Green Party elected officials stress their mainstream political credentials

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At a press conference called during the Green Party national convention last weekend, a number of Green officeholders boasted that their work in local government had earned them the respect of Democrats and Republicans, and, in some cases, endorsements for reelection.

Currently, 78 Green members hold elected office in local governments in 19 states and the District of Columbia. In addition to Nader's presidential campaign, the Greens will run 118 candidates in 22 states this year.

Art Goodtimes, an official in Colorado local government, acknowledged that he had voted to eliminate building safety codes in his district because, he said, the voters wanted it. Another Green official said he succeeded in stopping mandatory fluoridation of water in his rural Pennsylvania town—which he opposed on grounds of public health—by convincing the Democrats and Republicans on his local council that the measure would cost too much.

Michael Feinstein, a member of the Santa Monica, California City Council, provided a rationale for political opportunism on the part of Green officeholders. "Democracy can get messy," he said, "but it is the best system we have."

In the course of the press conference the elected officials sought to distance themselves from anything in the Green Party platform that remotely resembled socialism. Answering one reporter's question as to whether the Greens were "closet socialists," Feinstein said, "The Green Party is distrustful of large concentration of power, whether it is private or public. We don't stand for the nationalization of industries. We don't buy into the 'isms.'"

Feinstein said any attempt to label the Greens as socialists or revolutionaries could be answered by pointing to the record of the party's elected officials, who have "effectively governed in practical terms" and proven that "we really know what we are doing."

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