



Free New York

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The Official Newsletter of the Libertarian Party of New York

January 2025

BALLOT ACCESS BILLS REINTRODUCED IN THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY

by Andrew Kolstee
LPNY Secretary

The ballot access bills have once again been introduced in the New York State Senate and Assembly.

These bills reduce the number of signatures required for statewide candidates in an independent nominating petition from 45,000 to 15,000 and reduces the number of votes a political party needs to maintain recognition, from 130,000 or 2% (whichever is higher) to 50,000 votes. This would restore the old thresholds that were in place prior to 2020, when they were thrown into the state budget during the beginning of the pandemic. Additionally, it would change the petitioning period to 12 weeks during from May to August, when signature gathering is much more accessible with fairs and festivals.

Since the increase of the ballot access thresholds, New York has become the most restrictive state for ballot access for third parties. In 2022, when Kathy Hochul and Lee Zeldin ran for Governor, they were the only two candidates on the New York gubernatorial ballot. This was the first time since 1946 in which there were only two candidates on the ballot for that race. Libertarian Party candidate Larry Sharpe was very close to reaching 45,000 signatures, but fell short, despite having more signatures than all other

independent petitions, including Zeldin, who attempted to run on the Independence Party line.

In 2024, there were only two Presidential candidates on the New York State ballot, the first time since 1956, when Dwight Eisenhower ran against Adlai Stevenson II; and this was also the second time since 1872 when Ulysses S. Grant ran against Horace Greeley. New York was also the only state in the United States with two presidential candidates on the ballot in 2024. Between 1985 and 2024, there were only four instances there were only two Presidential candidates on the ballot in any U.S. state. The first three were in Oklahoma (2004, 2008, and 2012), and the fourth was New York (2024). Oklahoma has since eased its ballot access laws.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., who had a large number of signatures in the 2024 petition drive, spent over \$1 million, but failed to get on the ballot in New York (although due to a technicality). The Libertarian Party and the Green Party, in two different cycles, spent \$300,000 each and were just shy of reaching the required threshold to get on the New York ballot.

This makes New York the most difficult state to get on the ballot. The 2020 changes have essentially killed any chance a third party can get on the statewide ballot. Ballot

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access in New York State seems to only be available to the Democrats, Republicans, and anyone wealthy and willing to make the attempt.

Fortunately, a number of New York State legislatures have supported legislation to correct this and we very much appreciate their support.

On January 14, 2025, Mark Walczyk re-introduced Bill S01870 in the Senate. George Borrello has signed on as a co-sponsor. On January 22, 2025, a same-as bill was introduced in the Assembly by Kenneth Blankenbush. Co-sponsors are Joseph Angelino, Joseph DeStefano, Brian Miller, Michael Novakhov, and Christopher Tague.

We encourage everyone to reach out to their Senators and Assemblymembers to support this bill. In particular, if your representative is on an elections committee, we need their support first.

TRUMP INAUGURATION

by Christopher Skelly
LPNY Communications Director

As Donald Trump is sworn in today as the 47th President of the United States, the Libertarian Party of New York reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the principles of individual liberty, limited government, and personal responsibility. The peaceful transition of power is a hallmark of our republic, and we recognize this inauguration as a testament to that enduring tradition.

President Trump has articulated intentions to reduce government overreach and promote economic freedom. We are prepared to support initiatives that genuinely advance these objectives.



However, we remain vigilant and resolute in our duty to hold any administration accountable. Should President Trump's policies infringe upon civil liberties, expand govern-

mental authority beyond its constitutional bounds, or undermine free markets, we will actively oppose such measures.

LPNY APPLAUDS PARDON OF ROSS ULBRICHT

by E. Rose Leatherman
State Committee Member (JD5)

The Libertarian Party of New York is overjoyed by the recent pardon of Ross Ulbricht, founder of the Silk Road website, by President Donald Trump on his second day back in office. Ross, who was eleven years into a double life plus forty-year sentence, is now home with his family and free to begin a new chapter of his life.

Ross's case has long been emblematic of the problem of excessive prison sentences for nonviolent criminals, particularly those who find themselves targeted by state agents who wish to make an example of them. Convicted back in 2015 on charges related to his operation

of an online marketplace that facilitated trade in drugs and other black and gray market products and services, it is believed that federal agents wanted to send a message to the growing number of people who saw technologies such as cryptocurrencies and anonymous darknet platforms as a viable way to evade unjust laws or conduct business in currencies not subject to state control or taxation.

The LPNY stands firm in our belief that the state should not wield its power to instill fear in the public through arbitrary and excessive punishments of certain individuals, and continues to advocate reforms to the legal system focused on rehabilitation and restorative justice over retribution. Furthermore,



we hope this pardon will draw increased attention to the problem of overly harsh sentences for nonviolent crimes, and will encourage broader public discourse on the topics of drug prohibition and other victimless crime laws.

LPNY CONDEMNS KILLING OF ROBERT BROOKS

by **Christopher Skelly**
LPNY Communications Director

The Libertarian Party of New York is appalled and deeply saddened by the news of the killing of Robert Brooks at the Marcy Correctional Facility in Marcy, NY.

This tragic event highlights the ongoing and urgent need for reform within New York's criminal justice and prison systems.

Robert's death, at the hands of cor-

rectional officers, is a grim reminder of the violence and neglect that often permeate our correctional institutions. Every individual, regardless of their status or circumstances, is entitled to basic human rights, dignity, and safety. The failure to ensure these rights reflects a grave injustice that cannot and must not be ignored.

We demand a full and transparent investigation into the circumstances surrounding Robert Brooks's death. Accountability is crucial, and

those responsible for this heinous act must be held to the highest standard of justice.

The Libertarian Party of New York will continue to advocate for meaningful reforms, including the protection of individual rights within correctional facilities.

Justice for Robert Brooks is not just about uncovering the truth—it is about ensuring that no one else suffers a similar fate.

**Support the
LPNY and Donate!**

LPNY.org/donate

LPNY STATEMENT ON PASSING OF JIMMY CARTER

by Christopher Skelly
LPNY Communications Director

Former President Jimmy Carter passed away at the age of 100.

While Jimmy Carter was a member of the political establishment, his presidency, and post-presidential work exhibited qualities deserving both recognition and critical reflection from a libertarian perspective.

Carter's commitment to deregulation in industries such as airlines, trucking, and railroads is a legacy libertarians view positively. These measures reduced government overreach, expanded competition, lowered costs for consumers, and demonstrated that freer markets can improve lives. His championing of energy independence and recognition of the importance of individual responsibility in conservation also reflected principles of self-reliance and personal initiative.

However, we must also critique Carter's administration for policies that expanded government intervention in other areas. The establishment of the Department of Energy and the Department of Education centralized authority in ways that libertarians believe have hampered innovation and efficiency. Additionally, his imposition of wage and price controls in response to economic challenges underscored the dangers of top-down economic planning.

Beyond politics, Carter's post-presidential life was defined by humanitarian service and a focus on individual action to address global challenges, a legacy that aligns with the libertarian ideal of voluntary, community-driven solutions to societal problems.

Jimmy Carter was a man of principle and integrity, and while we may not always agree with the policies of his administration, we honor his



service to the nation and his contributions to civil society.

The Libertarian Party of New York invites Americans of all political persuasions to reflect on Carter's legacy and continue to work toward a future defined by peace, prosperity, and freedom.

SALT REDUCTION CAP

by Christopher Skelly
LPNY Communications Director

The Libertarian Party of New York believes the root cause of the controversy over the SALT deduction cap lies in the overreliance of states like New York on excessive taxation and overspending. The SALT cap simply revealed the inequities that have long existed in our state's tax structure and reliance on federal subsidies to enable unaccountable government growth.

While we recognize that the cap has impacted taxpayers in high-tax states, including middle-class fam-

ilies, the fundamental issue is not the cap itself but New York State's burdensome tax policies. Instead of lobbying for higher federal deductions that shift the burden onto taxpayers in other states, New York should focus on reducing taxes and making the state more affordable for its residents.

High taxes in New York drive individuals and businesses to leave for more fiscally responsible states. This exodus erodes our tax base and harms our economy. Instead of blaming the SALT cap, the state must take responsibility and work

toward meaningful tax reform, streamlining spending, and prioritizing economic freedom.

The Libertarian Party of New York urges state policymakers to reduce income, property, and corporate taxes. By creating a less oppressive fiscal environment, New York can prosper without relying on federal tax code provisions to subsidize poor fiscal decisions. We stand for liberty, personal responsibility, and the elimination of excessive government intervention—values that must guide any conversation on taxation and spending.



Joseph Dobrian

1956-2024

Former LPNY Vice-Chair, Secretary

by Andrew Kolstee
LPNY Secretary

Joseph Dobrian, who served as Vice-Chair and Secretary of the Libertarian Party of New York, passed away on November 22, 2024 at the age of 68.

Joseph Dobrian was born on October 12, 1956 in Iowa City, Iowa, a son of Walter and Louise (Lindquist) Dobrian. Raised in Iowa City, he attended the University of

Iowa and worked at the consulting firm of Dobrian, Frances, Bowie, & Long. He moved to New York City and worked as a freelance write for the Wall Street Journal and other publications.

He was involved in the Libertarian Party of New York in the early 2000s. He served as State Vice-Chair (2006–07; 2009–10) and Secretary (2007–09). He ran for office three times: U.S. House NY

District 8 (2002), Manhattan Borough President (2005), and Mayor of New York City (2009).

Following retirement, he returned to Iowa City and wrote fiction and essays. He authored five novels, one collection of short fiction, two volumes of essays, a book on writing skills, and one translation. Dobrian was also lifelong lover of animals. Dobrian died on November 22, 2024 at the age of 68.

See pages 6-7 for County Reports

Don't see your county listed?

**We are looking for Libertarians
to organize new County Affiliates!**

Contact us for more details!

affiliates@lpny.org

COUNTY AFFILIATE NEWS

CHAUTAUQUA

NEXT MEETING:

Tues., Feb. 11, 2025 @ 7:00 PM
and Zoom
(second Tuesdays)

CONTACT:

Andrew Kolstee, Chair
akolstee@lpny.org

LEARN MORE:

www.chautauquaLP.org
fb.com/chautauquaLP

CHEMUNG

CONTACT:

Craig Colwell, Chair
ccolwell78@gmail.com

LEARN MORE:

lpchemung.org

COLUMBIA

NEXT MEETING:

Wed., Feb. 19, 2025 @ 7 PM
Google Meet
(third Wednesdays)

CONTACT:

Scott Hoskins, Chair
scottdhoskins@gmail.com

CLINTON

CONTACT:

Zachary Remian, Actng County Chair
zremian@lpny.org
(518) 310-6664

DUTCHESS

NEXT MEETING:

Sat., Feb. 15, 2025 @ 5 PM
Location Varies
(3rd Saturdays)

CONTACT:

Robert Cocomello, Chair
Catrina Rocco, Vice-Chair
info@dutchesscountyp.org

LEARN MORE:

dutchesscountyp.org

ERIE

NEXT MEETING:

Held Monthly via Zoom

CONTACT:

Duane Whitmer, Chair
chairman@eriecountyp.org

KINGS (BROOKLYN)

NEXT MEETING:

Tues., Feb. 18, 2025 at 3 PM
@ Fourth Avenue Pub
76 4th Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11217
(3rd Tuesdays)

CONTACT:

Christopher Skelly, Chair
cskelly@cskelly.tech

MADISON

CONTACT:

Mark Braiman, Chair
mbraiman@lpny.org

MONROE

NEXT MEETING:

Thurs., Feb. 6, 2024 @ 7 PM
(first Thursdays)
Contact us for the link.

CONTACT:

Steve Becker, Chair
drsbecker@aol.com

LEARN MORE:

monroecountyp.org
Ask about the Google Group
and social meetings

NASSAU

NEXT MEETING:

Thurs., Feb. 13, 2025 at 7 PM
@ Landmark Diner
(2nd Thursdays)

CONTACT:

Jon Gunther,
Executive Committee Chair
jonguntherlibertarian@gmail.com
Blay Tarnoff,
County Committee Chair
LPNY@eblay.com

NEW YORK (MANHATTAN)

MONTHLY SOCIAL

Wed., Feb. 12, 2025 at 7-9 PM
@ PubKey Bar
85 Washington Pl.
New York, NY 10011
(second Wednesdays)

CONTACT:

Chance Haywood, Chair
chaywood@lpny.org

NIAGARA

CONTACT:

Wendi Szabo,
Acting County Chair
wendiszabo@gmail.com

ONEIDA

NEXT MEETING:

Contact Keith for the link

CONTACT:

Keith Redhead, Chair
kredhead@lpony.org

ONONDAGA

CONTACT:

Rachel Becker, Chair
reb4128@rit.edu

ORANGE

CONTACT:

Juan Ayala, Chair
livefree@juanrayala.com

PUTNAM

NEXT MEETING:

Thurs., Feb. 13, 2025 at 7 PM
at McCarthy's
374 Route 52, Carmel, NY 10512
(2nd Thursdays)

CONTACT:

Bill O'Donnell, Chair
billod10704@gmail.com

QUEENS

CONTACT:

John Clifton, Chair
mrjclifton@yahoo.com

RENSSELAER

Since October 2022, the Rensselaer County Libertarian Party has been collecting food items and monetary donations to give monthly to StreetSoldiers Rensselaer.

NEXT MEETING:

Wed., Feb. 5, 2025 at 6:30 PM
Alexis Diner, North Greenbush
(first Wednesdays)

CONTACT:

Jennifer O'Connor,
Acting County Chair
joconnor@lpony.org

RICHMOND (STATEN ISLAND)

NEXT MEETING:

Thurs., Feb. 20, 2025 @ 7 PM
@ Coffee and Collectibles
(3rd Thursdays)

CONTACT:

Susan Overeem Cummings,
Chair
susanovereem@gmail.com

SARATOGA

CONTACT:

Naz Garabedien, Chair
nazareth.garabedian
@lawsonproducts.com

SCHOHARIE

CONTACT:

Lora Newell, Chair
lnewell@lpony.org

SUFFOLK

CONTACT:

Robert Schuon, Chair
rschuon@mindspring.com

TIOGA

CONTACT:

Sara Price, Chair
sprice@lpony.org
Rich Purtell, Vice-Chair
rpurtell@lpony.org

ULSTER

NEXT MEETING:

Mon., Feb. 10, 2025 at 6:30 PM
Hickory BBQ, Kingston, NY
(second Mondays)

CONTACT:

Sam Kniffen, Chair
samkniffen01@gmail.com

LEARN MORE:

www.UlsterLP.org

WAYNE

NEXT MEETING:

Sat., Feb. 22, 2025 at 10 AM
Yellow Mills Diner
2534 NY-31, Palmyra, NY 14522
(last Saturdays)

CONTACT:

Jim Dayton, Chair
jdayton@lpony.org

LEARN MORE:

lpwaynecounty.org

WESTCHESTER

CONTACT:

Rajib Maitra
Acting County Chair
rajib.maitra1@gmail.com

YATES

CONTACT:

Jeff Bradley, Chair
jbradley@lpony.org

LPNY DIRECTORY

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Daniel Castello Vice Chair
Andrew Kolstee Secretary
Chance Haywood Treasurer
Christopher Skelly Communications Director
Mark Axinn Fundraising Director
Justin Carman IT Director
Richard Purtell Legislative Affairs Director
Pietro Geraci Outreach Director
Paul Grindle Political Director
Catrina Rocco Volunteer Director

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Daniel Castello
 Platform Committee Chair
Andrew Kolstee
 Rules Committee Chair

STATE COMMITTEE

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Mark Axinn (JD1) | Andrew Kolstee (JD8) |
| Morry Davis (JD1) | Duane Whitmer (JD8) |
| Paul Grindle (JD2) | Vacant (JD8) |
| Gary Popkin (JD2) | Pietro Geraci (JD9) |
| Evan Lebrecht (JD3) | Catrina Rocco (JD9) |
| Justin Carman (JD3) | William Schmidt (JD9) |
| Vacant (JD4) | Jeffrey Denecke (JD10) |
| Vacant (JD4) | Jonathan Gunther (JD10) |
| Vacant (JD4) | Vincent O'Neill (JD10) |
| Daniel Castello (JD5) | Christian Padgett (JD10) |
| James Fitch (JD5) | Robert Schuon (JD10) |
| E. Rose Leatherman (JD5) | Blay Tarnoff (JD10) |
| Mark Braiman (JD6) | Francisco Olvera (JD11) |
| Charles Dorgan (JD6) | Irwin Mark Weinblatt (JD11) |
| Samuel Hordeski (JD6) | Vacant (JD12) |
| Steven Becker (JD7) | Susan Overeem-Cummings (JD13) |
| Justin Pelletier (JD7) | Chance Haywood (ex-officio) |
| Sean Phelan (JD7) | Richard Purtell (ex-officio) |
| James Ziobro (JD7) | Christopher Skelly (ex-officio) |
| Maura Botsford (JD8) | |

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