

# LP National Convention Journal

George Autry, Holly Springs, NC  
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## THURSDAY

My train from Raleigh to DC pulled into Union Station two hours and one minute behind schedule. This left me less than an hour and a half to wait in the cab queue, negotiate downtown DC traffic to the hotel, check in (I saw Scott Horton check in just ahead of me), and register for the convention. I tried to attend the welcome reception, but there was no food and very few attendees while I was there. I gave up and went back to my room and had room service about 9:30.

## FRIDAY

This morning, I went back to registration to check up on some questions I had. I also went to the credentials committee to see if there was a possibility of getting seated in a delegation that was not full. This is how I became a delegate at the 1996 and 2000 conventions, but competition for LP delegate slots has tightened considerably since then. I didn't attend the NCLP state convention this year to get elected as a delegate. I was told that I would have to talk to different state chairs to see if they needed and accepted delegates after the convention had started.

At nine I went to the main ballroom where the delegations are seated and the convention was scheduled to start. I went to talk to the NCLP delegation chair and learned that our bylaws prohibit the addition of delegates after the state convention. Next I talked to Virginia, but their bylaws don't allow out-of-state delegates. I got some hints about other states that might need delegates, and ended up talking to the Oklahoma delegation chair. He had vacancies and his state's bylaws allow adding delegates, including out-of-state delegates. But he had to do some checking and I haven't heard yet whether I will be accepted. Stay tuned.

Because I am reporting for the Mises Club of the Carolinas, and am a sustaining supporter of the Mises Institute, I intend to focus the rest of my report on the fortunes of the Mises Caucus of the Libertarian Party, of which I am also a member and supporter. The Mises Caucus, organized by Michael Heise and supported by Tom Woods, Dave Smith, Scott Horton, and many other supporters of Austrian Economics, swept the elections for Libertarian National Committee positions at the last national convention in Reno (the "Reno Reset"). This created a firestorm of controversy within the party which puzzled me at first. But I have come to understand that the schism in the party is between so-called left libertarians, who believe that the focus of libertarianism is to insure that every alternative (i.e. non-traditional) non-aggressive lifestyle is supported if not celebrated, and the Austrian School libertarians who willingly tolerate every non-aggressive lifestyle, but who believe that the realities of economic law favor most traditional lifestyles for very cogent social reasons.

The first three hours of the business of the convention was consumed in a battle to seat delegates who had been submitted by a state but had somehow been disqualified and not included on the credentials committee list. Michigan had a list of 34 delegates and 41 alternates, of which only 7 had been seated when the credentials committee reported. I don't know the details of the Michigan case, but I suspect it has something to do with machinations of either the Mises Caucus or their opponents.

Several delegates had signs saying “Mises Caucus Vote No” or Mises Caucus Vote Yes”. These signs were held up as standing votes were taken, so it is safe to assume that those who stood for No when the No signs were up and voted Yes when the Yes signs were up were supporters of the MC position. No other group seemed to have that level of coordination, but the group in favor of seating the contested delegates was a rowdy bunch. Whenever they stood to vote for or against a motion, they loudly chanted “SEAT THEM ALL! SEAT THEM ALL!”

The largest group of contested delegates were from the Michigan delegation. They were eventually credentialed and seated, which I understood as a setback for the MC. I later was able to get some of the details of the Michigan situation. After their state convention it was alleged that 13 of the voting delegates at that convention were not actually qualified to vote under state party bylaws (probably because they had not been party members long enough). The state party judicial committee ruled that these voters had not been credentialed, and also ruled that only seven of the previously elected delegates would have been elected on the assumption that all 13 bogus votes had gone to them and were then removed from the equation. This may not be an entirely accurate account but it is the best I’ve been able to piece together.

This is purely speculation, but it is not unreasonable to think that the entity that tracked down the technicality in the Michigan LP bylaws and brought the violations to the attention of the judicial committee is most likely the Mises Caucus. If the leaders of the MC thought that the Michigan slate of delegates posed a threat to their party dominance, and found a legal method to mitigate the threat, they would be remiss as leaders by taking no action. But I also think that attitude would be seen as undemocratic and therefore un-libertarian by many, including even some MC members or allies, so the party remedied the situation by overturning the ruling of the judicial committee.

My observations from the morning session makes me think the Mises Caucus represents roughly half of the convention delegates, but I don’t think they hold a majority, and I have no idea what other factions may be aligned with or against them or on which issues. What has surprised me is the strong support for Robert F. Kennedy Jr. at this convention. After a luncheon at which Gabriel Shipton, younger half-brother of Julian Assange spoke about his brother’s trials and the history, purpose and significance of WikiLeaks, I attended a speech by RFK Jr. His speech emphasized the Bill of Rights and was very well written to appeal to libertarians. One of his promises is to pardon Edward Snowden and drop all charges against Julian Assange on Day One, bringing applause from the crowd. But he ignored Ross Ulbricht, even as shouts of “Free Ross!” filled the air.

Actually, between lunch and the RFK Jr. speech, I skipped the business meeting, grateful that I was *not* a delegate and not obligated to attend. I spent the time writing much of the foregoing. I am a little sorry I didn’t attend, as it was reported to me that the session degenerated into obscene invective shouted into multiple microphones simultaneously. One delegate was “physically removed” (ala Hoppe) by the Sergeant-at-Arms. I’m looking forward to seeing the YouTube clips.

After RFK’s speech, I got dinner, then attended the Vice Presidential debate between Larry Sharpe and Clint Russell, the MC endorsed candidate. Dave Smith moderated. After the debate, a straw poll was held and Clint was favored by 52%, which meant that he then debated Vivek Ramaswamy, also moderated by Dave. Before the debate began, Vivek was granted time to make a short address, which went over very well with the audience. But in the actual debate he eventually moved to suggesting a merger of the libertarian movement and the MAGA movement, which didn’t go down as well,

particularly since he was suggesting that our goal as a party should be to gain influence in the upcoming administration (assuming Trump wins). He made some solid arguments, but Trump will never be acceptable to purist libertarians. Vivek elicited many boos defending Trump, which makes me concerned that a significant part of the convention will just try to boo Trump off the stage tomorrow evening.

There was a comedy show scheduled at 9:30. I planned to go, I thought it was going to be Dave Smith but it wasn't and I'm too old to stay up that late anyway, so I'll finish for the night.

## SATURDAY

At breakfast I heard speaker Peter McCollough, an American cardiologist. His talk was about the Covid regime and particularly about the history of harm associated with vaccines. After breakfast I had to run an errand, then I checked in on the morning business meeting. When I arrived, the presidential candidate debate, originally scheduled for this afternoon, was already underway. I noted that Michael Rectenwald, the MC endorsed candidate, got the most enthusiastic audience response, even receiving standing ovations for several points. This was a further indication to me that the MC is the most dominant faction at this convention.

One of the candidates, a surgeon named Charles Ballay, while strongly condemning mandated vaccinations, also defended the use of vaccines administered voluntarily. He was drowned out by boos from the delegates.

I also learned from an article forwarded by Kent Misegades, that the cause of yesterday's chaotic afternoon session was the Trump invitation. The person removed by the Sergeant-at-Arms was shouting "F\*ck Trump" into the microphone and shoving people. I am even more concerned that tonight's Trump speech could devolve into a fiasco.

I just returned from lunch with Dave Smith as speaker. Needless to say he was supportive of the MC, and admitted that he was one of the main causes of the division in the party stemming from the Takeover (Dave was the first to use the term). He also stated that his reason for joining the party and the MC was in response to criticisms of Ron Paul coming from a former LNC chair (Nicholas Sarwark, but Dave never named him). He addressed an issue that had come up in the Presidential candidate debate, what is the purpose of the Libertarian Party, is it to win elections or to spread the libertarian message? He strongly disputed the idea that the party should always come first, pointing out that compromising on principle to gain electoral success gains you nothing but compromised office holders. I was able to chat with Dave after the talk and got a selfie.

Dave took a few questions at the end, and one delegate asked him to exhort the audience to maintain decorum at tonight's Trump appearance. Dave said we should certainly treat him with respect and applaud if he makes a good statement, but to boo the really bad ideas. He also added that he knew libertarians were going to do whatever they want, regardless of his advice. I have about six hours until the Trump speech. I may spend a little time in the business meeting.

At the business meeting, I met a young lady in the Connecticut delegation, who invited me to sit in a vacant chair in their section. As we listened to the LNC chair candidates give their campaign pitches I got some more details from her perspective about the seating of contested delegates. She adamantly maintained that there was no justification for the National party organization, specifically the LNC

under MC leadership, to interfere in state party vetting of its delegates. I have to agree with her on that score. She also insisted that it was the LNC under MC leadership, that brought the case to the Michigan judicial committee, as I speculated earlier. But though decidedly not a MiCauc, she insisted that she gets along well with her other delegation members who are.

Incidentally, the delegate on the other side of me was Michael Rectenwald's campaign manager, so now I have a "Rec the Regime" pin on my badge. Before I could have a conversation with her, the vote for LNC chair was called and non-delegates were requested to clear the floor, so I left and came back to my room to retrieve my phone and write this. I'm going back down to the meeting now. The Secret Service is putting up barriers on escalators and stairways. I also ran into a Trump impersonator on the way up to my room.

It is now 4:28. I just returned from the business meeting, where Angela McArdle received 49.2% of the vote for LNC chair. Like I said earlier, about half but not quite a majority. But I will be surprised if she doesn't get elected on the next ballot. Meanwhile, people are already queuing up to go through security for the Trump speech at 8:00. I grabbed a sandwich on the way up. I guess I'll get changed and head back down in about an hour to try and get a decent seat.

It took 20-30 minutes to get through security and find a seat at about 5:24. The general public was invited to the event, so about half the attendees were Trump fanatics. After about an hour, Angela McArdle came to the mic and announced that the first few rows had been promised to delegates and asked that any non-delegates (i.e. Trump supporters) in those rows please move back. There was a large central aisle dividing the room in half, front to back. I was seated behind the aisle, so I ended up surrounded by Republicans. I had a nice conversation with the lady sitting next to me, who was curious about libertarianism.

Trump finally took the stage at 8:37. His speech seemed less off-the-cuff than some Trump speeches I've seen. He basically ticked off all of the things he had accomplished during his term that libertarians would agree with, while emphasizing that Biden is the worst president in history and will destroy the country with communism and Marxism if elected to a second term. This made me remember that RFK Jr. and Vivek had not really mentioned Biden at all in their talks.

My fears of the delegates disrupting the talk proved unfounded, but the Trump fans were a different matter, frequently leaping up and shouting "We want Trump! We want Trump!". I occasionally heard boos from the front, but not loud enough to drown out the speaker. But when the Trump fans got going, you just had to wait it out. The delegates did respond so that "We want Trump!" sometimes morphed into "End the Fed! End the Fed!".

Trumped concluded by saying that if we Libertarians wanted to be winners, we should nominate him. This did not receive a favorable reaction from the delegates.

## SUNDAY

Breakfast was with Mark Skousen, financial publisher and organizer of FreedomFest. After breakfast, I spent a little time in the business meeting. The morning was taken up with nominations of presidential candidates, then nominee speeches. About 10:30 I left to walk a few blocks to a local market. When I got back, it was about time for lunch. The speaker was Spike Cohen, the Libertarian VP candidate in 2020, Jo Jorgensen's running mate. Spike is a very impressive communicator.

After lunch, the delegates embarked on the first of six ballots, finally coming down to Chase Oliver, Michael Rectenwald, and NOTA (None Of The Above, a choice on every Libertarian ballot). After the vote was tallied, there was a razor thin margin but neither candidate had 50%+. Under the bylaws, the lowest vote-getter is eliminated, but since the highest vote-getter, Chase Oliver, did not have a majority, the last ballot listed Oliver and NOTA. If NOTA had won, the Libertarian party would not have had a presidential candidate this year. Of course, that did not happen, Chase Oliver is the LP presidential candidate for 2024. This was announced around 9:30.

I watched most of the afternoon session on C-Span in my hotel room. I dressed for the Gala scheduled for 7:30, but when I arrived the convention was nowhere near breaking up. I popped into the convention hall again and got a selfie with Spike and another with Clint Russell. I also had a nice talk with Jeff, (I've forgotten the last name) who is the national coordinator for the MC. This was well before the announcement that Rectenwald had been defeated, so that was not a topic of discussion. We did discuss the factionalism in the party and I told him what I had written on Friday about the difference between left-libertarians and Austrian School libertarians.

About 8:00 I went back to the "Gala" and had dinner at a table for 10 with a father whose wife was a delegate and his 7 or 8 year old daughter, in a huge room with seating at tables for 200, with about a dozen and a half other people. Came back to my room to finish this off, and watched the announcement of Oliver's election, and listened to his victory speech. The convention is probably still going on (it's 11:35), they have not elected a VP candidate or the five at-large representatives on the LNC, but C-Span cut their coverage at 10, so I'll have to find out what happened tomorrow before I leave to catch my train.

So for the second time, the Mises Caucus candidate for president was not selected by the convention. I didn't spend much effort learning about Mr. Oliver since I was already committed to Rectenwald and am not a delegate anyway. I did not hear anything in his victory speech that indicated that his victory was any way a repudiation of the Mises Caucus, or that his priorities would differ much from the MC. So I hope the MiCaucs will support him wholeheartedly in this election cycle and get the best result possible in November. Unfortunately, with RFK Jr. to soak up the protest vote, the reality is that we could come in fifth, behind Trump, Biden, Kennedy, and either Jill Stein or Cornell West.

## MONDAY

I spoke to two delegates from Georgia and learned that the convention continued until 1:30 am. There were three ballots for VP, and the winner was Mike Ter Maat, one of the unsuccessful POTUS candidates. Out of 800 votes, Rectenwald lost by 6 votes, and Russell (VP candidate) lost by 31. So the support for the MC was not enough to get those candidates over the top. It is interesting that on the final ballot for POTUS, NOTA got 36%, which means 36 percent of the delegates were willing to risk not having a candidate in 2024 to electing Chase Oliver. I don't know if these were all MC delegates who were angry over the elimination of Rectenwald with such a slim margin, or if there is some other reason they object to Oliver. It is safe to say that the divisions in the party were not healed at this convention.

P.S.

After reading several of Chase Oliver's tweets over the last few years, I am starting to understand why there was such a negative reaction to his election. He seems to support the woke left-libertarianism that the Mises Caucus was created to combat.