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LIBERTARIANS CALL FOR BAIL REFORM

Californians charged with minor offenses are often kept in jail awaiting trial because they can't afford even a small amount of bail. Often, this occurs in cases where there's no threat to public safety. Libertarians are joining people from across the political spectrum to change this unfair system, which almost seems like a debtor's prison. We support SB 10 and AB 42, currently working their way through the California Legislature with the backing of legislators from both major parties as well as civil rights groups like the ACLU.

Bail amounts should be decided by the likelihood of the accused to show up in court, not by a bureaucratic list with no tethers to individual circumstances. "Not only must taxpayers foot the bill for prisoners who should have been released on their own recognizance, but these detainees may lose their jobs, homes, and custody of their children if they are stuck in jail for even a week unnecessarily," said Ted Brown, chairman of the Libertarian Party of California. And after all of that incarceration, one-third of felony charges are dropped or the defendant is found not guilty, according to the ACLU.

Poor people are treated abominably by the criminal justice system. They often have warrants against them for not paying previous traffic fines or fees, many of which are overly high to begin with. Courts don't take into account ability to pay. "If people have to rot in jail just because they are poor, we haven't come very far from the debtor's prisons in England of 150 years ago," said Brown. "Libertarians believe that no one should be in jail merely for being unable to make a payment."

It's understandable that state legislators and county supervisors don't want to change this system for fear they'll be blamed if even one suspect who is released commits a heinous crime. But each case is different and each person has specific circumstances which must be evaluated. Libertarians will always work to protect individual rights and advocate treating everyone as innocent until proven guilty.

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The Libertarian Party (LP) was founded in 1971 and is the third largest political party in the United States. Over 15,000,000 votes were cast for Libertarian candidates in the 2012 election, and the party has experienced a surge in new memberships nationally during the 2016 presidential election season.

The LP seeks to expand personal freedoms, dramatically reduce taxes and government interference in the economy, and avoid meddling in overseas conflicts.

The LP of California is an affiliate of the Libertarian National Committee (LNC).