

On the matter of the Oregon LP Special Convention of November 6-7

I propose to clear the air on at least one extremely important point: there has been no interference by the LNC with the LP of Oregon. The LNC has taken no action with respect to the LPO, the EC has taken no action, and in this entire discussion there has been no mention of any future action by the LNC.

The Chair attended the Special Convention, as an observer, as did the Secretary. There was another LNC member in attendance, who participated entirely as a member of the LPO. (The participation of M Carling will be discussed separately.) In addition, I participated behind the scenes, in a manner and for reasons which I will go into in much greater detail.

I will make an introductory statement, I will explain that statement, and then I will repeat that statement for final emphasis.

The leadership of the LPO were on the verge of committing so flagrant and egregious and far-reaching a transgression that intervention by the LNC would have been practically imperative. That they did not is substantially owing to the presence of two Professional Registered Parliamentarians, including the Secretary.

There were two crucial factors that would have composed this transgression, with one related but tangential matter. The two crucial matters both relate to outright disenfranchisement of legitimate LPO members. But first some explanation of how I became aware of these factors, and why I played the role I did ultimately play.

Sometime about the middle of October, I was contacted by a member of the LPO who was concerned about the developing situation regarding the runup to the Special Convention of November 6-7. I was contacted simply because I am the Regional Representative for region 5N, which includes Oregon. I might have also been contacted because of my reputation for adherence to both rules and principles.

This person revealed to me some of the particulars regarding members who were not allowed to participate at the upcoming Special Convention, yet who deserved to be so allowed. That they were not going to be allowed was because the LPO leadership had decided these people were not, in fact, members of the LPO, and this person believed that decision represented a violation of the LPO Bylaws.

That Bylaws issue started earlier because the current LPO Bylaws do not appear to provide for Life Memberships. The leadership decided that the change to the Bylaws that implemented that exclusion thereby also cancelled all pre-existing Life Memberships. That matter was taken before the Judicial Committee, which ruled in favor of continuing to honor past Life Memberships. But the leadership continued to treat SOME of those Life Members as no longer members – a total of near 3 dozen, in fact.

This is where the tangential matter came into play. Some of you might have read that the Judicial Committee (JC) is currently deadlocked at 2-2. You might have wondered how it is that the JC has an even number of members. In fact, the LPO Bylaws call for 5 members of the JC. In anger with the decision of the Judicial Committee to insist on

restoration of Life Members, a petition was circulated recalling the Chair of the JC, Ms Christiana Mayer. The success of that petition rested on the exclusion from the membership rolls of those 3 dozen Life Members. If they had been counted, the recall petition would have failed. But because those 3 dozen Life Members had been rejected, the recall petition was argued to have succeeded.

That is the flagrant transgression.

The person who contacted me also mentioned that he had signed up on the order of 15 new members prior to October 5. That date is important. The Bylaws require that in order to be able to vote, a person must have been a member of the LPO for at least 30 days. The cutoff date for voting in the Special Convention then was October 6. The 15 members signed up by October 5 should have been entitled to vote at the Special Convention. But the leadership of the LPO decided to 'review' 13 of those 15 memberships – on the authority, as conveyed to me, that because the Bylaws don't prohibit such review, the leadership is therefore allowed to conduct that review. Because the review was not completed before the October 6 deadline, it was argued that those 13 members would not be eligible to vote at the Special Convention.

That was half of the egregious nature of the transgression.

The other half was the refusal to allow those 3 dozen or so Life Members to be recognized as members of the LPO eligible to vote at the Special Convention.

That was the other half of the egregious nature of the transgression.

But none of that would have implicated involvement of the LNC. I would have been among those strenuously arguing that while the Bylaws violations were flagrant and egregious, they remained a matter internal to the LPO, for Libertarians in Oregon to settle. What made the transgression far-reaching was the purpose of the Special Convention.

The Special Convention was called specifically to revise the Bylaws of the LPO. As soon as I was informed of this aspect, a direct connection between the LPO and the LNC was clear in my mind. Within a fraction of a second, I saw the connection: if the revision of the Bylaws was conducted at a Special Convention at which legitimate LPO members had been disenfranchised, then all future actions taken under cover of the new Bylaws would be null and void. Such action would have included election of new officers at their regular Convention early next year, and in particular would have extended to the selection of the delegates to the 2012 National LP Convention.

While I have great respect for the people who have served and continue to serve on our Credentials Committee, I have reason to believe they would not have taken the drastic step of refusing to credential every LPO delegate on the basis of their Bylaws as of 2012 having been revised at an illegitimate Special Convention. Or if they had made such an unprecedented decision, the rest of the Convention delegates would probably have overridden that decision. What I saw therefore was that the events of the Special Convention of early November 2010 would have rippled directly to the National LP Convention in 2012, and would have rendered highly suspect every decision made at that National Convention.

That was the far-reaching aspect of the transgression. Had the Special Convention come off as planned, and the LPO Bylaws been revised, the LNC would have HAD to become involved, because the illegal events in Oregon in early November 2010 would have poisoned the entire National LP Convention in 2012, if allowed to stand.

But that's not all. The adoption of the highly controversial Bylaws revision would have encouraged the LPO to splinter into two organizations, each claiming legitimacy as THE Oregon affiliate. This would have been a repeat of the 1995 mess, in which the LNC had to become involved to resolve the dispute that could not be settled locally.

I saw those connections practically instantly when I learned of the purpose of this Special Convention. At that point, I realized expert help was needed. (I would have been unable to attend in any case – ironically, because of a prior commitment to attend the Annual Convention of the New Jersey State Association of Parliamentarians, the New Jersey affiliate of the National Association of Parliamentarians. We were slated to adopt a Bylaws revision, and I was on that Bylaws Committee, so my attendance at that Convention was required.)

So while I do have some credentials in this regard, being a member of the National Association of Parliamentarians, I knew of two others with much greater credentials. Ms. Mattson, the LP Secretary, is a Professional Registered Parliamentarian (PRP), and Mr. Carling, also a PRP, is not only a member of the LPO but an important contributor to the construction of the current Bylaws of the LPO. I informed the person who initially contacted me that I would bring those two individuals into this discussion, with the hope that one or both of them would be able to attend the Special Convention to be on hand to advise them of the serious Parliamentary questions that had arisen.

Over the course of the next several weeks, I first urged Ms. Mattson and Mr. Carling to attend the Special Convention – one of them as an observer, the other as a member with particular interest in their Bylaws – and also assisted in further discussions regarding gathering the essential evidence in support of the claims of Bylaws violations. These included, for example, statements from many of those 35 Life Members, as well as from the 13 new members. The evidence also included e-mail exchanges between the LPO leadership and this person regarding these memberships.

Armed with that evidence, and hoping to avoid the far-reaching consequences, Ms. Mattson and Mr. Carling flew to Oregon for the Special Convention. The role they played will be reported separately.

To repeat: The leadership of the LPO were on the verge of committing so flagrant and egregious and far-reaching a transgression that intervention by the LNC would have been practically imperative.

I took my actions not to involve the LNC but to try to avoid involving the LNC.

Dan Karlan
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Libertarian since 1969