

IS AARON RUSSO FIT TO BE THE LP'S CANDIDATE?

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None of the leading candidates for LP president is perfect issue or strategy-wise, but only one – Aaron Russo – has the potential to subject the Libertarian Party to damaging embarrassment that will harm the party for years. Even as a person who supports a flamboyant, “in your face approach” and lots of controversial publicity and advertising, I consider Russo to be unprofessional and “out of control.”

PLEASE talk to delegates from a number of states and listen to their stories of Russo’s behavior at their conventions, especially his consistently insulting behavior towards other candidates and delegates - especially those who ask hard questions or support other candidates. It is likely this behavior will carry over into similar treatment of the press and public. Any such behavior at the Atlanta convention is just the tip of the iceberg.

Additionally, review Russo’s history of failed projects. This history may be repeated in a failed or scattershot campaign. For these reasons Russo might even end up being the first Presidential candidate to have his candidacy “suspended” by the Libertarian National Committee, per the party’s bylaws.

STORIES FROM LP CONVENTIONS AND OTHER APPEARANCES

** CA LP Convention: Russo “jokes” about Gary Nolan being Arab: “Let’s kill him.” If Nolan had joked about Russo being Jewish, he would have been out of the race.

** March LP state convention: Russo “jokes” to delegate wearing Nolan sticker: “Nolan? Take that sticker off, I ought to beat your ass.”

** PA LP Local Event: “Jokes” to someone late for talk: “I’m not going to stand for this shit.” When a beautiful blonde raises her hand to ask a question he acknowledges her by saying, “No, I can’t sleep with you.”

** NY LP Convention: “Jokes” to delegates who didn’t vote for him in a straw poll: “I’m going to get you.”

**LP TN: “joked” that we should repeal women’s right to vote.

** LP VA: “Jokes” to a man asking about gay marriage, “Are you the woman in the relationship?”

** On Howard Stern radio show allows himself to get dragged into a discussion of his sex life with singer Bette Middler.

** LP MD Delegate event: “Jokingly” insults V.P. candidate Richard Campagna saying “You can’t be my V.P. candidate, get out of here,” and calling him “Chickenshit” for not endorsing a presidential candidate. Mocks libertarians as people who argue about whether “gnats have rights.” Loosens belt and lunges at woman (me!) asking a tough question saying, “Fix my belt buckle, I can’t get it in the hole.” Insults Nolan repeatedly by claiming his staffers will just use contributions to “line their pockets.”

**Russo skipped a planned Harry Browne call-in radio show appearance because of a diabetes-related health issue. However, when Browne announced he had decided to endorse Nolan because he doubted Russo’s suitability as a candidate, Russo called up, insulted him at length and hung up on him.

**Russo did not fire his Communications Director Tom Knapp for circulating a false, unverified claim that Nolan, who has Native American ancestors, made bigoted remarks against American Indians on a radio show.

HYPE VS. TEN YEARS OF FAILED PROJECTS

Russo boasts on Amazon.com “Finally, a Libertarian candidate with a charismatic personality.” In Maryland May 8th he boasted he’s at the “pinnacle of his career” and he’s got fantastic “access” in Hollywood. He claims he intends to raise \$50 - 100 each from one million people. However, look at his history over the last dozen years:

** His last two films for an HBO partner were \$20 million dollar flops, evidently of such poor quality they could be released only overseas and later to video, resulting in lawsuits. (Russo claims he has “no idea” why the films were not put in general release.) He was sued but the suits were dropped because, he says, the films were produced “on time and on budget.” This incident makes Russo more like “Hollywood poison” than a still successful producer.

** Russo started the Constitution party, promising it would get “vast media coverage.” But he got little publicity, never got it on any state ballot and never even registered with the FEC. (The US Taxpayer Party later adopted the name.)

** Russo did a pilot for a “Mad as Hell” television show, supposedly to promote the Constitution Party, which was never picked up for distribution, so he distributed it as a video.

** In 1998 Russo did get 25% of the vote (34,000) in a REPUBLICAN primary for Nevada governor. But in 2002, before deciding whether to run on a party or as an independent, he dropped out because of bladder cancer.

** Libertarians have noticed Russo being low energy and sickly looking. He has done far less campaigning and cancelled more appearances than Gary Nolan. He says he will run mostly a media campaign.

** In Maryland May 8 Russo explicitly discussed his cancer and admitted recently running to the doctor because of blood in the urine. (It necessitated his cancelling out of the South Carolina convention.) While he “passed” this test, we know cancer is an opportunistic disease which thrives on physical and emotional stress - like one finds in a Presidential campaign. Russo also admits he suffers from diabetes.

** In response to mere speculation that Russo’s wild behavior, failed projects and unreliability were symptoms of “manic-depression” his campaign manager’s psychiatrist wife declared she sees no evidence of “Bipolar Disorder.”

** Russo is using mostly personal money to “wow” people with a glitzy web page and TV advertising in Atlanta. But he admitted in Maryland May 8 he will not spend more than \$100,000 of his personal money. He has raised nothing for ballot access and admits he doesn’t know whether he can raise much money for his own campaign.