

Election 2004 Analysis

How Libertarians Faired in Michigan Elections

By Ernie Whiteside

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What do the results of the 2004 election say about the prospects for Liberty in our lifetime? Our nation, state, county and city have told us where their minds and hearts are ... or have they? First, let us examine the macroscopic national picture.

Candidate	Votes Rec'd	% of Votes	% Elig. Pop.
George W. Bush (R)	58,978,616	51.1%	27.1%
John F. Kerry (D)	55,384,497	48.0%	25.4%
Ralph Nader (I)	394,578	0.34%	0.18%
Michael Badnarik (Lib)	377,940	0.33%	0.17%
Michael A. Peroutka (CST)	129,842	0.11%	0.06%
David Cobb (Green)	105,525	0.09%	0.05%
Total Number of Votes in the 2004 Presidential Election			115,427,728
Est. Voting Age Pop. of the United States (July 1, 2003)			217,766,271

Nationwide, a record turnout of voters at the polls made news headlines! George W. Bush enjoyed the highest number of popular votes cast for any winning presidential candidate and John F. Kerry enjoyed the largest number of popular votes ever cast for a losing candidate. The real headline should read, "Non-Voters are the Sleeping Bear." Had even half of the non-voters turned out for Michael Badnarik and the other half for David Cobb, the election would have been a four way race with no clear victor.

I continue to be amazed that almost half of the nation is letting the other half rule them! I know from past surveys that most of these non-voters are NOT apathetic; they simply do not see how either of the apparent victors will provide them with real representation. Demopulbicans and Republicrats both offer America a future with larger, more expensive and more intrusive government. ONLY Libertarians offer America any hope that government will get smaller, less expensive and less intrusive.

The Michigan political picture is not dramatically different than that of the nation. My analysis is somewhat different though. Each statewide race listed has a votes received and percent of ballots cast. Statewide candidates are also compared to percent of votes cast for the Secretary of State in the 2002 general election. If any political party's principal candidate receives 5% or more of the total votes cast for all candidates for the office of secretary of state in the last preceding state election, either in the state or in any political subdivision affected, that political party is eligible to make its nominations by the direct primary method. Also, if the principal candidate of a political party receives a vote equal to 1% or more of the total number of votes cast for the successful candidate for the office of secretary of state at the last preceding general November election in which a secretary of state was elected, that political party is eligible to have the name of

its candidate printed on the ballots at the next ensuing general November election, and a column provided on the ballots for that party.

Candidate	Votes Rec'd	% of Ballots	% Sec State
Michael Badnarik (LIB)(President)	10,548	0.22%	0.34%
David Cobb (GRN)(President)	5,311	0.11%	0.17%
Michael Peroutka (UST)(President)	4,962	0.10%	0.16%
Ralph Nader (NPA)(President)	23,934	0.49%	0.77%
Scotty Boman (Board of Education)	136,274	2.8%	4.4%
Ernie Whiteside (Board of Education)	59,873	1.2%	1.9%
Michael Corliss (UoM Board of Regents)	75,118	1.5%	2.4%
James Hudler (UoM Board of Regents)	63,930	1.3%	2.1%
Bill Hall (MSU Board of Trustees)	89,092	1.8%	2.9%
Michael Miller (MSU Board of Trustees)	80,634	1.7%	2.6%
Jerry Jankiewicz (WSU Board of Gov's)	99,342	2.0%	3.2%
Thomas Jones (WSU Board of Governors)	80,036	1.6%	2.6%
Leonard Schwartz (Sup Court Justice)	443,049	9.1%	14.3%

Total number of Ballots Cast Statewide	4,863,255
Total number of Votes Cast for Sec of State in 2002	3,099,208

All third parties putting forward candidates for the various education boards enjoyed similar support, or lack thereof, by the voters. The average vote take was 1.8% with the range being from 1.2% to 3.0%. U.S. Taxpayers consistently enjoyed slightly more than average support; Greens and Natural Laws had slightly less than average support. Libertarians enjoyed average support but were inconsistent in their vote take covering the full spectrum of possibilities.

U.S. Taxpayer candidate, Karen Adams, was the high vote taker with 144,751 votes (3.0%) and Libertarian, Scotty Boman came in second with 136,274 votes (2.8%). Scotty Boman's excellent showing may not be a true reflection of party strength, since he shares his name with Scotty Bowman a famous former Detroit Red Wings hockey coach. The Natural Law Party top vote taker was Katherine Dern with 87,475 votes (1.8%) and the top Green vote taker was Peter Ponzetti with 85,557 votes (1.8%).

All of the third parties maintained their ballot status for the 2006 general election but none of them succeeding in taking 5% or more of the 2002 Secretary of State vote needed to become a eligible to participate in primary elections.

The excellent vote take of Leonard Schwartz for Supreme Court Justice is an indicator of how much better candidates do when they must run in a NON-partisan race. In other words, he was not on the ballot as a Libertarian, even though he is a member of the Party. Random votes for a candidate of unknown party affiliation helped him dramatically.

Presidential candidates for all third parties took VERY small percentages of the vote. This clearly demonstrates how lukewarm support for any third party really is. Voters may have sympathy for, or leanings toward, any of the third parties, but when it comes to using their vote to support the candidates for the highest office in the land, they generally

vote for major party candidates. Still, we can learn something from the numbers. About 0.1% to 0.2% of the voters strongly support third party candidates. And, 1.1% to 2.8% have preferences for third parties but do not have a strong sense of support for candidates that they think will loose in races for higher offices.

Libertarian candidate for president, Michael Badnarik did twice as well as Green, Taxpayer and Natural Law candidates in the election and nearly as well as Ralph Nader. This demonstrates that our presidential and other higher office candidates, their campaign teams and the Party in general are doing relatively more for our lower office candidates than those of the other third parties. It should also be noticed that Badnarik enjoys the only enjoys the support of 0.22% of Michigan voters while enjoying 0.33% of voters nationwide. This demonstrates that the party members in Michigan did not support his candidacy as well as he supported our party.

Now, we will look more microscopically at candidate performance on the county level. Here we will evaluate not only the presidential and education board races but a race for the state representative. We will compare his performance with that of the various other candidates for state representative.

Generally, presidential and education board candidates enjoyed support in Monroe County similar to, or slightly better than, that enjoyed statewide when evaluated as a percentage of ballots cast; 1222 votes were cast for Badnarik and votes cast for education board candidates ranged between 757 and 2,316 with an average of 1,721 votes being cast for Libertarians.

Libertarian candidate Lance Piedmonte, actively campaigned for state representative district 56. He was a candidate with connections in the Republican Party and name recognition in Monroe.

Candidate	Votes	% of Votes
Herb Kerhl (DEM)	21,551	49.1%
John Manor (REP)	20,670	47.1%
Lance Piedmonte (LIB)	1,068	2.4%
Robert Kull (GRN)	594	1.4%
Total Votes Cast		43,883

Piedmonte's vote take was similar to those taken by state representative candidates statewide. The average percentage of votes taken by Libertarians was 2.1% with the ranging being from 0.9% to 3.0%. The support for Libertarians did not appear to be affected by Democratic or Republican leanings, close elections or a fourth candidate, although if the fourth candidate ran with No Party Affiliation, they did much better than the Libertarian (3.3% and 4.1%) and appear to have taken votes away from the Libertarian in one race but not in the other. Taxpayers and Greens did not appear to take votes from Libertarians. The Taxpayer did nearly as well as Libertarian and the Green was somewhat lower in vote take.

The estimated population of Monroe County that is voter age is 112,827 of which only 74,674 cast ballots. IF these residents had divided their votes between the Libertarian and Green candidates in about the same proportion as the voters did, the Libertarian would have been in a tight three-way race.

The U.S. Congressional races were also very interesting with many contested by multiple third party candidates. Libertarians ran in all fifteen districts. In all but two races, Libertarians fared as well or slightly better than other third party candidates. One Detroit district preferred the Green candidates and a Taxpayer candidate fared better in district seven than any other third party candidate for U.S. Congress (3.0%). Libertarian candidates averaged 1.2% of the vote with a range of 0.7% to 2.0%. Libertarian vote take did not appear to be affected by Democrat or Republican leanings, although Greens fared better in heavily Democrat districts. The presence of other third party candidates on the ballot did not appear to affect the vote take of Libertarians.

A recent survey of voters indicated that 70% of all likely voters had heard of the Libertarian Party. While we enjoy greater name recognition than at any time in the 30 year history of the Party, we do not appear to be any closer to winning partisan elections for state and national office. The non-voting population may be source of future improvement in the Party's vote take and cooperative efforts including Greens, Taxpayers and Natural Laws should be encouraged since those who lean in the direction of any of these parties do not appear to be likely to vote for one of the other third parties in upcoming elections.

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