegg, Steve Chabot, and Jack Kingston had very successful campaigns and will be among the new leaders in the next Congress. Others, like J.D. Hayworth of Arizona, focused on conservative issues where we disagree and lost their contests.

“Across the country, we had scores of state executive and legislative victories, even a near victory by RLC favorite Tom McClintock in the California Lieutenant Governor’s race. Over 70 percent of our candidates won, but we had a few RLC members lose their seats in Maine and Washington. They’ll be back as activists and organizers for the next election cycle.”

In Florida, we fared similarly with a 70 percent of our endorsed candidates and referenda winning. Specifically, we see Rep. Tom Feeney returning to U.S. House district 24; Joe Negron losing in his bid to capture Rep. Mark Foley’s former U.S. House seat in district 16; Sen. Mike Haridopolos returning to his State Senate district 26 seat; Karl Dickey losing in his race for State Senate district 30; and Rep. Bob Allen retaining his Florida House district 32 seat. The RLC won in its efforts to kill the repeal of 8-year term limits on state legislators and also to approve a strong anti-*eminent domain* bill to counter the infamous 2005 *Kelo* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court.

To nominate a candidate or referendum for endorsement, fill out our endorsement nomination form found at http://www.rlcfl.org/rlc_endorsement_form.pdf.

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5. Ron Paul explores presidential bid

U.S. Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), a former national chair of the Republican Liberty Caucus, has opened an exploratory committee and is considering a run for the Republican nomination for president of the United States.

Since he was first elected to the U.S. House in 1976, Rep. Paul has long been an icon of libertarian Republicanism, a mix of stubborn principle and successful electoral politics. In the RLC’s Liberty Index, Rep. Paul’s voting record consistently ranks at or near the top of the U.S. House and as a result Ron is the largest Congressional beneficiary of contributions from the RLC’s PAC.

In a Jan. 22 *Reason Online* interview with Brian Doherty, Rep. Paul was asked what his campaign theme would be. “I think the biggest thing for Republican primary voters is that most Republicans are turned off right now,” Rep. Paul answered. “They’ve had a beating and are reassessing their values. They have to decide what they believe in. The Republican Party has become about big government conservatism, and Republicans need to hear the message they used to hear: [they] are supposed to be for small government.”

This is a key message of the RLC, and if Rep. Paul officially declares his candidacy the national RLC will quite naturally consider an endorsement. According to national RLC bylaws, an endorsement requires a vote of the national executive committee of the RLC and ratification by a majority of chartered RLC state affiliates. In Florida, there is likely to be a non-binding vote of the membership to guide the state RLC’s decision. The RLC has only endorsed one presidential candidate since its inception in 1990, magazine publisher Steve Forbes in his first primary attempt in 1996.

If endorsed, the RLC network — with members in all 50 states who attend their local GOP meetings and many who serve on county GOP executive boards – can serve as a foundation for the Paul campaign. To help lay the groundwork, all friends of Ron Paul are invited to join the RLC and all RLCers urged to start regularly attending their local Republican Club meetings. In a primary campaign, this direct connection with active and influential primary voters early in the campaign may make all the difference.

In preparation for a potential Paul campaign, RLCer Tom Walls set up a unofficial Ron Paul campaign news and blog site at www.electronpaul.blogspot.com.

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6. Blumel Speaks to GOP clubs about ‘the libertarian vote’

According to a 2006 study by the Cato Institute, approximately 13 percent of the American electorate can be described as libertarian, as opposed to liberal or conservative. This is a large and growing group – Cato says the number was closer to 9 percent back in 1990 – that has a higher-than-average propensity to vote.

When these libertarians vote, they overwhelmingly vote Republican — but not reliably. According to the study, about 72 percent of libertarians voted for George Bush in 2000 versus 20 percent for Al Gore, but only 59 percent voted for Bush in 2004 versus 38% for John Kerry. That’s a big swing, a much larger swing than one would expect from other voting blocs.

Why? And who are these libertarians anyway? Where did they come from? What do they believe? What does their emergence portend for the GOP?

These are questions that RLCer Philip Blumel is helping GOP groups answer with his talk, “What is libertarianism?,” that he is currently presenting to Republican groups in South Florida. In November, Blumel addressed the Latin American Republican Club of Palm Beach County in Delray Beach and the Biscayne Bay Young Republicans in Coconut Grove (Miami).

In his presentation, Blumel looks at libertarianism from three angles (historical, philosophical and political), identifies the most prominent individuals and institutions of the modern libertarian movement and discusses the role the libertarian minority plays in the GOP currently – and could play in the future.

If you would like Blumel to make a presentation at your GOP club, please call (561) 254-8458.

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7. Recap of RLC state board meeting, Jan. 27

On Jan. 27, the executive committee of the Republican Liberty Caucus of Florida met for a wide-ranging three-hour meeting at the Disney Swan Hotel in Orlando.

Finances

Treasurer Mark Cross reported that the RLC bank balance is \$454.94. This is after a December \$1,843.46 contribution to the national RLC as part of a agreement to share revenues and expenses resulting from the 2006 RLC national convention.

Membership

Membership coordinator Philip Blumel reported that the Florida RLC is the second fastest-growing RLC affiliate in the nation after Washington DC. Membership ended the year just shy of 300 members, which put it just below the goal set by the board last year. The board voted to set a new goal of 400 for 2007, and further divvied up responsibility for signing up new members between the regions of the state with board representation.

Liberty Index

RLC legislative coordinator Joe Haynes did not attend the meeting, but the board took action on the Florida Liberty Index in his absence.

At the September 2006 state board meeting, Haynes unveiled a first draft of a Florida Liberty Index using the same Nolan-chart methodology used by the popular national Liberty Index of the U.S. Congress. Using five votes on economic liberty issues and five votes on personal liberty issues, Haynes constructed an attractive and easy-to-use spreadsheet program to manage the votes and display the legislators’ rankings. Later, the index was expanded to 10 votes. However, due to the fact that most floor votes in the legislature are nearly unanimous, it was hard to choose votes that produced a meaningful result. After all, what good is an index in which all the legislators receive the same score? The Florida Liberty Index idea was tabled, pending additional input from Haynes or other RLCers.

RLC Liberty Award

While discussion on the Florida Liberty Index will continue, in the meantime the board approved board member Jerry Cameron's idea to create an annual to award legislators who best represent libertarian Republican

ideas or are the most helpful in shepherding RLC-endorsed legislation through the legislature.

The board awarded the 2006 RLC Liberty Award to former state Rep. Joe Negron. Negron actively supported Gov. Bush with his tax cuts, eminent domain reform and school vouchers. He also was one of the few legislators in 2005 and 2006 who opposed placing the term limits extension on the ballot. According to the South Florida *Sun-Sentinel* Negron “is more of a libertarian, who unlike many of his GOP colleagues doesn’t just spout small-government rhetoric, he also votes that way.” Congratulations, Joe!

Ron Paul (R-Texas) for President?

The board discussed the potential of a Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) campaign for the GOP presidential nomination. While not committing itself, the board’s consensus was clearly to embrace such a race if Rep. Paul were to throw his hat in the ring. The board approved a story about Rep. Paul that was added to the state RLC website in January.

Other

The board voted to send a letter to Gov. Charlie Crist’s office urging the appointment of former Fernandina Beach police chief Jerry Cameron to the Governor’s Task Force on Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

R.B. Lee of Kissimmee resigned from the state RLC board last September due to an illness in his family that necessitated a move out of state. Now that Lee has returned to Florida, he expressed an interest in rejoining the board and was approved to represent the Central Florida region.

Board members voted to pursue several policy and marketing opportunities in 2007 and named specific board members to take the lead on each:

- Young Republicans National Convention, July 4-8, Hollywood – Lisa Bullion
- Florida Tax and Budget Reform Commission – Steve Burden
- Presidency IV presidential straw poll, Oct. 17-20, Orlando – Mark Cross
- TABOR/Day at the Capitol, March 7-8, Tallahassee – John Hallman

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8. RLCFL calls for new GOP leadership in House

On Nov. 13, the Republican Liberty Caucus of Florida sent a letter to each Republican member of Florida’s delegation to the U.S. House urging them to vote for Rep. John Shadegg (R-AZ) for minority whip and Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN) for minority leader in the House leadership election.

According to the letter, such a move is needed to “refocus on what is not only one of our party’s central principles, but also our best selling point at the polls: fiscal responsibility. The Republican Party has to regain our credibility in this area by pursuing earmark reform, spending cuts, presidential vetoes, opposing tax increases — and by choosing solid fiscally conservative leadership.”

The endorsement of Reps. Shadegg and Pence echoed that of U.S. Rep. Jeff Flake (R-AZ), an RLC Advisory Board member, as well as the *Wall Street Journal*’s Stephen Moore, U.S. Rep. Tom Feeney (R-FL), the National Taxpayers Union, the Club for Growth and a long list of fiscally conservative organizations and individuals.

Rep. Shadegg is a member of the RLC and has a career rating of ‘libertarian’ in the RLC’s Liberty Index. Unfortunately, the party beat down this challenge from fiscal conservatives and chose Reps. Roy Blount (R-MO) and John Boehner (R-OH) for the positions.

In doing so, they also ignored the message from voters in the November election. Voters clearly were not enamored with Republican big spenders who try to preserve their conservative credentials by aggressively pandering to social conservatives or the close-the-borders crowd. Of the 19 Republican U.S. House reps that lost their job on Nov. 7, only two had better than average (for Republicans) spending ratings from the National Taxpayers Union.

“While the voters handed over leadership in the Congress to the Democratic Party, we do not believe that this shift represents a rejection of the limited government philosophy that the GOP has traditionally championed,” wrote RLCFL chair Lisa Bullion on behalf of the RLC state executive committee. “On the contrary, we believe

the Republican Party is being punished because the voters perceive that the GOP has rejected it. To win back the Congress, we must shatter that perception with genuine reform in the Congress and in our party.”

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9. Jeb: Tancredo is a “nut”

The *Wall Street Journal Political Diary* on Dec. 4 reported on an amusing rhetorical skirmish between then-Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-CO), a leading opponent of legal immigration.

Rep. Tancredo was quoted in the press saying that Miami resembled a “Third World country” and that “you would never know you were in the United States of America.” Further, he said Jeb was naïve and trying to create “create the illusion of Miami as a multiethnic ‘All American’ city.”

“What a nut,” the president’s brother told reporters. “I’m just disappointed that he’s a Republican. He doesn’t represent my views.”

While a vocal advocate of halting *illegal* immigration — a top concern of many Republicans, including RLCers — Tancredo also opposes *legal* immigration, going so far as to author H.R. 946, a 2003 moratorium on legal new immigrants.

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10. Holcombe critiques Florida’s ‘fiscal constitution’

Unofficial RLCFL advisor Dr. Randy Holcombe, a libertarian and an economics professor at FSU, published a report which gives an overview of Florida’s fiscal constitution – its strengths and its weaknesses – and points to specific areas and ideas for reform. This is particularly relevant this year, as the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission is gearing up for its once-every-20-years session.

"Florida’s Fiscal Constitution: Opportunities for Reform" was published as a James Madison Institute *Backgrounder* in December and can be found online at:

RLCers <http://www.jamesmadison.org/pdf/materials/527.pdf>

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11. Independent libertarian to run for Lee County Commission as a Republican

Gerard David Jr. garnered 29 percent of the vote as an independent last year in his campaign to beat 16-year incumbent Brian Bigelow on the Lee County Commission. Learning from that experience, he pledged to run again for the commission in 2008 – but this time as a Republican.

As the *Naples Daily News* put it on Dec. 3: “Political reality in Lee County is reflected in five of five constitutional officers and all five county commissioners being Republicans. David said he felt if he had run as a Republican he could have beaten Bigelow, who beat incumbent Doug St. Cerny in the party primary before besting David in the general election.”

To which David responded: “If you can’t beat ‘em join ‘em.”

David, 53, is a transportation company owner who has acted in TV shows like *Knot’s Landing* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and in a few movies. For more info, see: www.gerarddavidjr.com.

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12. Cameron recognized for work on Drug War

Tonyaa Weathersbee’s of the *Florida Times-Union* in Jacksonville summed up RLCer Jerry Cameron’s position on federal drug prohibition this way: “Cameron makes sense.”

In her Dec. 3 column, Weathersbee traced Cameron's career as graduate of the FBI National Academy and numerous DEA schools, a drug warrior on the streets and then as police chief of Fernandina Beach, Fla. She noted that he and his department were featured on the cover of *Law and Order* magazine for their vigilance in fighting the drug trade.

But somewhere along the line, Cameron began to believe that his efforts were doing more harm than good. In his last big bust in 1990 – 14 crack dealers in a Operation Habitual Offender – Cameron finally had enough of 'successes' in what he now sees as a failed policy.

Cameron, a RLCFL state board member and as well as a board member of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP), argues that prohibition keeps prices and profits artificially high and turns a major industry – and even neighborhoods — over to criminals and thugs. This necessarily results in violence in battles for territories and as a means for resolving disputes, just as the country saw during alcohol prohibition. It also encourages other crime, such as increased official corruption, gun trafficking and robberies.

The full article can be found at http://www.jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/120906/new_6679342.shtml.

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13. 'Radicals for Capitalism' hits the shelves

Brian Doherty got his start in libertarian activism at the University of Florida in the late 1980s. Today, Doherty is the associate editor of *Reason Magazine* – the highest circulation libertarian culture and public affairs magazine – and has just published his second book, "Radicals for Capitalism: A Freewheeling History of the American Libertarian Movement."

This 768-page book is the definitive history of the movement and is getting excellent reviews from the *Wall Street Journal* and other major publications. See: <http://radicalsforcapitalism.com/>

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14. Libertarian majority abolishes program; County concurs

On Jan. 11, the Lee County Soil & Water District abolished their mobile irrigation program pointing out that the program's cost greatly exceeded its benefits.

The program, which sent a soil expert to homes and businesses to check irrigation systems for efficient water use, cost \$202,000 annually, funded by state and county grants. Two employees were laid off as a result of the cut. The nonpartisan board – dominated by self-professed libertarians – argued that this was a waste of taxpayer money, and that such services were already provided by the private sector.

The Lee County Commission agreed. In a 3-2 vote, the county decided not to take over the program, saying the money could be better spent.

However, the Collier County Soil and Water Board is discussing taking over the program. Stay tuned.

In unrelated news, self-identified libertarian Republican Austin Cassidy was elected to the Duval County Soil & Water Board in November with 54 percent of the vote.

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15. RLCFL Chair Lisa Bullion receives YR award

After the November elections, RLCFL state chair Lisa Bullion was a recipient of the Orange County Young Republicans' Reagan's Legacy award for her volunteer efforts on behalf of GOP candidates. This included extensive door-to-door campaigning.

"This is one way libertarians can earn the recognition and respect of the party while helping out liberty-minded candidates," Bullion said.

In a recent discussion on the Cato Institute's monthly Cato Audio series, Cato's David Boaz and David Kirby of America's Future Foundation opined that one reason the libertarian faction of the GOP has less influence

than the Religious Right is that the latter dominates the party's volunteer base. In other words, the party needs them; they earned their position.

"We can do that too," Bullion said. "It starts by identifying local candidates worthy of libertarian assistance and then signing up to help. And, of course, make sure the party knows you are a member of the RLC."

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16. Burden, Blumel elected to county Republican Executive Committees

In February, two more RLCers were elected to positions of authority in their local parties. In Hillsborough County, RLC state vice chair Stevn Burden was elected to his REC, joining RLCer Jim Riis. In Palm Beach County, RLC state secretary Philip Blumel was elected joining numerous other RLCers including Bill Skinner, George Blumel and John Hallman.

"Every time a libertarian joins the leadership, the more libertarian the GOP becomes," Blumel said. "Every RLCer should join a local GOP club or even REC and run for a board position. It's easy."

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17. Join the RLC!

There is strength in numbers. The more members we have the greater influence we have on our party. Please join online (\$30) at <http://www.rlc.org/?p=Join> or print out and mail in our membership application at http://www.rlcfl.org/rlc_membership_app.pdf.

Thanks!