

The Volunteer Party Platform

February 20th, 2016

Preamble

We, as people of Missouri, have come together in common cause against a government that has betrayed us. It has sold us out to the national parties and allowed them to steal seats in our legislature without the need for a single vote. It has impoverished us with taxes, only to hand our earnings over to corrupt officials who swindle public funds for the sake of private interests. It has demoralized the citizenry, squandered our industry and silenced our voices.

Thus we have witnessed policemen turn into our oppressors rather than our protectors; we have seen our education fall short even as its administrators multiply; and we have watched our prisons overflow to the point that they are no longer safe. It is in this atmosphere of crisis, and in the spirit of liberty, that we question the current system of involuntary, general-purpose taxation.

How can a government expect its people to pay taxes for the ‘public good’, when it commits to a broad range of activities that could be morally objectionable? Should a person who is religiously opposed to the death penalty be forced to pay taxes which fund state executions? Should the devoted libertarian pay taxes to a state that uses ‘eminent domain’ to strip families of their homes? All men and women of principle – whether they are environmentalists, educators, social crusaders, business owners, labor advocates, humanists, spiritual believers or parents – will find it very difficult to pay taxes for the state’s general use without bearing the title of hypocrite.

Nor does any good that a tax may accomplish erase any of its evils. The security and comfort of thousands cannot atone for the suffering of even one innocent. We cannot – no, we **MUST** not – be part of a system that would punish a person who refuses to pay for acts that violate one’s principles.

We know that the current establishment has no answer to the culture of despair it has helped to create. The broken heart of this generation will not be mended with a policy adjustment. No slogan, no catchphrase, save the cry of **FREEDOM**, will bring ease to the troubled souls who labor to a master’s tune.

Declaration of Principles and Resolutions

Therefore we, as citizens, set forth the following platform for the creation of the Volunteer Party of Missouri:

Voluntary Taxation

The central concern of the Volunteer Party is, and shall always be, allowing citizens to contribute to the public welfare as they see fit. As long as government may feed itself with impunity upon the people's labor, property and commerce, it will seek to be the master, not the servant.

- 1) The people should not be required to pay blindly, in good faith, to any agency that routinely engages in waste, deception, or actions of questionable morality.

We are RESOLVED, to allow citizens to pledge their taxes only to the government programs that they choose to support, divided as they see fit, and that no pledge should exceed five years in length.

- 2) A tax for general revenue, without a predetermined purpose, is a shackle upon the conscience of the people and a temptation to unscrupulous men.

We are RESOLVED, that all general revenue tax money shall be required by law to be spent by specific agencies, in a prescribed manner, for certain uses, as stipulated publicly beforehand.

Election Reform

It is incredible that the entrenched political parties, the Democrats and Republicans, allowed nearly half (46%) of the state's House candidates and over half (59%) of the state's Senate candidates to run unopposed in the last November election. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of these unopposed candidates have also had no opponent in their party primaries, which means that the winners for 64 of the 180 seats (35%) were already decided *before a single vote was even cast!* This is not a functioning republic. It is taxation without representation.

- 1) Legitimate law-making and taxation will only occur when the General Assembly becomes a true representative council of the people, and not a hand-picked group of political party favorites.

We are RESOLVED, to support laws that will curb political party influence, and to repeal laws that have institutionalized parties and favored them over independents.

- 2) The current method of plurality voting asks for the minimum amount of information from voters when more could easily be obtained, and this results in negative voting strategies which undermine the democratic nature of elections.

We are RESOLVED, to support alternative voting systems that ask for more feedback, such as a voter's ranking or preference for each candidate.

- 3) Missourians deserve better than a 3-hour span, not of their choice, to exercise their prerogative to vote, free of hardship.

We are RESOLVED, to create a holiday for each election, in which only necessary enterprises may remain open, and all needed employees shall not be required to work more than four hours, and any hours so worked shall receive extra compensation.

Transparency

We live in a dark time when most government information is some form of propaganda. Records are rarely clear, and they are never complete. Sometimes they are difficult to find at all. The public cannot responsibly pledge its taxes or elect its sponsors under such a cloud of confusion. It is not acceptable for an official to be able to hide hundred-dollar dinners under the bland name of “travel expenses”. Nor is it tolerable that the affairs of our legislature are hidden beneath a heap of words, and the average bill is roughly the length of a novel. A government that wishes to lead with the confidence of its people must be honest, articulate and precise.

- 1) Records of how taxes are spent – budgets and accounts – should be one of the most important records kept by a government agency, yet even public schools utilize budgets that are often hidden, vague and lacking in details.

We are RESOLVED, to demand that all public funds be accounted for in a standard format; that this format records the specific service or good purchased and how it was, or will be, used; and that these records shall be readily available both in physical and electronic format, and issued to a pledge-holder upon request.

- 2) Laws should be passed in the spirit of simplicity, as a form of good governance, and not for the purpose of trading political favors or deceiving the public.

We are RESOLVED, to restrict legislative action to passing statutes for a single purpose, without multiple laws, e.g., “riders”, passed in a single vote.

- 3) A citizen should be able to know all of the laws under which they are governed, which is currently impossible, even for citizens who are lawyers.

We are RESOLVED, to reduce Missouri’s statutes in both their length and their number, and to remove as much as possible all vague, redundant or contradictory language.

Personal Freedom

Our country is founded upon the principles of liberty. The most important of these is trust in the individual, to make their own choices and to face the consequences, for good or ill. If we are not allowed by our government to make the “wrong” choice, we are not free; nor are we trusted. We are *managed*, like children. Is it any wonder, then, if we act out? A people kept prisoner – no matter how pleasant the cage – are a frustrated, self-destructive people. We must, therefore, learn to trust in each other’s ability to choose, and demand that our government do the same.

- 1) Privacy is not a privilege granted by government; it is an individual right. State and local governments should not lay claim to information without consent of the individual; nor should they be able to demand it as a condition for receiving general services, especially in public education.

We are RESOLVED, that government tracking and monitoring of citizens is forbidden as a felony, and that public schools do not ask children for private information without the consent of their parents.

- 2) Eminent domain, in many instances, has become legalized theft for the benefit of corporate franchises and government revenues. A state which uses its power to enrich itself or others upon the misfortune of its citizens, while claiming it is for the greater good, is both a thief and a hypocrite.

We are RESOLVED, to outlaw the government seizure of private property for the benefit of commerce, public enterprise, or any purpose other than the direct and immediate needs of public health and safety.

- 3) The purpose of law is to protect others, not to manage their choices. Whenever non-harmful actions are penalized or become crimes, freedom is imperiled.

We are RESOLVED, that no law shall punish or financially impugn a citizen for actions which cause no direct harm to the safety of another’s person or property, particularly with regard to the choice of parents in the education of their children.