

ELECTION IMPACTS REFORMERS, LIBERTARIANS

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Tuesday's general election did little to change the face of the state legislature and gave the state its first 100 percent Republican-controlled congressional delegation.

But the election outcome's biggest impact may have been on the state's Reform and Libertarian parties. Preliminary results indicate that the Reform Party will retain its status as a recognized party through the 1998 election, while the Libertarian Party will cease to exist as a recognized party in the state.

State law mandates that recognized parties receive 10 percent of the vote in a presidential or gubernatorial election in order to maintain their status as recognized parties, State Election Board Secretary Lance Ward explained. The Reform Party's presidential candidate, H. Ross Perot, received 10.8 percent of Oklahoma's presidential ballots, while the Libertarian Party's candidate, Harry Browne, received only .46 percent of the votes. Those results are scheduled to be certified by the State Election Board on Friday.

Pending the results' certification, Ward said, "The Reform Party will remain a recognized party in the state, having received 10.8 percent of the vote. All that was required was that they receive 10 percent. The Libertarian Party will cease to exist once the results are certified."

That means, Ward added, that in order for the Libertarian Party to have candidates appear on future ballots that they will have to seek the signature of several thousand registered Oklahoma voters again.

"Essentially, it means that they have to start all over," said Ward.

There are two routes the party could go, Ward added. They could seek recognized party status, meaning voters could register to vote under the party's name, it could hold a primary and could field a candidate in any race, or they could become an unrecognized party, having only the right to have the party's candidates for president and vice president appear on the general election.

Becoming a recognized party requires the signatures of registered voters equal to or more than five percent of the electorate participating in the general election. To become an unrecognized party, only three percent of those signatures is required.

The Libertarian Party was an unrecognized party in 1992, rising to recognized status for the 1996 election. The party conducted its first primary election — for US Senate — and fielded candidates in the Fourth District congressional race and 45th House District race. Each candidate finished a distant third, garnering from 1.2 percent to 3.5 percent vote.

Those voters currently registered as members of the Libertarian Party, Ward added, will automatically become registered independents once the general election results are certified and the party is declared to no longer be recognized.

The Reform Party employed a similar

manner to get a position on this year's ballot, obtaining the signatures of five percent of the number of voters participating in the last general election.

Besides its presidential and vice presidential candidates, the Reform Party fielded one legislative candidate — Mike Thompson in House District 48 — who received 2.9 percent of the ballots in that three-way race.

A new challenge, Ward noted, now faces the Reform Party:

It must field a gubernatorial candidate in 1998 or it risks losing its status as a recognized party.

"The law is clear," Ward explained. "To remain a recognized party, parties have to receive 10 percent of the votes in a presidential or gubernatorial election. If the party doesn't file a candidate, it can't get that 10 percent of the vote, and therefore, would cease to be a recognized party."

Ironically, it was the Libertarian Party which had the larger number of registered voters going into Tuesday's election — 141 compared to the Reform Party's 129.

Currently, the Reform Party also has a suit pending against the State Election Board. Filed in late October, the suit alleges the board, its members and employees acted illegally when they failed to have new voter registration forms and absentee ballot applications printed that included the party as a recognized party.

CONGRESSIONAL SPENDING FOR '96 ELECTIONS REACHES \$469 MILLION

From Federal Election Commission

■(WASHINGTON) U.S. Senate and House candidates involved in Tuesday's general election raised \$562 million and spent \$469 million from Jan. 1, 1995, through Oct. 16, 1996. This represents a modest increase over 1994 totals. Congressional campaign fundraising increased by 8 percent, while spending is up by 4 percent. Senate and House candidates reported \$145.1 million cash balances as they entered the last three weeks of the campaign.

Through Sept. 30, all Congressional candidates, including primary losers, reported raising over \$617 million and spending \$489 million. This is an increase of 12 percent in fundraising over '94 and only 10 percent in spending over both '92 and '94 totals of \$445 million.

Senate races for '96 include that group of small population states where campaign

finance activity has traditionally been less than for corresponding states. This remains true for 1995-96. Senate candidates have raised \$187.8 million and spent \$168.3 million. They reported \$28.8 million in cash reserves for the last weeks of campaigning.

In contrast, House races have increased 27 percent in fundraising and 23 percent in spending. Candidates have raised \$374.1 million and spent \$300.7 million, with \$116.3 million left for the final weeks.

Funds from candidates themselves, either in the form of loans or direct contributions, are down by more than \$22 million, mostly due to a decrease in the amounts Senatorial candidates have used of their own funds — \$19.4 million compared to \$42.2 million in '94. (This is predominantly due to the last California Senate race.) House candidates have reported tapping slightly more of their

See *Spending*, page 3

Capitol Network News

A division of

GIT, Inc.

P.O. Box 61206

Oklahoma City, OK 73146-1206

Office (405) 528-2546

Fax (405) 521-9807

Net: gitinc@ionet.net

Web: <http://www.exoweb.com/git>

Darwin P. Maxey, Publisher

Mary Millen, Editor

COPYRIGHT© GIT, Inc., 1996. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted, transcribed, stored in a retrieval system or translated into any language in any form by any means without the written permission of GIT, Inc. The data contained herein is obtained from government sources, but it is not warranted as to the accuracy by the publishers.