**Convention Report**

First, special thanks to the following people, without whom this convention would not have worked:

**Wes Benedict** – His support and open lines of communication were invaluable. He was always available and had great advice. His willingness to work with me to solve problems won’t be forgotten.

**Robert Kraus** – he did so many of the things I would have ordinarily done. He freed me up to do so much more. His skill at keeping things organized and me informed as to sales, costs, and other pertinent items made this convention.

**Tim Hagan** – The interactive spreadsheet he created from my budget was invaluable (thank you so much!) Not only did it help keep track of expenditures and revenues, it allowed us to run ‘what if’ scenarios. If anyone is interested, I can send those on of the last updates before the convention.

**Denise Luckey and Lauren Daugherty** – their work with the website, design, décor, and our printed materials was outstanding. Their handiwork was seen throughout the convention. With their guidance, we could create a “how to” manual for the next COC, so a great deal of the work is done up front. I especially liked the idea of going to a spiral binder for the convention book.

**Daniel Hayes** – A large portion of the convention is finding speakers and balancing them. Daniel did a fantastic job of finding speakers people were interested in hearing. I believe this increased our ticket sales substantially. He did a great job of making sure the speakers were where they were supposed to be and on time as well as communicating with the speakers. A special heartfelt thanks to Daniel for bringing in Alex and Danielle.

**Alicia Mattson** – her ability to get us on target and on time made things run so smoothly. She kept track of room sales so we knew when we needed to find other hotels. Her historical documents allowed the committee to make good decisions. A huge thank-you to her for setting up all our telephone conferences.

**Alex Snitker and Danielle Alexandre** – their work at the registration desk and their ***volunteers*** throughout the convention made the difference between a good experience and a horrible experience for our attendees and our staff. I don’t know if we will ever find anyone who can do a better job- ever. I never once had to troubleshoot a thing. Volunteers make or break a convention and, like Michele Poague in 2008, Danielle was able to bring in volunteers because of who she was. This is a hard thing to duplicate. Danielle and Alex’s expertise created a truly amazing atmosphere.

A very special thanks to **George Phillies** for his constant support of LP Conventions. His donation through buying a suite brought in much needed funds. We also owe him a huge apology as his donation earned him a gold ticket that he so kindly passed on but we forgot to make him a sponsorship badge! George I am so sorry about that.

**Report:**

Robert sent me an overview of the numbers but not a breakdown of expenditures yet. While we spent much more than we have in the past, we brought in much more. Part of this is due to the increase in ticket sales. We brought in $291,294.00 and spent $215,308.76. This leaves a net of $74,985.24. My estimate was that we spent about $198K. I will need to look over the expenditures to find where the extra money was spent.

My goal was to break even so that more money would be available for donations to our candidates. We sold 999 convention tickets for a total of $218.273. This exceeds our expenditures. Adding in the banquet only tickets we brought in, through ticket sales only over $230K.

I don’t have the numbers for staff time and travel or what was spent for office supplies, décor, and design. There may be other items. Knowing these numbers will help to form a better budget for the next two conventions.

Any questions on specific expenditures should be directed to staff.

**Ticket prices**

Prices were set with this in mind:

Basic ticket would pay for the cost of the convention and include all breakout speakers, floor speakers, and convention materials, books and bags.

Bronze, gold, and silver tickets prices were set at the basic ticket level PLUS the cost of the meals added.

Attendee tickets were meant to be the delegate package for delegates to pay for the cost of the hall and the AV.

Because of a cross in communications, our Attendee Package ended up including all the breakout sessions without the delegate materials. This seems to have worked out well and I encourage use of this in the future BUT I believe that ticket price (set before the AV costs were known) should be at least $30 to $40 higher to cover the higher AV costs.

Being used to running conventions on my own dime (2008 National convention included), I set the earliest tickets below cost to get money in the door. This was and should be in the future, unnecessary. Daniel Hayes said as much in a meeting. Also, I tried holding the top ticket price below $500 but we had to cut a meal to do that. I suggest we not worry about the $500 ceiling in the future.

**Sponsorships**

I would limit the number of sponsorships in the future. I created some of them in response to some inquiries for a way to sponsor an event or speaker. I now believe that we work those out on a individual basis – maybe put on the site ‘Other sponsorships, including meal and speaker sponsorships available – please call.’ On the website and printed material I would keep the following:

Bag sponsorship

Book ads (inside the convention books)

Bag drops

Badge sponsorship

**Convention Committee**

In the future I suggest the board seat the convention committee with people to fill certain jobs. I am aware that no one wants micromanagement but I believe the committee would run smoother with dedicated positions. Once the committee is set, they can determine if things need to change.

The committee needs volunteer assistants from the start of their term on the committee so these volunteers know how things are run from the beginning. This gives us at least two people who know everything about AV or speakers for instance and it shares the convention load; a help since most of us work.

A better understanding of labor from the very beginning will help the convention committee. Robert gave me an idea of what each party (staff and COC) was responsible for at the beginning but I think a real “sit down” would have helped.

**Office Staff and contract Employees:**

I can’t say enough good about the staff and the contract employees. Robert and Wes were always quick to respond to my inquiries and needs. Denise and Lauren worked so hard before the convention to make things perfect. The website was great and when things needed changing it was done immediately. Elizabeth and Carla did a lot to relieve my worry about the media. It is because of the staff that things ran as smoothly as they did.

**Convention Costs**

AV costs were much higher than what we spent in 2012. Instead of 30K the costs were closer to 60K and that was with discounts and cutbacks. I suggest future budgets should figure the AV at 50K for non-presidential years and at least 80K for presidential years when setting ticket prices.

Meal costs were kept in line. The only meal that we did not collect money for was the Torch Club breakfast. A miscommunication between Robert and I ended up with us ordering too many meals for that event (I was asking for the numbers of guests and he gave me the number of invites). We bought a handful of extra meals at the banquet that were not ordered, so we overfilled on that event. Knowing that not every one shows up to the breakfast and lunch meals, we should get the word out to our full time volunteers (after they are at the convention) and guest speakers that they might be able to eat. We collect the money for those meals and I prefer not to have people who have bought show up to no meal as happened in Atlanta. I did cut our orders by 6% to 10%, knowing the hotel would make up the difference should everyone show up.

Speaker costs were higher than originally budgeted, but not by as much as it appears. I budgeted money for VIP and entertainment, almost all of which moved into the speaker budget line. In the future, I would suggest we send out as many invites to top speakers as we can ‘offering’ them a ‘chance’ to speak at our convention with no money or travel assistance at least a year out. Those that respond, we will add to our line-up. We have too many good speakers who will come for free or for room and travel. I would still budget 8K or so for speaker costs.

Other Costs: I have no idea on the other costs until I see the final numbers from National but I have been assured the decorations budget and printing budget did not go over by much. Our bags, badges, and ribbons were within budget. I suspect that we will be slightly over budget but we also sold many more tickets than were budgeted.

**Other Suggestions:**

While this convention we moved the nominating and voting back one day and had no speaker slots on Sunday once we began, we didn’t have time to finish properly. We should realize we need more time on presidential years.

Remove all but an opening speaker and a keynote speaker form the convention hall, with the exception of the short speakers who present while votes are being tallied. Move bylaws and platform to the same day on presidential years.

Set aside an actual convention fund. Use the money made to help fund the off-year convention because as AV costs rise, the less likely an off-year convention will pay for itself. Don’t use that fund for anything else.

Place people on the COC that actually want to be in charge of a piece of the convention; make sure your convention chair is willing to communicate with others and is willing to share the responsibility and the work. We have a couple of volunteers that already want to work who could be placed on either the committee or a subcommittee, let’s put them to work right away.

Create a template of all the things that go on at the convention, including all the AV. This should be archived so anyone who steps up to run the convention actually have a blueprint from the start. Do the same thing with the budget.

Set ticket prices early; get at least two speakers committed early; advertise the convention early; sell tickets as early as possible.

Find a way to advertise to people who are registered Libertarians but not National party members. These people will be interested in break out sessions and will help pay for AV through their purchases.

Increase the decorations and staging budget to at least double. Things looked stark compared to other conventions.

I used stock ribbons for most of our ribbons but that ended up with too many items being identified with red ribbons. My suggestion is we pay a little more per ribbon and get delegate ribbons in a different color.

I sent out a survey for everyone to fill out. I received two responses but they are detailed. Below are their responses.

What do you think went well before the convention?

**BetteRose set the package prices by September 2015, which allowed staff to start selling packages on LP.org very early, even before an official convention website was set up. --Wes Benedict**

What do you think, in terms of things leading up to the convention, should definitely be changed or not done at all in the future?

**There were way too many special sponsorship opportunities offered. They took a lot of time to manage, and very few were sold. Lots of staff time was used trying to understand them and add them to the website. Simplify the offerings, and sell larger quantities of a smaller variety of things. --Wes Benedict**

What major changes would you make in respect to the convention planning and the committee itself?

What did you think went well during the convention?

**Lots of people attended, which made the LP look good, and also was a motivator to attendees. I think the primary reason lots of people attended was because we had several strong presidential candidates coupled with dislike of the 2 older parties. People turned out to support (and defend) their candidate. I think some people attended because Orlando is a nice destination, but I suspect the primary driver of turnout was the presidential contest. We had a relatively high turnout in St. Louis, Missouri in 2010. St. Louis isn't a particularly attractive destination city, but I think turnout was high for that convention due to a highly contested chair's race. I'd caution against overestimating the impact a nice destination city has on turnout--though it certainly helps some and I think New Orleans is a good choice for 2018.**

**The graphic design work and branding for the convention was beautiful, thanks to Denise Luckey.**

**BetteRose did a great job communicating with staff about important convention details.**

**Registration went reasonably well without the long lines I worried about (thank you Robert Kraus, Nick Dunbar, and especially thanks to the Florida volunteers recruited by Alex Snitker). --Wes Benedict**

What would you change in terms of what happened at the convention?

What would you definitely remove from the convention in the future?

**I would eliminate most of the main convention hall speakers. Very few people were on the convention floor to hear those speakers. Specifically, for 2016, I would have eliminated the speakers that were on Friday from 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm, and Saturday from 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm. That would have allowed more time for official business, or perhaps allowed for the business sessions to start 30 minutes later so the breakfasts could have been a little later. --Wes Benedict**

Give a list of all suggestions you have for the future Convention Oversight Committee and the LNC.

**Once again, I suspect we bought too much food because we failed to factor in the significant number of no-shows for meals, but I haven't looked at those numbers carefully myself. I think we ordered food for 70+ for the donor breakfast, but more like 40 attended. We need to better understand our attendance rate. I'm not certain on the amounts, and please correct me if I'm wrong. In any case, I suspect we should expect something like 75% turnout for lunches and dinners, and 65% for breakfasts. So, if we sell 400 dinners, we should only order food for 400\*75%=300 people. (It's okay to add extra to project additional late signups for meals, but we should try not to order for more than we have people.)  So much money is at stake that I'd consider adding a provision in the convention section of the policy manual requiring the convention organizer to send an email to the COC and LNC chair, treasurer, and executive director, before signing any Banquet Event Orders (BEO), stating the number of meals sold, expected attendance rate, and actual number of meals ordered, before signing the BEO.  --Wes Benedict**

**What do you think went well before the convention?**

We had a lot of communication and I could get a fairly good handle on what was going on before we got there. That was great for us to be able to have a rough plan for volunteers.

**What do you think, in terms of things leading up to the convention, should definitely be changed or not done at all in the future?**

I think more defined roles for volunteers with descriptions would have been helpful. Not over-the-top but more like “4 Volunteers for Registration- Help give out pre-registered tickets and convention badges, register new package purchases and assisting attendees with questions.”

If that was done for every volunteer need it helps placing the right person in the right place. Some people are not good with other people. Some can’t handle a rush. So knowing some details will help overall organizing your needs and getting the right people to fill them.

I also would make the website very clear on what is a paid event. I would even make sure that the schedules posted and handed out also made it very clear what the paid events were. I was somewhat confused on who had to pay for what before the convention. The website was not as clear as it could have been. I tell clients (if we don’t do the website for them) to place a disclaimer on EVERY paid event EVERY time it is on the website. Put what packages it is included with and always make sure it says no one will be allowed into the event without a ticket, ribbon or however you are distinguishing payment has been made.

Also any materials that will be paid for only should be listed in advance as needing payment. If the convention program or bag needs to be paid for than it works the same as paid events. Always a disclaimer all the time.

**What major changes would you make in respect to the convention planning and the committee itself?**

I would say that if possible get someone who does event planning for large corporations or non-profits for a living. I know for me there are a lot of things I tell clients that probably would have helped when you guys were planning but by the time we got involved it was too late on most of it. Having someone consult on the committee from the start would help a lot.

**What did you think went well during the convention?**

I thought the convention was one of the best I have ever been at and that includes some of our clients. It had a lot of activity, a lot of vendors and great attendance. We kept most of the guests sheltered from some of the more off-putting things that happened which always helps and no one waited around for anything except for vote tallys. From a fundraising perspective having people stay there and have fun the whole time gets them more willing to open their wallets at the banquet. So I think that was great.

**What would you change in terms of what happened at the convention?**

I would also get rid of the main hall speakers but in terms of volunteers clear roles and needs would have made things smooth. I often have a printed sheet of instructions for volunteers waiting for them at the desk or laminated and posted at the place they are volunteering. This way if someone can’t be there to “train” them right away they can get a little bit of a handle on what is needed. It also helps as an organizer that if you have to make instructions you really put thought into how many volunteers you need and where.

I would also offer volunteers something. I know in the end I and some of the other volunteers ended up getting at least one meal, however, no one knew that going in and it would have helped. Even if they just get a convention bag or a ticket to a debate (since it doesn’t have food costs) that would be a nice “thank you” to volunteers. We personally provided a lot of food and drinks for them and most of them were there out of loyalty to us and that was great but you can’t always count on that.

I think defining these things beforehand will help. A lot of people come to help and are not there for anything else. So my team spent a lot of money to be there (which we personally paid for some of them) but I think if people want to come and just volunteer but know that water and light food is available for them during the day will help offset some costs for them and help. We brought about $300 worth of food and drinks and it lasted the entire time. It was a small cost in the grand scheme of things and none of our people had to be out of pocket for meals.

You also need clear beginning and ending times. If the schedule says something is closed by 6pm than it needs to be closed. Or make sure the hours coincide with when you will have a rush but defined hours are a must. People will always complain about why the closing time should not apply to them but it doesn’t make it right. Have hours and mean it.

Not volunteer related there has to be a more efficient way of tabulating votes. There is no way it takes that long. I have organized voting for fortune 500 companies with over 1,000 people voting and it took 20 minutes. There is no need for hours. You can’t move onto other business while an open vote/motion is on the floor so it needs to be done in less than 30 minutes every time.

**What would you definitely remove from the convention in the future?**

The main hall speakers. I would have one person open the meeting with some inspirational 15 minute opening and that’s it.

I think it was overall great. I just think there was some things that could have been done to make sure there was as little confusion as possible. We were so happy to be able to be a part of it. Thank you all so much!