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### Free Staters: Bold Experiment in Living Free or the Drinking Man's Tea Party

By M. Dennis Paul, Ph.D. Salem-News.com

**While a serious libertarian effort in the state seems to exist, the message remains cloudy.**

(WINDSOR, N.H.) - Founded in 2001, the Free State Project (FSP) is a political movement with a planned goal of seeing at least 20,000 libertarian-leaning people move to the state of New Hampshire in order to make the state a stronghold for libertarian ideas.

Primary activities. The primary activities of the FSP shall be: 1) the dissemination of information on the benefits of a coordinated move by advocates of the minimal state to a single state of the United States; 2) the distribution of a Statement of Intent (definition below) for signature by those willing to undertake such a move. Prohibited activities. The FSP shall not attempt to influence the election of candidates to public office, nor shall the FSP attempt to influence the passage of any specific piece of legislation. The primary objective of the FSP is a coordinated move by persons of a specific ethical philosophy – the achievement of this objective does not depend on any legislation. No part of the net earnings of the FSP shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its Directors, Officers, or other private persons, except that the FSP shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes of the FSP. The activities of the FSP shall be limited to exempt purposes as set forth in section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code. Participation Guidelines. Once 5,000 people have signed the Statement, voting shall commence on a state where all participants should move. All sufficiently small states, as determined by the Directors or a committee set up by the Directors for this purpose, shall be considered. The voting shall proceed according to Simple Condorcet's Method (a method of voting whereby voters rank all candidates, and candidates are then compared against each other in pairwise contests, the only unbeaten candidate being the winner – if no unbeaten candidate exists, the smallest-magnitude defeats are eliminated until one candidate is unbeaten). All signers of the Statement of Intent have the right to participate in the vote; no one who has not signed the Statement of Intent may participate. All ballots shall be made available for verification to all voters after the voting has concluded. Postal and electronic ballots shall be valid methods of voting. Once 20,000 people have signed the Statement, the signers shall move to the state decided upon as expeditiously as possible and absolutely within five years of the achievement of the 20,000-signer threshold. Should the Statement never attract 20,000 signers, no signer shall be held responsible to move. Statement of Intent 1...The FSP shall circulate a Statement of Intent, indicating that the signer will: a) move to the state designated according to the rules laid out in the Participation Guidelines (which Guidelines shall reflect the provisions set forth in these Bylaws); b) work toward a society in which the sole role of civil government is the protection of persons' rights to life, liberty, and property. The Statement shall become void three years after signing should the designation of the state not have occurred by that time. 2...The Statement of Intent is not a contract and is not intended to be legally enforced. 3...The FSP shall not require dues or contributions of any kind for the right to sign the Statement of Intent and to participate in the move.

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Essentially, FSP offers a very minimally defined objective which carefully dissociates itself from the activities of its members & friends. FSP, as an

organization, assumes no responsibility for the actions of its followers and, at least on the surface, does not endorse any actions. According to statement on its website, "The FSP has no political platform, nor even an agenda for what participants must do. Instead, each participant chooses the issue(s) to focus on, the tactics to use, and the people to work with. This freedom has resulted in a dynamic and successful community of activists". Its goal, one may assume, is merely to create a moderately influential presence of somewhat like-minded individuals who, on their own, will influence the local and state governments in an effort to create a model of minimal government over the populace. Its unstated goals, however, appear to be somewhat more involved.

The similarities in direction of its members is decidedly libertarian (although they claim one not be libertarian to sign on) and, while not a stated goal in its by-laws, the organization's website (in response to suggested arguments against FSP) claims a goal of return to federalism and a concentration of its members in a "model" state "where they will exert the fullest practical effort toward the creation of a society in which the maximum role of government is the protection of life, liberty, and property". Beyond this, FSP offers no information, in the form of definition or example, regarding what such maximum government role would entail. A lofty goal, indeed. Notable, is the influence on its founders (and a large portion of its members and friends) of the arguably sociopathic Ayn Rand, Henry Hazlitt, and Ludwig von Mises. Here, John Stossel "interviews" the President & Founder of FSP. <http://3yc5.sl.pt> As with most prominent libertarians, explanation of the role government should have is defined, on the surface, according to their own specific interests and leanings and often relies upon some manner of exercise relating to various concepts of "free" market, deregulation, and the rights of individuals and corporations to exercise self monitoring and self control. So open to individual interpretation, this mind set can encompass the right of a methamphetamine manufacturer/dealer to practice this trade without restraint to a Wall Street firm fleecing the country with impunity. Recent examples of this cloudy libertarian thinking come in the form of libertarian Rand Paul and his now famous support of Walgreen's right to refuse serving people of color and his contention that President Obama bullied Oil Criminal BP by demanding they establish a 20 billion dollar escrow account to service victims of its disastrous oil spill. The fact that some libertarians agree with Rand while others eschew Rand's beliefs only demonstrates the lack of clear moral objective in this named group. After much consideration and voting, the FSP chose my home state, New Hampshire, as the location for its grand experiment. New Hampshire's motto is "Live Free or Die". Once a Republican stronghold, the sparsely populated state seemed (to FSP) an ideal location to embark upon their "project". The FSP website states: "As of July 31, 2010, there were 10,293 participants, 838 of which had moved to New Hampshire.". FSP movers have formed pro-liberty newspapers and internet, television, and radio shows, receiving positive coverage in existing media. Four FSP movers were elected to the NH state legislature in 2008. FSP movers helped defeat anti- liberty legislation like Real-ID, mandatory seat belt laws for adults, and numerous tax increases, and helped pass pro-liberty like spending caps, eminent domain safeguards, and gun rights protections". FSP claims they are well regarded in the state and receive positive exposure in the media. Their website carries an archive of press coverage <http://3ycz.sl.pt> . Some coverage, however, is notably absent. Not surprisingly, once the movement established roots in NH, propaganda films began to appear promoting the FSP (and, in many cases, gun rights and video/audio taping police) and other libertarian groups. Most were quite amateur and obviously staged. The following are examples. <http://3yc9.sl.pt> <http://3yca.sl.pt> . Soon, the videos became confrontational.. <http://3ycd.sl.pt> <http://3ycm.sl.pt> & <http://3ycp.sl.pt> & <http://3ycq.sl.pt> . Keene, NH, which is a small college town, has been the site of numerous protests regarding marijuana. According to Melanie Plenda, a correspondent for the Union Leader newspaper (a state wide publication long considered a standard, and model for, right wing publications across the US) "people from the Free Keene and Free State movements have met daily in Central Square since last summer, generally to

publicly smoke marijuana ( <http://3ycr.sl.pt> & <http://3ycu.sl.pt> ). In recent months, the Free Keene group has instituted "Topless Tuesdays" which also takes place in the Square, across the street from Keene Middle School and city hall." Recently, a new event has become popular. The Free Keene and FSP members call this event "night cap," wherein a number of people gather in Central Square (in the main section of downtown Keene) at around 11 p.m. each night to drink alcohol in protest of open container laws which are covered by local ordinance. Apparently, the various acts of civil disobedience have begun to co-mingle. The following are interesting videos from some recent "actions" taken by the Free Keene and FSP folks. In one of the videos, the video coverage ceases, however, the audio portion remains and is worth a listen. <http://3ycy.sl.pt> . While it appears there exists a serious libertarian effort in the state in terms of legislative actions (however trivial or important they might be), the messages (as cloudy as they are) from the FSP and from libertarians in general, have so far been mainly taken up by marginalized and disaffected youth and a collection of various confrontational and attention seeking gun "rightists". More in line with Party legislative efforts, the NH 2010 Liberty Forum was held in my former home town of Nashua. Among the speakers at this forum were Judge Andrew Napolitano, NH State Rep. Dan Itse (Sponsor of HCR 6, a bill which, among other issues, would require NH to use gold and silver as money, end the state education "monopoly", and exempt NH firearm manufacturers [Sturm Ruger & Co., Sigarm and Wilcox Industries] from federal regulation), NH State Rep. Jenn Coffey, Dan Mitchell (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute) and Stewart Rhodes (Founder and Director of OathKeepers). Other presenters included a selection of authors with books ranging from gun rights to economics as well as a political writer for FOXNews.com. In examining this movement, it is worth taking a look at who has actually endorsed this project. Among the list, of course, are the various past Libertarian Party Presidential candidates such as Ron Paul, Michael Badnarik (2004), Richard B. Boddie (1992) and David Bergland (1984) and virtually all of the State Libertarian Parties as well as large support from the Republican Liberty Caucus. There are a number of economists and Professors, such as Dr. Walter Block, from around the world and associated with the Ludwig von Mises Institute. William A. Dunn, PhD (the Founder & Chairman of DUNN Capital Management), Louis James (was president of the Henry Hazlitt Foundation ..defunct), a number of former Congress persons (such as Bob Barr 2008 LP Presidential candidate) and Governors (including former NH governor Craig Benson), libertarian commentator and former judge Andrew Napolitano, late Hollywood Producer and "9-11 truther" ( <http://3yg6.sl.pt> ) Aaron Russo (Trading Places & Wise guys), Doug Stanhope co-host of Comedy Central's sexist "The Man Show", the thoroughly obnoxious vaudeville entertainer Penn Jillette and, surprisingly, Keith Stroup (Director of National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws-NORML). Beyond this look, some very revealing information on links to support of the FSP was provided by Pam Martens, a local writer for CounterPunch Magazine, in the Spring of 2009. Her article, "Anarcho Capitalists" Backed by \$25 Billion Corporate Giant -The Far Right's Plot to Capture New Hampshire <http://3yg7.sl.pt> noted " the role of shadowy think tanks and their corporate money backers in the Free State Project strategy". She also noted the sister project of FSP organizer Tim Condon & Zack Bass (alias), funded, in part, by the Republican Liberty Caucus, planning the takeover of a town or county in NH by Free Staters ( <http://3ygc.sl.pt> ). This effort was a complete failure as the town selected, Grafton, fought hard to discredit the plan. FSP, from what I have been able to ascertain, disavowed this effort (after the fact) and banished Zack Bass (Larry Pendarvis). Following the money, like any good reporter should, Pam discovered that none other than KOCH Industries (Yes.. the same KOCH Industries said to be behind the emergence of the Tea Parties) is linked (through its foundations and donations to the Mercatus Center, the Institute for Humane Studies, and George Mason University Foundation) with the founders of FSP. Donor's Trust ( <http://3yq3.sl.pt> ) , according to Pam, also supports Mr. Sorens. (Please read Pam's article). A simple search provided the following: Jason Sorens Founder of FSP) is an Affiliated Scholar, Mercatus Center & Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Buffalo (SUNY) His research interests include fiscal federalism, secessionism, ethnic violence, and comparative federalism. Richard

Fink is a member of the Mercatus Center's Board of Directors. He is executive vice president and a member of the board of directors of Koch Industries, Inc., in Washington, DC. A member of George Mason's economics faculty from 1980 to 1986, Dr. Fink was founder and director of the Center for Market Processes (which became the Mercatus Center). He is a trustee and former president of the Charles G. Koch and Claude R. Lambe charitable foundations, and serves on a number of boards, including the George Mason University Foundation, the Progressive Policy Institute, the Institute for Humane Studies, and George Mason's Center for Study of Public Choice. Charles Koch is a member of the Mercatus Center's Board of Directors. He is chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Koch Industries, Inc., one of the largest privately held companies in America. Under his leadership, Koch Industries has been transformed into a dynamic and diverse group of companies engaged in trading, investment and operations worldwide. Koch Industries and the Koch family are major contributors to George Mason University. Additionally, the infamous Edwin Meese is a member of the Mercatus Center's Board of Directors. He served as the 75th attorney general of the United States, from February 1985 to August 1988. Prior to serving as attorney general, he was counsellor to President Reagan from 1981 to 1985, where he functioned as the president's chief policy advisor. He also served as a member of the president's cabinet and the National Security Council. In its nearly 40 year history, the Libertarian Party has demonstrated little following (less than 250,000 registered members..though it should be noted that only 30 states allow registration by party). Since its inception, in all Presidential races, the party has seen only one year in which its candidate received 1% of the popular vote (1980). According to their website ( <http://3yqr.sl.pt> ), "Nationwide, there are 153 Libertarians holding elected office: 38 of them partisan offices, and 115 of them non-partisan offices. For partisan offices, the elected official must have appeared on the ballot with the party designation "Libertarian" -or- the elected official must currently be registered to vote as a Libertarian. For non-partisan offices, the elected official must be a current or former dues-paying member of the Libertarian Party". Historically, the Party has experienced a considerable amount of infighting regarding issues from dues to platform. Various splinter caucuses have arisen and subsequently failed. Several revisions of the Party platform have occurred over the past decade with mixed support making it appear that consensus among libertarians is difficult at best. An obvious result of the infighting and lack of consensus is an inability of the Party to gain greater membership. In the opinion of this writer, the Free State Project, was purposely designed to attract a following for the Libertarian Party through appealing to a host of marginalized and disenfranchised youth seeking utopian dreams and various groups and organizations not gaining focused self interest support from the major political parties. The design of FSP, itself, is strategically constructed to allow FSP to disavow anything that might occur from any of its followers which would negatively impact the reputation of the FSP and the Party. Ultimately, the goal of FSP would simply be to draw enough attention to the Libertarian Party to allow it greater chance at gaining legislative seats in NH. This, in turn, would allow it to promote greater deregulation in the state in an effort to attract corporations who would directly benefit from lack of controls over their operations and, further, create a domino effect through requiring out of state corporations and businesses to adopt compatible measures in order to transact business within the state. The marginalized groups, particularly (but not exclusively) the youth, naively mouthing arrogant rhetoric and creating scenes will eventually become dispensable though initially, perhaps, used as tools for political gain as candidates point to their ability to solve the problems created by these groups (See \*\*\* in additional reading). It is clear, from the presentations of these groups, that they have no real concept of who genuinely stands to benefit from their adherence to the murky libertarian "philosophies" they espouse. In spite of the already proven dangers inherent in deregulated corporate enterprise, these groups appear oblivious to the further slavery that will befall them should corporations be given full unfettered reign in NH and elsewhere. Through the FSP and libertarian appeal to the self, and selfish, interests of these groups, much like the libertarian and Republican appeal to the same denominator in the groups forming Tea Parties, enough distraction is created to allow corporations a

reasonable chance of finally dominating government at both the federal and state levels. Recognizing that both the Tea Party movement and Free State "phenomenon" are heavily linked to the same corporate giant and think tanks makes it difficult to view these groups as separate from each other or, for that matter, from the Republican agenda and that of the corporate Democrats. Additional reading: \*\*\* Varrin Swearingin is the president of the Free State Project, and lives in Keene. Here's his letter to the editor that appeared in the Keene Sentinel about the Central Square controversy. These are his opinions as Varrin the individual, as he is not speaking for the FSP: <http://3yrf.sl.pt> Letter From New Hampshire: How to Stage a Coup, American-Style <http://3yrj.sl.pt> The Free State Project: An Interview with Jason Sorens <http://3yfv.sl.pt> The Boston Globe <http://3ygt.sl.pt> "Just Tell Us What You Want, Claire!" by Tim Condon <http://3yq6.sl.pt> Free Town Project <http://3yq7.sl.pt> FSP Yahoo Group <http://3yq8.sl.pt> Finding the Free Town in the Free State <http://3yq9.sl.pt> Reclaiming the American Frontier <http://3yqb.sl.pt> Free Staters Gaining Attention in Keene <http://3yqg.sl.pt> No law against topless, but ... Keene police arrest protesters <http://3yr9.sl.pt> Protester, this time clothed, accepts plea deal <http://3x0u.sl.pt> <http://mercatus.org/> <http://www.theihs.org/> <http://freekeene.com/> <http://www.keenesentinel.com/> <http://freetalklive.com/> <http://libertyradionetwork.com/> <http://www.schoolandstate.org/home.htm> <http://www.nhliberty.org/> <http://newhampshirefreepress.com/> <http://nhfree.com/> <http://www.freemindsmedia.com/> <http://www.nhclog.org/>

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