

even advocated the abolition of women's corsets and proposed that the name of the United States be changed to Columbia.

Greeley's personality did not help either. On the campaign trail Greeley was often shrill, self-righteous, and intemperate, and he ended up alienating as many voters as he attracted. When the election was over, most voters concluded that they were better off with the incompetence of Grant than with the eccentricity of Greeley, and Grant was easily re-elected. In what was perhaps a symbolic end to a doomed party, Greeley died before the electoral votes were cast, and with his passing the Liberal Republicans quickly disintegrated.

SEE ALSO: Campaigns, Presidential; Limited Government; Political Parties in American Elections; Presidential Election of 1872; Protectionism; Reconstruction.

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Libertarian Party

LIBERTARIANS BELIEVE THAT the government's intervention in the economy and personal life should be limited. Because neither of the two major parties fully endorses this position, the Libertarian Party is the institutional mean through which libertarians try to elect representatives to public office to promote their policies.

The party had little success in challenging the monopoly of the Democratic and Republican parties during its almost four decades of existence. As do other minor parties in the United States, the Libertarian Party faces a number of institutional and financial

obstacles, in addition to voters' mistrust in the viability of such parties.

The party was founded on December 11, 1971, by a group of people disillusioned with the two major parties, and held its first national convention in 1972 in Denver, Colorado. Although the first Libertarian presidential ticket received only 2,691 popular votes (a mere 0.003 percent of the total vote), it secured one electoral vote from Roger MacBride, a Republican elector from Virginia who became the Libertarian Party's candidate for president in 1976. His vote for the Libertarian candidate for vice president, Theodora Nathan, was the first electoral vote cast for a woman in U.S. history. In 1978, Ed Clark received five percent as a candidate for governor of California, and Dick Randolph became the first Libertarian elected to state office as a Representative in Alaska.

The 1980 presidential election represented the best result of a Libertarian ticket, with Ed Clark and David Koch receiving 921,299 votes, the only occasion when the party rose above one percent at the national level. Currently, the party claims more than 200,000 registered voters and more than 600 people elected to public office.

Libertarians stress their ideological differences with both Democrats and Republicans. They criticize what they see as an excessive interference with the working of the free market, coming mostly from Democrats who favor high taxes and government welfare. Yet, they are equally critical of what they see as the Republican corporate welfare policies of handouts to business. Libertarians favor a laissez-faire governmental approach to the economy: lower taxes, less regulation of business and labor, and privatization of welfare and Social Security. On social issues, they also disagree with both Democratic and Republican positions, but especially the latter, whose social conservatism conflicts with the libertarian notion that the government should not interfere in personal lives. They favor strong protection of individual rights and civil liberties, claiming that each individual has the right to control his or her own body, actions, and speech.

Therefore, libertarians support privacy protection and sexual freedom, and oppose government interference in reproductive rights, including access to abortion. They strongly opposed the Patriot Act, and believe that marriage and other personal relationships must be treated as private contracts, solely defined by the

individuals involved. Libertarians believe that instead of fighting real crimes, the government's resources are wasted fighting what they call victimless crimes (drug use, prostitution).

The libertarians' view is that individuals should retain the right to voluntarily assume the risk of harming themselves in the exercise of free choice. In foreign affairs, libertarians militate for a position of neutrality for the United States and its withdrawal from international organizations and alliances, more lenient immigration policies, and free trade.

Calling themselves the party of principle, libertarians consider that their position is not just an approach to politics based on the tenet of self-government; unlike the policies endorsed by the two major parties, theirs is also the only one that is consistent with the purpose of government envisioned by the founding fathers. They believe that the conventional liberal-conservative dimension is inadequate to capture their position; instead, they promote the Nolan Chart, developed in the early 1970s by David Nolan, one of the founders of the Libertarian Party, which uses the response to a number of questions about economic and social issues to map separately, along an economic dimension and along a social dimension, the positions of voters, parties, and candidates.

They claim that the two-dimensional mapping offered by the Nolan Chart is more appropriate in highlighting the distinctive position of the Libertarian Party, and shows how the monopoly of two major parties over the government leaves a large number of citizens unrepresented.

According to a Rasmussen Research poll conducted in 2000, which used the Nolan Chart to map the positions of a representative sample of American citizens, 16 percent of respondents were libertarians. Nonetheless, obstacles such as single-member district plurality elections, presidentialism, and legislation unfriendly to third parties are a tall order, so it is unlikely that the Libertarians will be able to overcome them and make any significant gains in the foreseeable future.

SEE ALSO: Conservatism; Liberalism; Two-Party System.

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Liberty Party

THE LIBERTY PARTY was a short-lived political party in the United States around the 1840s that had as its main focus the abolition of slavery. It could be considered the forerunner of the Free Soil and Republican parties.

The Liberty Party formed as a splinter group of the American Anti-Slavery Society. This occurred when several members of that organization grew disaffected with the society's leader, William Lloyd Garrison. These members held that the abolishment of slavery could be achieved through conventional political means, while Garrison championed more radical action, believing politics, and the Constitution itself were broken. Among these were several prominent philanthropists, including Arthur Tappan, Theodore Dwight Weld, Gerrit Smith, and William Jay; writers John Greenleaf Whittier and William Goodell; and Salmon Portland Chase, who became a well-known senator and governor of Ohio and, later, the chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1839, these and other disaffected members created the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. In 1840, this group held a national convention in Albany, New York and formed their own political party, the Liberty Party, with the abolition of slavery as the sole plank in its party platform.

Attorney James G. Birney, an outspoken abolitionist publisher and former slaveholder, ran unsuccessfully as the Liberty Party candidate for president in 1840. He earned only about 7,000 of the roughly two million votes cast for president. Improvements in local organization, combined with popular concerns over the annexation of Texas, caused the party to grow. In the 1844 election, Birney garnered about 62,000 votes out of the roughly 2.5 million votes cast for president. Birney might have polled better, but for a forged letter that appeared in many Whig newspapers that made him appear soft on slavery. In the 1844 election, Birney played spoiler. Whig candidate Henry Clay lost the election by about 38,000 votes. Had Birney not run, it is likely that his 62,000