

POLITICS

Kauffman Ousted in Free State Shakeup

by **Damien Fisher**

October 3, 2023



Outspoken and controversial Libertarian leader Jeremy Kauffman is out at the Free State Project (FSP), booted from the board over his refusal to tone down his online trolling, including his promotion of a racist social media feed.

Kauffman, the mercurial Libertarian Party candidate for Senate in 2022, was voted off the board after weeks of tension with other members, like Carla Gericke and Free State founder Jason Sorens. Kauffman forced the vote

after the other members tried to ease him out. In the end, the FSP board decided it could not tolerate his trolling in their name.

“In order for us to function as an organization, it is absurd that someone could say that our names as a board should be attached to anonymous accounts because that’s your whim then,” Gericke told Kauffman during the meeting in which he was voted off the board.

The video of Kauffman’s now final board meeting posted online depicted a visibly agitated Kauffman arguing to stay on the board despite his repeated refusal to give up his communications role for the FSP. And he repeatedly refused to adhere to standards the board was trying to set for him as a representative of the cause. Gericke was seen getting angry with Kauffman in the video. She said one of the final straws was Kauffman’s refusal to stop using FSP social media accounts to amplify white supremacists after being given a new written directive.

“You then totally sh*t the bed by doing 14 crazy things,” Gericke said.

Sorens is the political scientist who developed the Free State Project in the early 2000s. He told Kauffman that his social media presence hurts the FSP with donors and the general public.

“One of our biggest donors, perhaps our biggest donor ever, has said that he will not donate as long as you’re on the board, and he’s also said he’s not going to donate to the Free State documentary,” Sorens told Kauffman. “Your personal messaging affects our organization.”

Kauffman’s social media activity included recent posts supporting the former apartheid South African government that discriminated against Black South Africans, retweeting white supremacist accounts, as well as posts about Jews controlling the world and supporting violence against transgender people.

Kauffman was in charge of the FSP communications, the group’s Twitter/X accounts, and accounts for the state Libertarian Party.

Kauffman blamed Sorens for the ouster in a statement provided to NHJournal, saying the man who came up with the FSP concept is a liberal who is trying to remake the organization to appeal to the left.

“The removal was led by Jason Sorens, a Hillary Clinton-supporting left-libertarian who wants to force small New Hampshire towns to build multi-family affordable housing. Jason Sorens held a struggle session against me that was straight out of the socialist playbook,” Kauffman claimed.

“One key allegation was that it was racist to assert that South Africa is much worse off today than it was decades ago, as well as that it’s racist to discuss differences in crime rates. This decision was opposed by nearly every NHLA-supported Republican, including liberty leadership. It’s vastly out of step with where the movement is as a whole, which is why it had to be done in such an underhanded way and why the decision was nearly universally derided on social media.

“I’m still optimistic about the future of liberty in New Hampshire and will continue to recruit right-wing libertarians to move here.”

One of the people who pushed to get Kauffman off the board was Jim Harper, a New Hampshire Libertarian and fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Kauffman’s reckoning had been a long time coming, Harper said, as many Libertarians were tired of being associated with Kauffman’s brand.

“There’s sort of the activist and the normals, and I’m one of the normals. I do have opinions, and I don’t like anyone to sully my ideology,” Harper said.

The Libertarian movement in New Hampshire and nationally has been split between what Harper calls the “normal” Libertarians and a noisy, right-wing “Trumpy” fringe of which Kauffman is part, Harper said.

“It’s the ‘Trumpy’ style Libertarian where they gravitate toward outrage and where it’s more important to snub the powers that be than present a positive image to grow the party,” Harper said.

Kauffman and his followers are great at getting noticed but little else, Harper said.

“They’re excited about themselves because they get a lot of attention and count their Twitter following, but anybody in the business knows it’s poor politics,” Harper said.

In the turn to reactionary and, at times, racist messages, the Free State Project has become tarred as being part of a sinister attempt to take over state government, Harper said. People who claim they are part of the FSP even backed the highly ridiculed secession movement.

“That secession stuff is how you make yourself look ridiculous,” Harper said.

Harper hopes the FSP can now refocus on its mission, which is not about a radical right-wing takeover of the state. He explained that the goal isn’t a takeover but to bring enough Libertarians into the state to nudge Democrats and Republicans toward embracing more freedom-focused public policy.

“Hopefully, it will get back to its roots, bringing normal liberty-inclined people to the state,” Harper said.

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