

Contesting for state power

Editor:

"We have two active viable parties (in Charlevoix County)", said Democrat Bill Lovett recently, reflecting on his post-election summit meeting over dinner with counterpart John Haggard, chair of the local Republican Party. ("Political leaders call for open dialogue," 11/11/08.)

Well, not really. The Democrats haven't run anyone for county office since 2000 with one exception, sort of. In 2002 they nominated Paul Richards for county commissioner. But Richards ended his campaign when he heard the Green Party nominated Bill Henne.

In a vacancy election for commissioner in February 2006, Connie Saltonstall initially declared as a write-in on the Democratic primary ballot. She found out it was illegal, and withdrew and ran as an Independent. She won, but it didn't advance the party.

This year the Charlevoix Democrats were energized. Obama came close to beating McCain locally.

Even so, no Charlevoix Democrat ran for county office.

By definition, you are not a political organization unless you challenge for government power.

Democrats here don't do that. The result is that Lovett's call for debate and compromise is meaningless. Republicans have no one to negotiate with.

I am a Green. I ran for office a few times, most recently for University of Michigan regent. When I run, like Lovett and Haggard I start the campaign by treating my opponent to lunch.

Except for JoAnne Beemon in 2000, local Greens haven't had much success. But we do bring issues and interest into local politics.

There are practical benefits too. Half a million people around the country voted Green in House races, twice the number in 2006. Tom Mair, a Green candidate for Grand Traverse commissioner, got 30 percent. Our presidential candidate, Cynthia McKinney, scored incrementally better than our candidate in 2004.

So we do have hope. And the hope has future possibilities. The reason is we stand up and act like a party.

Ellis Boal
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