

Libertarian could help determine Florida's next governor

By Zac Anderson , *Herald-Tribune* / Wednesday, July 9, 2014



Adrian Wyllie. (AP photo)

The bold slogan splashed across Adrian Wyllie's campaign materials urges Floridians to "Take a Stand!" It's a motto the state's Libertarian candidate for governor takes seriously.

Driving through Bradenton recently in a black Chrysler 300 bearing Libertarian bumper stickers, Wyllie was prepared to be arrested at any moment.

The 44-year-old computer consultant refuses to carry a driver's license in protest of a federal ID law he views as overly intrusive, a decision that already led to one short jail stint this year. That comfort with confrontation and his potential to draw supporters from other candidates makes Wyllie a wild card in Florida's 2014 governor's race.

Having been told he cannot address a campaign forum at a gathering of Florida news organizations Thursday, Wyllie vows he will speak or be dragged off by force.

But his presence in the race could prove disruptive in more consequential ways, with some predicting he might swing a close election by pulling votes from one of the major party contenders, most likely Republican Gov. Rick Scott, experts say.

Libertarians have been attracting attention across the nation in recent years thanks to a confluence of political cross currents — war fatigue, debt concerns, marijuana legalization efforts — that dovetail with the party's positions.

A Libertarian candidate for governor in Virginia recently captured 6.5 percent of the vote, one of the party's best showings in a major campaign. Political figures such as Ron Paul, a Libertarian turned Republican who maintains his former party's core philosophy, have brought mainstream awareness to the movement nationwide. U.S. Senator Rand Paul, Ron's son and a fellow Libertarian-leaning Republican, is seen as a contender for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016.

Now Wyllie, who lives near Tampa and sometimes works in Bradenton, is hoping to capitalize on that foundation and shake up Florida's gubernatorial race, widely seen as a showdown between Scott and Democrat Charlie Crist. He is the first Libertarian candidate for governor in at least four decades, according to records on the state Division of Elections website that go back to 1978.

A recent poll by Gravis Marketing had Wyllie attracting 6 percent of the vote, a decent showing for a third-party candidate but not enough for him to be considered a serious threat to win. Wyllie is adamant that he can win, but he also insists that "voting your principles is never a wasted vote."

Even modest support for the candidate could affect the outcome of the election.

"If a race is close enough a third-party candidate can make a difference," said Kevin Wagner, a political science professor at Florida Atlantic University. "And the expectation is that this is going to be a pretty close race."

'I got angry'

Sticking to his principles earned Wyllie a trip to the Pinellas County Jail in May.

He was protesting the Real ID Act, which was passed after 9/11 to thwart terrorists from getting driver's licenses but has been criticized by civil liberties groups as an invasion of privacy.

The driver's license showdown is the most dramatic example of Wyllie's efforts to thrust himself and the Libertarian philosophy into the forefront of Florida's political debate.

The married father of two has long been interested in politics, running unsuccessfully for a Dunedin City Council seat in 1998. But he says his real political awakening came a few years ago. Three big concerns — the national debt, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and perceived federal government violations of civil liberties — spurred

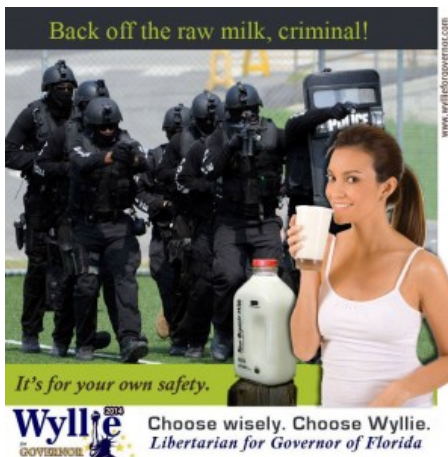
him to get more politically involved.

“I got angry, quite frankly,” he said.

Wyllie immersed himself in Libertarian politics — generally described as a mixture of fiscally conservative and socially liberal views — and became chair of the state party in 2011. He also cohosted a Libertarian talk show and served as the media director for Libertarian friend Alex Snitker’s 2010 U.S. Senate campaign.

Snitker received just 24,850 votes. Wyllie described it as a learning experience.

The party is more organized this time around, he said, noting there are 1,200 volunteers helping with the campaign. They are organizing events across the state and contributing to a robust online presence, including a [Facebook page](#) with more than 4,400 likes and a [campaign website](#) that includes a series of “Wyllie Memes” — pictures with text superimposed on them — that range from humorous to provocative.



A "Wyllie Meme" from Libertarian gubernatorial candidate Adrian Wyllie's website.

One photo illustration shows a police SWAT team approaching a woman drinking raw, unpasteurized milk. Text above the photo reads: “Back off the raw milk, criminal!” [Another compares a U.S. government ID law to the Nazi marking](#) of Jewish people with stars on their clothes.

Sitting for an interview at a Bradenton Starbucks this week after visiting one of his computer clients, Wyllie looked like any other businessman in charcoal grey suit pants, black dress shoes, a white dress shirt and yellow tie. He has salt-and-pepper hair and a smooth, radio-friendly voice.

Hosting a talk radio program helped make him “quick on his feet,” he said.

He breezes from one issue to another while sipping a large iced coffee.

Provocative platform

Two of Wyllie’s campaign promises are difficult to imagine becoming state policy: The elimination of property taxes on primary homes and a proposed 30 percent reduction in the state budget.

One depends on the other.

Wyllie said that cutting the state budget by 30 percent — or roughly \$23 billion — would allow him to shift state sales tax revenue to local governments to make up for the reduction in property tax collections.

But when pressed on how he would trim so much money from the budget — a move equivalent to eliminating nearly all education spending — he declines to go into specifics, saying only that it can be done largely by tackling “corruption” and “cronyism” in state contracting.

“I can’t give you every detail right now but there are no sacred cows when it comes to budget cuts,” he said.

Some of Wyllie’s other positions are equally provocative. He would allow casinos, the recently banned “Internet cafes” and other forms of gambling to expand. He wants to legalize marijuana for recreational, not just medical, use. He hopes to make it easier for people to use gold, silver, bitcoin and other alternative forms of payment when shopping. He supports the open carry of guns in public places. And he believes Florida should ignore, or “nullify,” federal laws deemed unacceptable.

The Libertarian philosophy of maximum personal freedom and minimal government has been gaining traction. The party has at least 10 U.S. Senate candidates in competitive races this election cycle, according to the Washington Post.

There is speculation that Libertarian candidates could help decide which party controls the Senate by playing spoiler for one of the major party candidates.

The same dynamic could play out with Wyllie in the governor’s race.

The Wyllie Factor

Wyllie insists his internal polling shows he is drawing equally from Republicans and Democrats.

“I don’t believe I’m a spoiler for anyone,” he said.

But Libertarians tend to be more closely associated with Republicans, Wagner said, and he expects Wyllie would appeal more to potential Scott supporters.

“My suspicion is that the Libertarian candidate will get very little traction,” Wagner said. “He’ll probably be drowned out but if he can draw even 1 or 2 percent that might help Crist.”

Jennifer Duffy tracks gubernatorial contests for the Cook Political Report. She believes the Florida race would have to be very close for Wyllie to make a difference. The state is expensive to campaign in and she does not expect the candidate to attract much attention.

But if Wyllie can gain momentum “it is going to disproportionately impact Scott,” Duffy said.

Asked if the Scott campaign is concerned about Wyllie, Scott Spokesman Greg Blair sent a terse email response.

“No,” Blair wrote. He declined to elaborate.

Another factor complicating the political equation this year, and Wyllie’s potential influence, is the fact that medical marijuana will be on the ballot.

There is speculation that the ballot initiative will bring out pro-marijuana voters who otherwise might have skipped the midterm election and are more likely to vote for Crist, who has endorsed the initiative.

Wyllie supports full recreational use of the drug, which could make him a more attractive candidate for some of these voters. If that happens, it would pull support from Crist and help Scott.

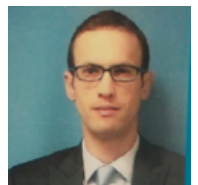
But Wyllie could struggle to get his message out. He has raised \$36,236 to date, not enough to do any significant advertising. That’s one reason he is fighting to be included in debates and candidate forums. He has been invited to participate in two debates, but not Thursday’s forum sponsored by two media industry trade groups.

Florida Press Association President and CEO Dean Ridings said the qualifying criteria established by the group is actually “more liberal” than in past years. Wyllie did not reach the fundraising or polling threshold, either of which would have earned him a spot. Democrats Crist and Nan Rich are expected to take part, though Scott is not.

“It’s not our goal to arrest anyone,” Ridings said when asked about Wyllie’s intention to crash the forum. “But it is my goal to make sure that we have a safe and orderly event.”

Wyllie is undeterred.

“If he wants to make it orderly all he needs to do is pull up an extra chair,” he said.



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Jo Ann Vaccarino · Top Commenter

My vote is my voice. I want my vote to say "I've had enough of the phony crony major parties the media caters to." I will vote for Wylie no matter how much money he raises because I don't think campaigns should be about money. I think they should be about qualifications, character and principles - and Wylie has plenty in those areas.

I hope the FPA will recognize the value of all the time Wylie has spent touring the state and all the adamant supporters he has earned - and let him waltz into their forum and take Rick Scott's chair. Rick Scott isn't interested in using it. Give it to someone who cares. But if they choose instead to arrest him, I'll be proud to say - my candidate has King Kong kahunas.

Reply · Like · 7 · July 9 at 7:28pm



Ron Johns Jr. · Top Commenter · Chapter President at Young Americans for Liberty

I hope he gets in!

Reply · Like · 4 · July 9 at 10:21pm



Kennon Gilson · Top Commenter · Volunteer at Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas County

It's well known for decades that USLP libertarians attract new voters and equally from all parties/groups, so the article/ Dr.Wagner is simply making data up.

For more on the world movement, see <http://www.libertarianinternational.org/> the Libertarian International.

Reply · Like · 1 · July 9 at 11:11pm



Sean Reed · Top Commenter

That is straight out false. There are next to ZERO Minorities in the Libertarian Party in AMERICA.

Reply · Like · 20 hours ago



Bill White · Top Commenter · Works at Noneyobusiness

Sean Reed <http://youtu.be/IDLSAm0y1W0> it is YOU who is lying

Reply · Like · 1 · 18 hours ago



Sean Reed · Top Commenter

Bill White this link is bull \$hi%

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Jeremiah Tattersall · Top Commenter · University of Florida

Anyone know if he's really getting arrested today? I need to see this.

"Having been told he cannot address a campaign forum at a gathering of Florida news organizations Thursday, Wylie vows he will speak or be dragged off by force."

Reply · Like · 1 · Yesterday at 7:20am



Denise Vosburgh Smith · Top Commenter

Adrian will be doing a Meet & Greet on Aug 4th at Darwins Brewery in Sarasota , Please come out and support him. Also will be in Bradenton at Motorworks Brewery on Aug 19th

Reply · Like ·  1 · Yesterday at 6:53am



Sean Reed ·  Top Commenter

So Adrian is a drunk too?

Reply · Like ·  1 · 19 hours ago



Denise Vosburgh Smith ·  Top Commenter

Sean Reed are you a TROLL? getting nervous are you? He's fighting for the small business breweries ...but I guess you cant understand that, now go back to your parents basement and quit making up lies ...

Reply · Like ·  1 · 19 hours ago



Sean Reed ·  Top Commenter

Denise Vosburgh Smith You hang out at bars....Your a Drunk simple as that....why must this be so complex? The dude is going to take 6% of the vote....wow.....I am scared that the racist may win at 6%. Good grief you wackos.

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Sean Reed ·  Top Commenter

Please lets get the facts straight. An American Libertarian is not a socially liberal person as they do not believe in the Civil Rights Act. That one idea is all it takes to land the Libertarians into loony land.

Reply · Like ·  1 · July 9 at 6:04pm



Alex Mazzara

It might sound crazy to a far left authoritarian like yourself, but some people actually support a persons right to own and operate a PRIVATE business.

Reply · Like ·  7 · July 9 at 6:35pm



Sean Reed ·  Top Commenter

Alex Mazzara My Family owns and operates a family business....Now what?

Reply · Like · July 9 at 6:39pm



Sean Reed ·  Top Commenter

Alex Mazzara just own up to it and tell the world....**Alex Mazzara** is a racist....by political ideology.

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Sean Reed ·  Top Commenter

Here this is a link for all the Libertarians that deny they are racist. There are over 1,800,000 articles explaining how you people are racist. https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=libertarian+party+and+racism

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Denise Vosburgh Smith ·  Top Commenter

oh look you use Google - gee who do they donate to - the LEFT , it all makes since where your getting your information from....

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Sean Reed ·  Top Commenter

Denise Vosburgh Smith Use bing if you want....use what ever search engine....good grief racists and how they run around the issue.

Reply · Like · 18 hours ago



Bill White ·  Top Commenter · Works at Noneyobusiness

Sean Reed FOR THE 3RD TIME "My Family owns and operates a family business....Now what?" tell us what the corporate tax rate is and the licensing requirements . I call BS

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Robin Miller ·  Top Commenter · Writer/Editor/Videographer at Millers Art & Video

Want to makes them libtards and obamabots really really angry? You know you do.

A vote for Wyllie will have them frothing at the mouth and calling for their mommies!

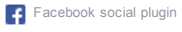
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Toni Wilson Renier · Works at FACES (Families for Alternative Choices in Educational Services)

He's got my vote! :)

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