

Yellow is still a Primary Color – by Katy Brumbelow

It is June 2018. I receive mail from a little-known group called the Libertarian Party of Oregon, containing a ballot and a request for money. (It's that time again, by the way.)

A few weeks prior I had taken my kids down to Salem to meet with our state senator and district representative. Afterwards, my kids and I sat in the gallery and listened to some pretty racy debate (my youngest was two at the time). The kids even got to see a bill introduced. While I enjoyed this, I was struggling with increasing feelings of disenfranchisement and frustration. I was trying to educate my kids about the democratic process and somehow inspire hope in them, without having much confidence of my own.

My newly discovered, newly opened ballot had an empty space next to District 27. I was familiar with the job description of state house district representative, having just interviewed her. I thought to myself, "What the heck?" and wrote my name in. I did call my husband first, as he is a great resource for testing which ideas of mine make it past the initial cut.

A few weeks later I received my letter of congratulations. I had won the write-in nomination! I have to admit that I hadn't put a whole lot of thought into it – just filling in empty spaces. Now I would have a good laugh with my husband over this one. I laughed, and thought, and prayed, and stewed. And re-read the job description. Then I got serious. I thought about what I would change. I wrote a candidate statement for the voter's pamphlet. I learned that in order to submit it I needed to pay \$750 or get help from a PAC or else do the grunt work of getting 250 signatures. Seeing how strapped for the cash the LPO seems to be, and having nothing but free time as a homeschooling mother of four kids then 8 and under, I decided we were embarking on a campaigns unit and our family began the trail.

During some of the hottest days I can remember, my kids and I went knocking on doors in the West Hills of Portland gathering signatures to get my candidate statement into the Voter's Pamphlet for the general election. There would be a libertarian choice in my district! I met over a thousand people during that summer. I had some of the best conversations I have ever had, and learned that we libertarians are not as strange as we seem. Many of my ideas resonated with the people I talked with, from across the political spectrum.

Well, I didn't win. But I did get 3% (just under 1000) votes in my district. (Just imagine if I had begun the process in May rather than mid-July?) Every Libertarian in my district received a letter from me and I was launched from the sidelines. (All of my campaign contributions went to pay for stamps. There is currently the same 25 cents in my political checking account that was there at beginning of October 2018.) Here I am, two years later, fully committed to helping the Libertarian Party of Oregon establish some credibility and energy. Very shortly after this brush with campaigning, I realized how labor intensive it is and how we need to build grassroots support for limited government. I decided to fill a position on the board in early spring 2018 and then was re-elected in June of last year.

So here you are, asking, "What can I do?"

It's not too late to start your write-in campaign. Email candidates@lporegon.org. Here's hoping the last two months have alerted you to the need for more representative government. Now we have a team to help you get started, and unlike mine, they are not under the age of 10. Or, as always, just send us a buck or two. It all counts. Do what you can. Maybe you know someone who needs to step up. Tell them.