

Field Operations Report to the Libertarian Party of Illinois

October 9, 2021

Kankakee, IL

Field Operations Division Director, Les Deffner
Field Operations Division Deputy Director, Blake Hanson
Membership Director, Kevin Mahoney
Volunteer Director, Lorraine DeNardis-Albert
Activism Director, Keith Zelinske
Campus Outreach Director, Elizabeth Arnold

Prior to my accepting the position of Field Operations Division Director in December of 2020, Field Ops Division was without leadership for about six months.

With the changeover to Civi-CRM, and the loss of access to our former executive document vault, I am fortunate that my predecessor Paul Durr was happy and willing to hand off to me what materials and resources he had available. Recently we've re-established a new vault for use by senior leadership.

As Director, I have worked very hard to update our divisional policy manual, files, training documents, and other resources. Among my top goals for 2021 were to restore a stronger relationship between the Field Ops Division and the Chapter Chairs. While this endeavor continues, I am confident that the State Party's connection to the chapters is markedly improved over the past year. Our divisional officers exist to support the chapters in both training, resources, guidance, and direction. The smaller a chapter is, the more important the Field Ops officers are.

Early in 2021, excepting for the Membership Director Kevin Mahoney, all divisional director positions were vacated. It took a few months to fill those positions, with the tasks being largely handled by myself and Deputy Director Blake Hanson. Early goals were to feel out where opportunities for growth existed. In 2022, our Deputy Director will be more focused on work as a liaison to outside groups for the Libertarian Party of Illinois to work with, helping to build inroads with other groups on like-minded situations and with regards to event coordination.

Our Membership director reports that through August 31, we had 294 New Members sign up for the state party this year. 157 New Member packets have been sent out, the backlog mainly coming from the change-over to CiviCRM, and more work to do.

This year, two chapters fell inactive, either due to local leadership decisions, or through attrition. However, this has been offset by new chapter developments.

One established chapter, the Stateline Libertarians relocated to Stephenson County from Winnebago County. The exciting part is that we have seen organic new growth chapters in northern Illinois. New chapter Winnebago County LP has been credentialed within the past month, comprised of mostly new LPIL party members. Northwest Cook County LP has been established in early 2021 with experienced party members.

2020 proved to be a very difficult time for chapter chairs to retain party momentum, and membership. In 2021, We've seen a restoration of chapters being able to get out in the community, promote liberty, a return to in-person chapter meetings, and participate in parades and protests. In spite of the pandemic, our three strongest areas currently are northeastern Illinois, central Illinois, and central-east Illinois.

Three years ago in 2018, Northern Illinois chapters began holding a regional picnic in August of each year. With the first year of the pandemic, the 2020 picnic was cancelled. 2021 saw a return of the event. Such events are beneficial for chapters to be less-political, and more family and visitor friendly. It also affords candidates a less formal opportunity to meet party members and build support. This year, Central Illinois chapters held their first regional picnic. We are looking forward to the Southern Illinois affiliates to plan theirs in 2022.

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Dormant chapters such as Macoupin County LP and Capital Cities LP have turned over their Facebook pages to the State Party for management and development. If a website is akin to property, a Facebook page is a leased storefront. Those resources have already been built out, and efforts to use them to re-ignite new chapters will be easier as they are now LPIL assets.

Areas of significant potential for new chapter/re-established development exist in South Cook County, Will County, Fulton County, Rock Island & Mercer Counties, and the Illinois counties just east of St. Louis. The challenge is to find leaders willing to take ownership and provide consistent presence.

I'd like to offer a special word of thanks to Executive Director Justin Tucker who has significantly helped the Field Ops efforts to establish new chapters. Chapter Development Director Ian Peak took on the role only a couple short months ago, but prior to that, and even since, Justin has been a great driving force. This party is fortunate to have him.

With the uncertainty of the college campuses due to the pandemic, our campus outreach efforts remain stalled, but I foresee our Campus Director Elizabeth Arnold being more successful in her efforts in 2022.

With the new Civi-CRM, additional training continues to be rolled out to our Activism Director and Volunteer Directors. The Volunteer Director Lorraine DeNardis-Albert was able to help staff the LNC 2021 quarterly meeting in Chicago, and our Activism Director Keith Zelinske helped assist the LP of Chicago for protests. In 2021, Lorraine's focus will be on locating LP volunteers interested in managing campaigns for LP candidates.

Early in 2021, the joint decision was made by Political Division Director Jake Leonard and me that the position of Precincts Director ought to be an inter-divisional position. In non-election years, the PC Director reports to the Field Ops Director with a primary goal of recruiting and training Precinct Committeepersons on how to be the grassroots ambassadors for the party, and to prepare for the following campaign year. That's the time for setting a strong foundation for the year to come. During the upcoming 2022 election year, the PC Director becomes significantly important as they will be needed to rally PC's for the Ballot Access petitioning drive. Currently, this position is vacant, and has been for the past year and the State Party is in need of someone who has strong communication and organizational skills to fill the role. To use a military analogy: it's a lot like preparing your grassroots army for battle. If Field Operations is able to do so and succeeds in its efforts during the off years, when those PC "troops" are deployed under Political Division's command, they will be better able to succeed in their efforts to obtain ballot access.

As a military veteran, I've a longstanding value that leaders are to lead by example. As a former ordained minister, I strongly believe the notion that leaders are supposed to be servants to those who they lead. Leadership is service. Many great ideas have failed for lack of quality leadership. Many poor ideas have succeeded due to having good leaders.

Michael Jordan once said, "Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships."

A few years ago, a non-libertarian friend of mine said, "When you're trying to take down the two old parties, you can't be on your C-game. You need to step it up." He's absolutely right. We as a party need to keep stepping up. For my part, I'm working to build a winning team for this party, more professional, more credible, and more formidable and to also be the best servant for each of you in the service of liberty and seeing all citizens of Illinois have their freedoms restored.

Respectfully Submitted,
Les Deffner
Field Operations Division Director