

# LP COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT REPORT

**TO:** Libertarian National Committee, Inc.  
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**FROM:** George Getz, Press Secretary  
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## ■ MEDIA REPORT 2002

SUMMARY: Obviously the biggest media event over the past three months was the National Convention in Indianapolis, so much of this report will focus on that. But first an overall view to put the months of January through August in perspective:

The average number of monthly media contacts has continued to improve over last year, and is just a shade below where they were during the last presidential year. The number of monthly interviews also remains about 20 percent higher than in 2001 and 2000.

Media interest in the party was generated by issues such as the drug war strategy and our role in the Bob Barr race; our opposition to “nanny state” regulations on eating, smoking etc.; the ever-expanding surveillance state; and, of course, the convention.

Perhaps the brightest news is that LP spokespeople have made additional appearances recently on major TV shows such as “Crossfire” and “The O’Reilly Factor.” In just the past two months – July and August – Steve Dasbach has been “caught in the Crossfire” three times. (More on those in a minute). And since March, we have scored a total of seven interviews on CNN, Fox, and C-SPAN’s Washington Journal.

This seems to indicate that we are continuing to make headway on one of our most difficult media challenges – landing in the “regular guest” Rolodex of bookers for the talking head shows.

Our op-ed program continues to generate placements in newspapers around the nation, and we have now moved to a broadcast fax system to allow us to get them out more efficiently.

### THE NUMBERS:

- From January through the end of August, we averaged **122.3 media contacts** a month. That’s up 18% from the 103.7 contacts we averaged last year. (And it’s hovering close to the 130 media contacts a month we averaged during the 2000 presidential year.)
- From January through the end of August, we averaged **62.6 interviews** a month. That’s up 19% from the 52.6 interviews a month we averaged last year.

- From January through the end of August, we booked **17 TV interviews** – seven of them on major, national networks (Fox, CNN and C-SPAN).

■ **THE CONVENTION:** Attracting publicity for the 2002 convention posed a twin challenge not seen since 1993 in Salt Lake City: The event was to be held in a non-presidential year, and in a location not considered a media center, such as New York, Washington, or Los Angeles.

We were aware that the national media might have limited interest in the actual news value of the convention – the election of a National Committee and new national chair. So we decided to concentrate on saturating the state and local media with information about the event and selectively contact the national media.

Using the Bacon’s CD-Rom software, we created a new statewide list of Indiana media. That list was supplemented by a list of “friendly” contacts developed by the Indiana LP’s Brad Klopfenstein. We ended up with a combined, and perhaps party overlapping, list of 463 people.

They all received a series of press releases, including a convention preview; a promotion piece for all of the major speakers; a hard news release announcing the election of a new national chair; etc.

We also hit our national media lists with the releases, then followed up with phone calls and e-mails to reporters at *USA Today* and other national papers; to AP and other wire services; to bookers at all the talking head shows; and to C-SPAN’s “Washington Journal” to pitch an interview with the incoming national chair.

The result?

The total number of credentialed media attending the convention was two to three dozen – which is relatively small compared to our three most recent conventions in Washington and Los Angeles.

But we also got two very pleasant surprises.

- **Surprise No. 1:** We attracted reporters from *every* local network affiliate – ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox – and two of them (Fox and ABC) showed up twice. We have no way of knowing how many interviews they conducted as they wandered around, but we handled interview requests for Ed Thompson, Carla Howell, Mark Rutherford, David Nolan and three or four others.
- **Surprise No. 2:** We scored two national TV appearances, and a nationally distributed – and largely favorable – story from the Associated Press. On July 3, Steve Dasbach appeared on CNN’s “Crossfire” with hosts Bob Novak and Paul Begala to discuss the convention. And on Sunday, July 7, Geoff Neale was the featured guest for a 45-minute segment on C-SPAN’s “Washington Journal.” (C-SPAN also taped three speeches over the course of the convention – those of Harry Browne, Neal Boortz, and Bill Masters.)

Print coverage included a page-one story in the city's major daily, *The Indianapolis Star*; and coverage by *Insight* magazine, the American Politics Journal, and the following Indiana papers: the *Greenfield Daily Reporter*, the *Muncie Star-Press*, the *Alexandria Times-Tribune*, and the *Frankfort Times*.

The event also generated 15 radio interviews, which were heard on approximately 3,160 stations – largely because reporter Jerry Snook of the 1,800-station Metro Networks taped five stories, three of which were carried nationally. Libertarians from Florida and Pennsylvania also did convention-related interviews with their home stations.

Overall, we got better media coverage than we had expected – but less than we had hoped for.

## ■ Drug war strategy/Bob Barr race:

Our plan to target Bob Barr generated a flurry of media activity in August.

- We contacted reporter Jim Burns from CNS, who did an interview with Ron Crickenberger on August 7 about the medical marijuana ad featuring a moving testimonial from multiple sclerosis sufferer Carol Miller. That interview triggered a call from Fox News in Atlanta, which asked for a copy of the tape.
- On August 12, National Journal online interviewed Ron about the race, which led to call the next day from Robert Youn at the CNN's Political Unit in Washington, who also wanted a copy of the ad. Though neither ad was featured in a CNN story as far as we know, it's clear that the potential to have an impact in Congressional races is one way to pique the media's curiosity.

■ **Nanny state, surveillance state:** As long as these topics keep generating calls, we'll keep writing press releases on them!

### **Nanny state:**

- Our August 1 release on an obese New Yorker's lawsuit against the fast-food industry for "causing" his heart attacks generated 11 calls and a TV appearance by George Getz on Larry Klayman's "Judicial Watch." George was pitted against a personal injury lawyer who had actually won several such cases.

Amusing aside: The conversation turned to a case involving someone who died of carbon monoxide poisoning while barbecuing – *indoors*. The attorney admonished the manufacturer for failing to put a warning label on the grill, and seemed taken aback when George quipped: "That was a case of the gentle hand of Darwin at work."

- Our June 21 press release on a lawsuit against Southwest Airlines by "jumbo" flyers angry at being charged for two seats generated five calls.

In addition, the fax tax issue generated an online video appearance on Sam Donaldson's ABCNews.com show in late March, and a follow-up appearance on his radio show in August. Steve did both interviews.

We predict that our opposition to “nanny-state” issues like smoking regulations and fat taxes will generate even more attention for the LP, especially as groups promoting a so-called obesity crisis continue to weigh in. (Recall that a March press release opposing new restrictions on cigarette marketing generated 10 calls, an April press release about a California proposal to tax soda generated 17 calls, and an April 17 op-ed on the fat tax was printed in 10 newspapers and magazines.)

### **Surveillance state:**

These issues continue to strike a nerve with a public increasingly uneasy about government excesses in the War on Terrorism.

- Our July 17 press release on the TIPS program (Terrorism Information and Prevention System) attracted 14 media calls and 11 interviews – which were heard on 77 stations. June releases on airline profiling and the Homeland Security Agency resulted in 10 calls.

One final topic that’s been working well for us: Iraq. Our August 8 press release, “Don’t Attack Iraq,” got 10 media calls, and the related op-ed was printed in seven papers. Normally press releases on foreign policy are a dud – except when the U.S. is about to go to war or Americans are killed overseas. The possibility of Americans perishing in Iraq, combined with the fact that the issue is inextricably linked to the 9/11 attacks, means this will continue to be an incendiary issue.

**■ NATIONAL TV:** In the last three months, LP spokespeople have appeared in 10 TV interviews, bringing our total to 17 for the year. The previous section on the convention noted two of the major interviews: Steve Dasbach on “Crossfire” and Geoff Neale on “Washington Journal.”

But in August the LP made two more appearances on “Crossfire:”

- On August 2 producer Debbie Burger called and said, “We’re doing a fun show tonight. President Bush is going on vacation and we’re doing a segment on whether the government should just go ahead and mandate a monthlong vacation for everyone! Something tells me you Libertarians wouldn’t approve of that.”

We scheduled Steve to play the “vacation scrooge,” and on the other side was environmental activist and author of “The End of Work,” Jeremy Rifkin. Steve found a way to take the pro-vacation side, however, by suggesting the government mandate yearlong vacations for Congress, which would give them less time to raise taxes and write more regulations.

- On August 27 “Crossfire” called again, this time to discuss the U.S. Agriculture Department’s food pyramid, of all things, and whether it has been giving Americans bad dietary advice. The other guest was former Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman.

Those two August TV interviews, combined with the Judicial Watch interview on fast-food lawsuits, confirm the media's interest in "nanny-state" issues: government-mandated vacation, government-guided eating, etc.

And they also confirm a positive trend for the LP, namely, that the media is starting to think of the LP as the "go-to guys" when they need a reliable, principled voice against the nanny state.

- **Summary of the year's 7 major national TV interviews and topics:**

Crickenberger on "O'Reilly Factor" on March 6 – Drug War ads  
Masters on "Washington Journal" on March 14 – War on Drugs  
Getz on "O'Reilly Factor" on May 7 – Let Mike Tyson Box  
Dasbach on "Crossfire" on July 3 – LP convention  
Neale on "Washington Journal" on July 7 – LP convention  
Dasbach on "Crossfire" on August 2 – Gov't-mandated vacation  
Dasbach on "Crossfire" on August 27 – USDA's food pyramid

## ■ OTHER MEDIA NEWS:

- **Op-eds:**

Although production hit a lull in the months immediately preceding the convention, we are now picking up the pace in an attempt to make up for lost ground. By the end of August we had gotten 55 op-eds printed, and our goal is to produce at least three per month for the remainder of the year.

The two most recent LP commentaries have gotten pretty good play: Our August 20 article opposing an attack on Iraq was printed in eight papers – five of which had never published us before. And the 9/11 anniversary piece that we faxed out on September 6 had been scheduled to run in four papers as this report was written on September 7.