

The Libertarian Party

T o m M a r t i n

U . S . S e n a t e



Tom Martin, U.S. Senatorial candidate

Tom Martin is the Libertarian Party of Pennsylvania's candidate for U.S. Senate. He attended Pennsylvania State University, where he received a BA in biology in 1981, and he now works as a software engineer. He ran for Congress in Ohio's 19th district in 1996 and he won 4.4% of the vote on a campaign budget of only \$750.

Tom Martin adheres closely to the Libertarian Party's platform, so he believes that a person has the right to determine his or her own actions without government coercion, as long as those actions do not infringe on the freedoms of others. He also believes that the government has no right to dictate how people spend their money. On these grounds, he opposes taxation, which he equates to a form of slavery, because the exchange is not voluntary. He is socially liberal and opposes the Bush administration's tactics in the wars on terrorism and drugs. However,

he is economically conservative, believing that the private sector can provide nearly every service better than the government can, and that economic integration can solve many of our foreign policy disputes.

The Libertarian Party's platform is less decisive on issues like environmental protection, as controlling pollution is a problem that a free market system struggles to address. On this issue, Martin proposes treating corporations as criminals when they dump hazardous by-products into the ecosystem.

Tom Martin first ran for office in 1996, when he read a study suggesting that the tax burden in 20 years time would be 83%. "I am afraid that," he says, that "when my child starts working, he will ask me: 'Am I not a slave? What did you do about it?' How am I to answer him? How are any of us to answer that question when our children and grandchildren ask it?"

An Interview with Tom Martin

Pitt Political Review: What prompted you to run for the Senate this year?

Tom Martin: I think that the direction that we're going is wrong. Federal government is growing way too much. There's no respect for the

PPR: The two major parties dominate politics in part because they are funded generously by organized groups like labor unions and big business. How can one break up the monopoly of the two parties without getting too involved in choosing where their funding can come from?

"A just government respects the rights of all people equally and grants special favors to none. It's the smallest amount of government necessary."

Constitution at the federal level, state level [or] local level... We need people to stand up and say, "Knock it off." When you go into office, you're swearing to uphold and defend the Constitution. It's not just a ceremonial utterance. That's your job. You look at the Constitution: there's your job description. We have too many people who... their allegiance is to the political party. Their allegiance is to getting re-elected. Their allegiance is to ... their campaign contributors. These kinds of things say that the system is wrong.

PPR: If you were elected to the U.S. Senate, as a rare third-party legislator, how would you exercise power in a body that is so tied up in political allegiances?

TM: [The Senate composition] will be pretty much a balance between Republicans and Democrats. and who's going to be the most powerful person in there: the one holding the ballots, or somebody whose allegiance is to their party, who's not allowed to change, not allowed to move? When those [the two major] parties are very closely balanced, the people in the middle are going to be the controlling factors.

TM: I'm for term limits on the politicians and the laws they make. This campaign finance fecal matter that these guys passed, BRCA [Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act], would be more accurately called an incumbent protection act. If we had term limits on the idiot laws that they make, like this campaign finance garbage, we would only suffer with it for a few years and then it would go away. Concerning campaign finance specifically, we need something that actually respects the Constitution. And it's two things - very short, very concise: Citizens only report the amounts. A corporation is not a citizen, a union is not a citizen, the red Chinese are not citizens. Citizens only report the amounts.

PPR: How does the Libertarian Party feel, and how do you feel, about the amount of money that America spends on its military every year, which is currently equal to the expenditure of the rest of the world combined? Is national defense a legitimate function of the government? Are we spending too much?

TM: There's a mixed answer on that; it's not clear-cut one way or the

other, because of the many things that the government does - most of them it shouldn't - but military is a legitimate function; it's accounted for in the Constitution. However, just because it's a legitimate function does not mean that everything we have it doing is legitimate. We spend way too much money on it. They just love that big stick, they don't care about talking softly or anything.

PPR: Is foreign aid appropriate when it might be more cost-effective than military campaigns?

TM: That's always been [seen as] justified, and we've been doing it a long time. In Africa, we've been unloading money on all these things and we keep feeding all these kleptocracies. It's supposed to go to help all these poor little people, but it's the local dictator and thug that gets it. All we're doing is keeping the bad guys in charge, making them richer. We need to do things to encourage trade, to encourage respect for property rights. That way their own economies will spring up.

PPR: The Supreme Court ruled against Mr. Bush, in a certain sense, regarding how long prisoners can be detained in Guantanamo Bay. Do you feel that that ruling was satisfying or did it do too much or too little to curb the power of the executive in this case?

TM: Bush needs a little more curbing than he's had. He wants to have his cake and eat it too, but if you're going to be lawful, then follow the laws. In some cases, you have to be better than they are.

PPR: You suggest on your website that environmental protection laws should take the same form as

trespassing laws. Do you mean that corporations should be prosecuted as trespassers when their emissions cross into the territory of other people?

TM: When I first got involved with the libertarians, one of my areas that I had hassle with was environmentalism. We need to be protected from evil polluting corporations and the free market isn't going to do that. I think it's a new way for a lot of people in thinking about how to solve solution problems. It's a new tool.

PPR: Do you believe that global warming should be on the agenda?

TM: We need to understand it better. It's all a part of understanding the planet physics. So, yeah, we need to understand it.

PPR: You propose that we eliminate the state-run education system, or at least start bringing in competition against it. How will everyone have equal opportunity when some can afford better educations at the primary and secondary levels than others?

TM: Alexis de Tocqueville, in the 1830s, before we had any bureau of this and that, found that the American public was one of the most educated around, because on the local level they found it very important to educate. Now, did everyone get to go to college? No. But everybody, or at least the vast majority, got a high level of learning [in] reading and writing and the fundamentals. [Public schools] end up being puppy mills. They just grind people through. It's just a process. There is no reward for doing a good job, no punishment for doing a bad job. I like vouchers because people can then vote with their feet. Pennsylvania has the most expensive students in the country, if you factor in cost of living, and the third most expensive teachers in the country. Yet, if you look at SAT scores, we're almost

middle-of-the-road. If we're going to get a mediocre product, we don't need to pay that much. If you have competition, then people can say, I'm going to send my child over to that school, and they're going to find a more economical way to solve the problems.

PPR: Do you subscribe to the Libertarian maxim that the government can perform any function that the private sector will not perform or will not perform as well?

TM: My one-liner that I have is that a just government respects the rights of all people equally, and grants special favors to none. I'm glad that there are police that are around to arrest muggers and rapists and thieves. I'm glad that there are magistrates so that we can get them [criminals] taken care of. So there are legitimate functions of government.

PPR: What sources do you consult when you're thinking about foreign policy decisions and domestic issues?

TM: There are a variety of sources. I could be in the bookstore, reading on Jane's [Defense Weekly Magazine] on jets and other military stuff like that. Some of my friends are in the military, they can tell me some things. I've read the Koran, the Bible... I try to keep my ears open for other stuff. There's lots of libertarians and we have our web blogs... They'll either say things that I agree with or not, or they'll have something posted that runs me off in some weird direction. So, I don't have any one source. I do know that if I actually win [this election], I would have a lot more experts who would be ready and willing to talk to me. I could talk to generals, not read what some newspaper reporter wrote about what some general said. So, if I were there [in the Senate] I would have a closer read on some of the important stuff.

PPR

AGREE?
DISAGREE?
LOVE IT?
HATE IT?

THEN WRITE
ABOUT IT

SEND LETTERS TO
THE EDITOR AT

PITTPOLITICAL
REVIEW
@GMAIL.COM