



Episode 1,400: Libertarian Party Vice Chair Alex Merced on the LP's Past and Future

Guest: Alex Merced

WOODS: All right, let's talk Libertarian Party. I solicited some questions from the supporting listeners group, SupportingListeners.com, the *Tom Woods Show* elite group. But before we get into some of those, I think it'd be a good idea to start off with your own background with the Libertarian Party. You're the vice chair, and I'm curious to know about your history with the party, how you got involved, and what made you decide to run for vice chair. Just give me a little bit of that background.

MERCED: Gotcha. Basically, I became libertarian with the Ron Paul movement in 2007, 2008. But after that, I didn't get directly involved with the Libertarian Party. I actually kind of dove deep into like the Seasteading Institute and stuff like that. It wasn't till 2013, actually, Roger Stone intervened in the convention of the New York City Libertarian Party, and actually ended up, they actually had to throw out the convention, so they had no candidates. So all the candidates ended up getting shaken up. And they didn't have any candidate for New York City public advocate, which is like the vice mayor of New York City. So the mayoral candidate by the name of Michael Sanchez was a fan of my YouTube videos that I'd been doing over the years, so he reached out to me said, *Hey, can we run you for public advocate?* Actually, now that I think about it, the day that he asked me to do that was actually the first day I met you, because that was actually at Liberty Fest in New York City in 2013. You had a table at the event, and that's actually where I met Michael, and he asked me to be the public advocate candidate.

WOODS: Oh, okay. I didn't know any of this. Okay.

MERCED: Yeah, this actually just came together right now in my head. I never really realized that till just now. But basically, he asked me to be the candidate, and they got me on the ballot, and I was like, okay, I'm going to run. And I ended up getting the highest vote total that year of any of the Libertarian Party candidates;. I ended up getting 10,000 votes, which was double the next highest, strictly Libertarian Party vote total of 5,000 for the city-wide candidates. And I made really good relationships with the rest of the people in the New York City party, so I became really involved. And then in 2016, I ran against Chuck Schumer, and that kind of got me more involved with the state party. And then at the end of 2017, was on the Johnny Rocket Launch Pad, and Larry Sharpe both asked me to run for vice chair of the national party because of all the stuff that was kind of going on at the time. And after both of them asking me, it was kind of hard to say no. So December 1st, 2017, I announced my candidacy for vice chair of the Libertarian Party, and then traveled the country, became more involved with the national scene of the party. And then last July, I became vice chair of the Libertarian Party.

WOODS: Well, that is quite a story, and I want to make sure everybody who's listening knows kind of what you are known for. And I would say what you're known for most – in fact, before I say that, what would you most like to be known for in the Libertarian Party? Let's see if it matches up with my answer.

MERCED: I think what most people know me for is as the nice guy of Libertarian Party. I generally am a very nice guy. But I generally got my start more intellectually. I just became really interested in Austrian economics, and then economics more broadly afterwards, and I spent pretty much all of 2008 to today making videos on economics and philosophy. Like literally every time I read a book, anytime I learned something, I'd make a video about it. So there's over 2,000 videos on YouTube and thousands of podcast episodes all over of me just talking about what I learned. But I've always kind of been someone who tries to reconcile and understand other people's ideas, so people always looked at me like as a sort of a welcoming and inclusive figure.

WOODS: Am I hearing a chirping bird in the background?

MERCED: Yeah, I apologize for that. My cockatoo just flew into the room.

WOODS: [laughing] You don't have to apologize. It's just so funny the things I hear in the background with guests. All right, so are you a nonaggression principle, self-ownership kind of guy?

MERCED: Yeah, yeah, I would definitely say that. I come at it from all angles, so I definitely believe in the whole idea of self-ownership and nonaggression. Those sort of principles really ring true to me, and I think they're very important to instill in and encourage people to adopt. But I also very much appreciate sort of the utility of liberty and the benefits it has on a broad scale and on an individual scale.

WOODS: Does the vice chair – I know the chair would not intervene – I guess in the same way in the Republicans, the Democrats, the chair does not intervene in the primary to say, "I endorse so and so." So that would be the same thing for you in the Libertarian Party, I assume, right?

MERCED: Yeah.

WOODS: Okay.

MERCED: I don't plan on endorsing anyone in the Libertarian Party. And actually, so far, all the candidates that have announced, I'm fairly good friends with all of them, and I'm very excited that they're all involved. And I encourage more people to get involved. I want as many voices to get out there, and I encourage all delegates to get to know them. And if you're not a person who's involved with a party, if you want to influence who gets chosen, become a member, become a delegate. That's how it works.

WOODS: What do you say to people who have a philosophical opposition to the state that they think leads them to the conclusion that they can't participate in a political party, they can't vote, because that's giving their consent to the system?

MERCED: I would say that the Libertarian Party does a lot more than just politics. I always say that the Libertarian Party has four things that it really does for the liberty movement. There is a political side to it, where we get involved in elections, ballot initiatives, lobbying legislators to move policy in a more libertarian direction. But that's only a small piece. There's also the education side, where campaigns do form a great way of connecting people to libertarian ideas.

But also, there's the community within the Libertarian Party. And like I go to Libertarian Party events. People are carpooling; people are taking care of each other's kids. We are literally building that sort of voluntarist world within the party. It doesn't have to necessarily be a nation to be the example. That example of a libertarian world is the community within the party, a place where we aren't looking to force each other into anything. We all work with each other. We work through our challenges. We try to innovate our way through our challenges. And that's, I think, one of the strongest arguments for libertarianism in general, when people are see that this community of people working with each other, knowing each other, caring about each other. So I'm always very big on building that community within the LP.

And then four, I think, advocating for liberty. And one of the reasons why I focus a lot on emotional intelligence is a lot of times people hold back on – like logical arguments are great, and I love logical arguments. But you have to be open to listening to them, and oftentimes people's brains are closed off because of the things that have happened to them in the past, the people who've spurned them, the wounds they have from life. So part of it is the healing process, because if you help build people up so they can trust people again, they'll be opened up to those ideas again, and then they can start hearing those logical arguments and really embracing a lot of our ideas more wholeheartedly. And that community helps in that kind of healing when people get involved with the party.

So I think all these aspects are things with being involved with a party, so even if you don't vote, even if you don't like politics, being involved with the party gets you involved in the community that's a great example of libertarianism in action.

WOODS: Now, that's a very interesting way to answer, and in a way, it's kind of an Alex Merced way to answer, because I would have immediately gone at the philosophical roots of the objection. And I would have said: now, you're wrong to think that voting or whatever is some kind of consent to the system, and I would have cited Lysander Spooner on my side, or whatever. And your view is more: well, maybe I will change their minds on that, but I'll tell them that there's more to the Libertarian Party than that. And if there are some parts you don't want to be part of, then don't do that, but there are a lot of – That's an interesting kind of answer.

Well, let me ask you something that came out of the keynote talk I gave this weekend when I saw you at the Libertarian Party convention in Florida, the state convention there. The topic came up, or at least I brought it up at some point, about running a candidate for president. And naturally, if you're going to have a political party, it seems only natural you would run a presidential candidate. But there have been some people who have thought that the presidential election sucks all the resources and the energy and the attention of the party away from more winnable, local races. And so some people have wondered if maybe in some cases it might be a mistake even to field a candidate for president. And there's a certain plausibility to that until you realize – and this was the other point I made – that it's precisely

the presidential campaign that generates a lot of interest and fundraising activity and all this energy that you need for the rest of the party, for the party to function. And so if you were to give up the presidential candidacy, then you would become almost invisible, and that would be a problem. So what do you think is the right and wrong of all that?

MERCED: I totally agree that the presidential election has its own momentum that it builds within itself, and a lot of the people who donate to any candidate – because you hear this with every candidate about every other candidate – that if everyone just focused on my campaign, on my particular local campaign or my Senate campaign – and I've been there. I was a Senate candidate; I was the public advocate candidate; I was a comptroller candidate in New York City, and you become very passionate about your campaign and about what you can possibly do. And you think, well, if everyone just got behind me, we would change the world. And theoretically, that could be true. And you want candidates to feel that way, because you want them as passionate about what they're doing as possible.

But people are going to donate where they're going to donate, and if people want to donate to the presidential candidate or to a Senate candidate, it's because that's where their heart is. We can't just sit there and say, well, if we don't run a presidential candidate, suddenly, that person is just going to donate elsewhere. It's kind of people who think, well, if Gary Johnson didn't win, all those votes would have gone to Hillary or Trump. It's not a given that the person would have done something absent of an option. So that's the wrong way. When people sit there and say exactly that, like, "Go focus on local," that's sort of the wrong approach.

If anything, all candidates need to focus on building new donors, new voters. That's how we grow, not by fighting over the pool that we have, but by looking at growing, and that's really where the community involvement comes in. And that's something that, again, whether you believe in voting or not, everyone can get involved in creating a local neighborhood barbecue and building relationships within the community. Because those relationships, they may not necessarily say, "Hey, we need to go abolish public schools tomorrow," but, hey, once you've become friends with them, had a nice burger, they're going to be much more receptive to those ideas, because now they like you. So that's something every candidate, every liberty movement person can be doing, getting involved in the community, and that's going to grow the fundraising; that's going to grow the votes; that's going to grow and all other. But at the same time, we need the media that the presidential election brings, because that's going to be our highest medium every four years.

WOODS: Right, right, right. Well, let's talk about 2020, but we'll speak generally, not talking about any particular candidates at the moment. But I've been a bit pessimistic about the prospects for the Libertarian Party in 2020, simply because – not because of anything peculiar to the Libertarian Party, but because I think any third party is going to run into a problem. And really, it's a perennial problem, and I don't just mean the "I don't want to throw my vote away" argument or stuff like that, but it's more that, every four years, we get told this is the most important election of our lifetimes. It's almost a running joke at this point. Every four years, and then four years from now, that'll be the most important election of our lifetimes. And so there's always an excuse why I can't afford to vote for the Libertarian Party, because this is the most important election of our lifetimes. But in this case, they'll say, all right, look, I know we've cried wolf before, but this time, it really may be the most important election of our lifetimes, because the Supreme Court does have the potential to do a lot of harm or to prevent a lot of harm, and if we can just get a lock on non-activist judges on the

court, that'll do a lot of good, and voting for the Libertarian Party will undermine that process. So how do you recommend that the party respond to that or cope in 2020?

MERCED: That is a high-stakes election, not just the Supreme Court, but I mean, it's a census year, so a lot of those governor races and whatnot are going to have a huge impact on politics over the next decade. So it is a high-stakes election. But my focus is growth, and 2018 was another year where basically polarization really had people focusing on, *Well, I need to go vote against the person I'm more scared of.* And that's always a bad environment, if you're an emerging party, because people aren't looking for an alternative; they're looking to prevent something they think is worse. But in 2018, we still ran more candidates than we've had in previous election cycles. We still, in many of those races, saw growth in the number of votes that they got. Now, some of the percentages dropped because it was a high turnout election, and high turnouts aren't great for emerging parties. But we saw growth and votes. We grew our ballot access. We got ballot access in New York, which we've never had before. Larry Sharpe did an amazing job. Huge vote growth.

And that's what matters. Are we gaining yards? Because over the last 40 years, I know people want to see us become as big as the Republicans and Democrats overnight, but when the Republicans and Democrats started, they didn't have to deal with the ballot access laws that we're dealing with. They didn't have to deal with the kind of media entrenchment that we're dealing with right now. And despite all of that, we are still the third largest party in the United States, and we are still growing. Our membership numbers are growing. Our fundraising numbers are growing. We have challenges, and you know, if you're expecting us to be at the top in 2020, maybe that's not necessarily the right metric. But if you're looking at 2018, how in 2018, despite there being a lot less attention for emerging parties, we still did better than we did in 2016 by a lot of metrics. Even our convention revenue was better – I think just about better than 2016, which is pretty impressive. So the fact that we're still growing, despite kind of things going away from sort of that emerging-party-friendly 2016, that's a good trend, that we're still growing. And as long as that trend holds, I'm happy.

WOODS: Let me ask a question that combines the questions of two people from the supporting listeners group. One, I'm just going to read his question. He says: "It would be nice to get an inside perspective on how political parties work, what goes on in them, what is his function, etc., which is to say that for many of us, political parties are like the banking system to the average Joe, or even the above average, educated libertarian: not very accessible. So just what are the basic nuts and bolts of it?" And then somebody else wants to know about the budget, the party budget. How does the fiscally responsible party handle budgetary issues internally? Now, I know nothing about that, so for all I know, that's a really hot question, or it could also be a really boring question. I don't know.

MERCED: It's interesting. I mean, basically, what a political party is, it's just an organizational apparatus to do X; in this case, for the Libertarian Party to do libertarian stuff within the political realm, which is not the only realm of doing libertarian stuff. I mean, I'm very big on all the cultural stuff, like the music of Backwordz and also all the innovative stuff. But the Libertarian Party creates an organization that allows us to use economies of scale in politics. I mean, people can run individually as an Independent, per se, and still be a libertarian; the problem is, they don't get the benefit of the networks that a political party has or the relationships that a party has built. That's sort of the benefit of, especially when you're talking about national politics, where you really need a lot of those things kind of built up ahead of time, because you don't have enough time to build them up yourself in an election

cycle, especially nationally. So the Libertarian Party's trying to build an apparatus, the networks, the media relationships, the organization to actually have libertarian ideas be able to function effectively in a national cycle without constantly having to bash heads against an establishment. Because in the Libertarian Party, even the establishment is still pretty darn libertarian, unlike, you know, you go into one of the other parties, you really are like a lone voice fighting against a large force. We try to make sure that there is a large force that is libertarian.

Now, as far as budgeting goes, basically, the way it works is once a year, we have a budgetary meeting here at the LNC. The last year was my first one, and I guess the last couple years, we had deficit budgets, and there was a concerted effort this year to go back to being very strict, balanced budgets. And we had a high revenue last year. Like last year was one of our better years, or one of the best years, really, but we also spent a lot of money. We spent money on a lot of new staff, which was very beneficial. I mean, in one race in Wyoming, we came 50 votes short of unseating the state senate majority leader in Wyoming. 50 votes. They actually called the race in favor of Bethany Baldes, so a Libertarian would have unseated the senate majority leader in that state. But at the last minute, they found 500 votes, and that switched it, flipped sides. But still, being that close is an amazing feat.

WOODS: Yeah.

MERCED: And that was because we invested in having some people going in there and helping the organization of the party and kind of practice some of that traditional retail door-knocking and whatnot. So we've seen a return on those investments, and we want to make those investments on a greater scale. But showing those small examples hopefully will inspire people to say, hey, you know what? If I get my \$25 membership in the Libertarian Party, hey, the money's actually being used for something.

We have the CRM project, where we're actually creating a much easier tool for state parties to be able to share data, so that way, every election is not like everyone's starting from scratch, as it has been in the past, collecting data, collecting the same emails over again. You'll have some sort of continuity. We're trying to just make those basic infrastructure investments that actually have a huge return.

And that's mainly what we do at national level. So there's a national budget, which is fairly not the most exciting thing in the world. It's really, you know, we pay the building's mortgage, do we invest in these projects, and that's pretty much the deal at national. Then every state has their own budget. Some states have much bigger budgets than other states. And if you haven't gone to a lot of state conventions, there's a very huge disparity between sort of the most organized states and the least organized states. So there's a lot of room to grow, there's really – if people want to get involved right now, there's a lot of room to actually get involved and have huge impact because of the size that we're at right now. So we're having impact on a national scale, despite our size, because we innovate, because since we're not dulled down by all the sort of entrenched leaders and whatnot and old traditions, people can try out new things, try out new technologies. People can experiment.

I like to think of the Libertarian Party as a clearinghouse for libertarian activism, where people can try different things. And it's like a free market, where good ideas rise to the top, and people try some things that don't work and it disappears, but at least you're free to do so. Unlike other parties, where they really control how candidates run, they really control who

says what, and basically, they keep trying the same things over and over again. Here, you get some experimentation. And I like that, and I think that's part of the reason why we have grown more than other emerging parties, because basically internally we're free market of activism in the same way we believe in free markets in the economy.

WOODS: This one looks kind of interesting. The gentleman is asking: "I'd like to hear about successes of elected libertarians. I hear a lot about them running, a little about them winning, but not very much about what they actually do in office. Do you have any anecdotes you can share?"

MERCED: Oh, yeah. I mean, last year, Jeffrey Hewitt in California, he won. He's our highest-level elected Libertarian. He won a seat on the Riverside County Board of Supervisors. And Riverside County is like as big as a few – I think it's actually bigger than a few states, far as population goes. And before that, he was the mayor of Calla Mesa, California. And he went in there and actually renegotiated the pension system, because basically, the California pension system is a fiscal disaster. And he actually went in there and actually was able to opt out, and basically took on the union's head-on, and succeeded and won, and basically drastically reformed the pensions and retirement system for Calla Mesa into a much more fiscally sound system, in a sense. So he actually took a problem that existed and fixed it. And he did it by basically reaching across the aisle and, over the years, building relationships within his community. Like, he is a libertarian through and through, and he actually did our State of the Union address this year. But I would definitely go take a look at Jeffrey Hewitt as one of the best examples.

But also, a lot of the California Libertarians have done some cool stuff. Like there's a couple in Northern California that, not as elected Libertarians, but there was a tax increase going on in their community, and by doing the research, by strong advocacy, they actually prevented it from happening. So there are people who are actually making real changes, and there's real results from, again, not just elections and candidates, but from activism. We have Libertarian parties helping out with ballot initiatives to decriminalize drugs or basically end prohibition at all levels and fight taxes. So again, that activism can take many forms, and there's actual results. There's actually things we can point to. Now, would I like there to be more? Sure, but it's growing, and that's what matters.

WOODS: Let me now share a passage from David Friedman that I was not familiar with until this very moment, but maybe you've heard, and it had to do with the Libertarian Party. It just goes to show David Friedman's been around a long time. I think this is from 1973. So I'm going to read this to you. It says: "When I say that a party wishes something, I'm again employing a convenient abbreviation. Consider a small ideological party, such as the Libertarian Party. Initially" – actually, by the way, I'm not sure that the quotation is from 1973. It could be a reference to – it doesn't matter. It's from a long time ago.

MERCED: Okay.

WOODS: It says: "Consider a small ideological party, such as the Libertarian Party. Initially, all it has to offer to potential workers, officers, or candidates is the opportunity to achieve their ideological objectives. As long as that is true, its members, officers, and candidates continue to be the people whose main objective is ideological, and the party continues to believe in libertarianism. Suppose the party begins to win elections. It occurs to some people that positions of power within the party may in the long run be worth quite a lot of money.

Some of the people to whom this occurs may be non-ideological and willing to proclaim any ideology they find convenient. Others may be vaguely libertarian, but with a greater commitment to their short-run private objectives than to their long-run public ones. What these people have in common is their willingness to make a profession of gaining power within the party. In the long run, in the struggle for power, professionals will beat amateurs. It is as certain as anything can be in politics that once a party achieves substantial political power, it will eventually swing towards a policy in which ideology is a means, perhaps an important means, but not an end. It will become a vote- and income-maximizing party, taking positions dictated by its ideology when that seems the best way of getting votes or the volunteer labor and money it requires in order to get votes, and taking actions inconsistent with its ideology when such actions yield the party a net profit in votes or dollars. We already have two parties like that. I see no advantage to having a third."

Now, I don't think that's a good description of what's going on in the Libertarian Party at this moment. But if it were to become super successful the way he's positing here, how do you prevent that?

MERCED: I've had this question before, and generally my feeling is this. This is what happens to all successful institutions over time. As institutions get successful, they grow, they become stale, they become stagnant, and eventually they die. That's why you want free markets, because businesses that were great and innovative in the past become old and stale in the future. Who knows? Maybe back in the day, Democrats and Republicans were much more edgy and cool than they are now. But now they're old and stale, and they need to die. And the Libertarian Party right now is growing. It is very strong in its principles, very strong in its ideology. And maybe in the future as it grows and succeeds and does some work towards that ideology, it becomes big and stale. And at that point, it'll need to die, and new parties will need to come. I don't expect institutions to be gold forever. It's like *The Outsiders*, "Nothing stays gold, Pony Boy." But at this point, it's gold and getting goldier. And in this moment, it's the vehicle for what I want to see in the world. Will it always be that? I don't know, but I never expect any institution to always be that.

WOODS: Now, let's move from these fun little questions to something a little bit more controversial. First, let's do Tom Mullins' question, and I probably shouldn't be using people's names, but I know Tom won't care. He says, "The leadership gets a lot of blame for the Johnson/Weld nomination, especially Weld, but they were nominated by a majority of the members. Does Alex believe Johnson and Weld represent the views of a majority of the membership? If not, what are his thoughts on why they were nominated? And does he foresee candidates who more closely resemble the party platform being nominated going forward? Why or why not?"

MERCED: Oftentimes in politics, I don't think people always vote for the person who represents their views the most. I mean, I generally do, but I think a lot of times people look for a balance of different things. Who represents views that I generally agree with, but then also checks off other boxes to accomplish what I hope to be accomplished? So it's not just the what, but the who, the what, the where, the why. And at the end result, Gary Johnson crossed off more boxes for more people than any of the candidates; Weld's a little bit more closely – so I mean, it was only a few votes shy of having a Larry Sharpe vice presidency, which, you know, it was what it was.

But at the end of day, it is the delegates who make the choice, and generally the officers are fairly hands-off in the process. We don't get to decide whether someone runs or doesn't run. I've been running into that controversy this weekend with some new candidates who appeared. But, you know, what we do is we just facilitate the process. We're just trying to make sure that the convention, that there is an institution whose rules are being adhere to, that allows people who care enough to be involved to be able to make that decision. But I would say that what the people decided at the national convention is generally a sum of a lot of different values, not just purely: is this the person on the stage who represents my values the best? Because also people will care about the result of that action and whatnot. I mean, I generally am someone who probably does vote for the person who really just kind of represents my views the most. That's why I enthusiastically voted for Ron Paul in 2008 and 2012, and generally still vote pretty much Libertarian in most elections, because that's just where my heart is.

But at the end of the day, if you're voting as a delegate in the Libertarian Party convention, your heart is already much more away from establishment thinking than people who are already operating generally in the Republican and Democratic Party. So you're already a couple steps removed, maybe not as removed as other members, but it is what it is. I don't think the process is bad. Like any electoral process, it ends up having a median result. But if you want to have the most impact, I think you can really have that strong libertarian voice by getting involved and making it more libertarian.

WOODS: All right, a couple more things I want to ask you. One of them is hypothetical, but not entirely, I suppose. Let's suppose you have a an election, maybe it's a governor's race or whatever, in which there are two people running and one of them, nobody knows what they're going to do when they get in power, but let's say what the person is running on seems like it's 75% to 80% in line with what we believe. And if a Libertarian candidate jumps into that race, it is almost certain to turn that election over to somebody who is 5% with us. Can you ever imagine being in a situation where even privately and quietly without fanfare, you would advise against any Libertarian candidate entering that election in a case like that?

MERCED: I generally won't interfere in the decision of someone to run. Personally, I just — and I mean, there have been actual situations like this that have come up over the last year since I've become by vice chair, and then in my running for vice chair, where there were races where people were concerned. It was like, hey, we have this really, almost good Republican. But I don't think either way it's bad. I mean, when you win, if you have someone who's by and large libertarian, great, if they win. If they lose because of an emerging party vote, like the whole spoiler effect, I mean, there's two takeaways from that. Oftentimes, when you have that effect, it's a signal to organizations that, hey, we're not appealing enough to this audience, and we need — if you're too quick to give your vote away, then people won't cater to what you have to say as much. So that's one issue. But also, at the end of the day, if the Libertarian Party is growing, we're not going to go from not having any effect to winning. It's not going to be like a jump. We're going to be a spoiler first. That's like, in the step of growing, you're going to have a consequential chunk of the vote. And doing that is part of our growth, and if we don't do that, we're not going to get to the eventual winning part. So we're going to impact, and there's going to be people on the left who hate us for it, and there's going to be people on the right who hate us for it. And I really don't have a problem with that.

WOODS: All right, finally, I'm curious about the different caucuses within the Libertarian Party and what their role is. And in particular, you know I have a vested interest in the so-called Mises Caucus. I was at their event, kind of in tandem with the convention in 2018 in New Orleans.

MERCED: Good times.

WOODS: Yeah, good times, and some really outstanding, energetic young folks involved in that caucus. My understanding is you're not a formal member of any of these caucuses, but you have some sympathies here and there. What can you tell us about that?

MERCED: I try to be as friendly with all the caucuses, or just really the entire membership, as possible. The reason being is that there are going to be times where there's going to be conflicts between people in the party and different groups within the party, and I need people to feel comfortable coming up to me and saying, "Hey, I have this issue. Can you help me out with this?" So if I come out too strong in saying I like this group and I don't like this group, then what happens? It becomes harder, where some people won't feel comfortable talking to me. So I generally don't get involved too much with the caucuses.

But the role of a caucus within a political party is just it's an informal group of people who want to influence the direction of the party. And I think the fact that we've been growing the number of caucuses within the party is another sign of its growth. Because if you had a party of ten people, there would be no reason to have a caucus.

WOODS: There would be no caucuses, right.

MERCED: Yeah, so as an organization gets bigger, you need those small groups, because a larger political party isn't going to be as good at representing purely what you believe, so you need those small groups where we can say, hey, this is what we believe, this is what we want to do, let's organize towards that. And that's good, because it allows – and I do think that they kind of find a great equilibrium between each other, because each of them keep pushing sort of their goal.

So you have the Mises caucus, which is trying to really push that sort of heavy property rights, heavy Misesian Austrian-economics focus on policy, end the Fed, all that good stuff. You have the Pragmatist Caucus, which is focused on sort of practical, traditional politicking. So you have people who are anarchists and people who are classical liberals in the Pragmatist Caucus, but they all kind of want door-knocking and very traditional sort of politicking.

Then you have the Audacious Caucus, which is kind of the polar opposite. Their goal is sort of to dismantle respectability politics by sort of being as audacious and not respectable as possible, which I think, well, sometimes – you know, people, they like to push people's buttons, but that's kind of what they're trying to do, which I think there's an element of necessity to that, some element in politics, or at least from a libertarian perspective, in the sense that in the libertarian world, we want everyone to participate in markets. And in the same way, we want everyone's voice be part of the discussion, ideally through consumerism, but also through just hearing people. So the more you start kind of pushing on the edges, the more people who might be heard, although, again, people have very different views on different tactics that the Audacious Caucus has used.

There's also the Radical Caucus, which focuses on making sure the party sticks really to its platform, to its core principles, and its founding, which is generally a very anarchocapitalist-heavy group. And what else? I'm trying to think what other caucuses are there. Those are the sort of the main or the larger caucuses. There's also an Individualist Caucus, a Unity Caucus, but these are more smaller groups that are more not as large as the four that I mentioned before.

WOODS: I guess my own approach is rather different from the Audacious Caucus. I give the external appearance of respectability, and I'm wearing a suit and am, you know, reasonably well-put-together and all that. But then beneath all that, I'm this crazy radical. So I lull people in with a false sense of security. Well, this seems like a reasonable guy. Yeah, wait till you hear me start talking [laughing].

MERCED: Yeah, that's generally my approach, as well, so I totally empathize with that.

WOODS: All right, so people can find out more about the Libertarian Party, of course, at LP.org. But how can they follow Alex Merced?

MERCED: There's always AlexMerced.com, where you can find my books, my merchandise, my podcasts, all sorts of really cool stuff and anything that I'm involved in. But one thing I'd really like everyone to do is follow me on Twitter, subscribe to my YouTube channel, and subscribe to at least one of my podcasts. Just go into your favorite podcast catcher, put in "Alex Merced," and you'll find information on that. And then if you want, like one of my Facebook pages. But AlexMerced.com is really sort of the home of what I do. The other URL I think people should remember is Libertarian101.com. It's a really handy, quick URL you can give to anybody with just the basics, core way of easing people into libertarianism. I think it's a very principled message, but I think I set up a couple videos that are sort of very – what's the word I'm looking for? – accessible. So those would be the place I would look: the podcast, AlexMerced.com, Libertarian101.com.

WOODS: All right, that's a lot to remember, so I'll put all that stuff up at TomWoods.com/1400. Now, that's easy to remember; 1400 on the nose, you can get all those Alex Merced resources sitting there waiting for you. All right, well, I appreciate you coming on, answering some questions. I think you're a real force for good in the party. I love that you make the effort to listen to everybody's perspective and try to get along with everybody. I think that's extremely admirable. Somebody's got to do that, and I think you're doing an outstanding job. And I'm glad to have supported you, and I'm glad you could you were elected, and man, are you energetic. You're flying all over the country, and you still maintain this positive outlook, and at no time do you say, doggone it, I'm stuck in some blankety-blank airport or whatever. That's not Alex Merced's style, and that's terrific. Thanks so much.

MERCED: Thank you so much. I really appreciate that, and always a wonderful time to talk with you, Tom.