

**Posted on Wed, Jun. 11, 2008**

[reprint or license](#) [print](#) [email](#)  
[Digg it](#) [del.icio.us](#) [AIM](#)

## **Libertarians to hold their convention in Fort Worth**

**By AMAN BATHEJA**  
[abatheja@star-telegram.com](mailto:abatheja@star-telegram.com)

While thousands head to Houston for the Texas Republican Party's high-profile convention this weekend, the Libertarian Party of Texas will gather on a smaller scale in Fort Worth. About 125 people are expected to attend the Libertarian convention, said Wes Benedict, executive director of the Libertarian Party of Texas. It is the first time the party has held its state convention in Fort Worth, he said.

Bob Barr, a former Republican congressman from Georgia, is the Libertarian presidential candidate. He will address the convention Saturday.

Benedict said that this may be a good year for the fiscally conservative and socially tolerant Libertarians as more voters appear disillusioned with the Republican Party. Also, U.S. Rep. Ron Paul's presidential bid has stirred interest in Libertarian principles of small government and individual freedom.

"Ron Paul has brought a lot of Libertarians into the Republican Party," Benedict said. "But I don't think they're automatically going to vote Republican in November."

Benedict said many Paul supporters would have come to the Libertarian convention except for the conflict with the GOP convention. Instead, they're going to Houston to jockey for more Paul delegates.

"I would much rather do it on a different weekend," Benedict said.

Third parties in Texas are required to have their state convention on the second Saturday in June. The Democratic and Republican parties can hold their state conventions anytime during the month, according to the Texas Election Code.

Libertarians have 174 candidates on Texas ballots this year, Benedict said. As in previous elections, many are running largely so their party will be represented in as many races as possible rather than actually expecting to win.

John Spivey, Tarrant County Libertarian Party chairman, said the party is getting more active in local elections.

An example is Steve Smith of north Fort Worth, who is on the ballot to represent District 98 in the state House. State Rep. Vicki Truitt, R-Keller, holds the seat representing Northeast Tarrant County. Democrat Nancy Moffat will also be on the ballot.

Smith said he became disillusioned with Republicans a few years ago, and his strong belief in limited government attracted him to the Libertarians. Of the Republicans who ran for president this year, Paul was most in line with Smith's thinking, he said.

"I think the Republicans really lost an opportunity there," Smith said, referring to the selection of U.S. Sen. John McCain as the presumptive GOP nominee. "It was a further

indication to me that small-government principles don't really have any place in the modern GOP."

AMAN BATHEJA, 817-390-7695