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Teen Libertarian Starts New Political Organization

Westmoreland County Libertarians will advance ideas of smaller government, lower taxes

Trent Somes, III, may not be old enough to vote but that didn't stop him from creating a new political organization dedicated to ensuring that the residents of one western Pennsylvania county can enjoy all of their freedoms, all of the time. The 17-year-old junior at Penn-Trafford High School founded the Westmoreland County Libertarians (WCL) after learning about libertarian ideals and realizing that they represent the best hope for securing our country's future.

The WCL held its inaugural meeting yesterday afternoon on the steps of the historic Westmoreland County Courthouse in Greensburg, PA. Following opening remarks by Libertarian Party of Pennsylvania (LPPA) media relations chair Nick Frollini, the WCL adopted its organizational documents, elected its initial officers, and formally approved a petition to the LPPA for recognition as the official Westmoreland Country affiliate of the Pennsylvania branch of the third largest political party in the country.

In addition to Trent, who was named chair of the WCL, elected were: Nick Testa, vice chair; Alexander Davis, finance chair; Evan Buchanan, treasurer; and Thomas Strang, secretary. While the other members of the board are old enough to vote, the average age is just 20 – making them among the youngest group of Libertarian leaders in the country.

LPPA Chair Shawn Felty remarked, “I am incredibly proud of the work of Trent and his colleagues to organize the WCL. With more than 1,300 Westmoreland Country residents registered as Libertarians, they have the potential to make a strong push to advance the ideas of liberty and to bring forward candidates for local, county, and state-wide office who will work to shrink the size of government, reduce taxes, and respect the rights of all individuals.

“At a time when so much of our state government is dysfunctional – when the governor and the legislature still haven't passed a budget, when they are discussing increasing our sales tax to the second highest level in the country while continuing to hand out \$700 million per year in corporate welfare – it is, frankly, quite refreshing to see a group of young people who understand freedom and personal responsibility. I look forward to receiving and reviewing the WCL's petition to affiliate with the LPPA and expect that it will receive approval at our next board meeting.”

New WCL chair Trent Somes, III, noted, “I am truly humbled to have been elected as the first chair of what I know will grow to be a force to be reckoned with in Westmoreland County. We will work hard to get our message out – particularly via social media – and are already developing plans to encourage the creation of affiliate organizations on college campuses across the county. Together with the numerous Libertarians in our region, we will create a clear path for individuals who believe in the ideas of limited government and liberty to run for and win public office. It will be a long and challenging road, but we're just getting started.”

The efforts of the WCL, and other groups across the Commonwealth offering alternatives to the old parties, would be greatly aided by the adoption of Senate Bill 495, the Voters' Choice Act, currently under consideration in the state legislature. The VCA would replace Pennsylvania's existing ballot access laws, which effectively keep third party candidates off of the ballot, and which were recently ruled to be unconstitutional by a Federal judge, and end the unfair treatment of minor party and independent candidates seeking to serve Pennsylvania, finally bringing real choice to the Pennsylvania voting booth.

The Statement of Principles of the national Libertarian Party Platform reads, in part, "We, the members of the Libertarian Party, challenge the cult of the omnipotent state and defend the rights of the individual. We hold that all individuals have the right to exercise sole dominion over their own lives, and have the right to live in whatever manner they choose, so long as they do not forcibly interfere with the equal right of others to live in whatever manner they choose."

The Libertarian Party of Pennsylvania is a member of the Pennsylvania Ballot Access Coalition and believes that all citizens of the Commonwealth deserve choice at the ballot box. Learn more about the LPPA at www.lppa.org. Learn more about Westmoreland County Libertarians at www.fb.com/WCLibertarians.

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Contacts:

Shawn Felty, LPPA Chair
chair@lppa.org
1-800-774-4487

fb.com/LibertarianPartyofPennsylvania

Nick Frollini, Media Relations Chair
media-relations@lppa.org

Trent Somes, III, WCL Chair
tsomes3@gmail.com
fb.com/WCLibertarians