

## Words of Inspiration

### To the Editor:

I want to thank George Roumell for sharing his fall 2015 commencement address to the MSU College of Law entitled “You Will Make a Difference” in the July 2016 issue of the *Michigan Bar Journal*. George’s comments to the graduating law students were encouraging and his words were also a reminder of why most lawyers went to law school. Each and every lawyer can and does make a difference in the lives of their clients, even if it is done humbly and without much fanfare or media coverage.

In his unique way, George has again provided inspiration for not only a new generation of lawyers, but also those who have been in practice for many years.

**Jeffrey F. Paulsen**  
Bingham Farms

## More GOP History

### To the Editor:

Bruce Barton’s article on Jacob Howard in the July 2016 issue of the *Michigan Bar Journal* contained several inaccuracies. To begin, the 1854 Under the Oaks Convention that gave birth to the Republican Party wasn’t held to protest vague “actions of Congress supporting the institution of slavery,”

but to specifically protest the recently enacted Kansas-Nebraska Act, which created two new territories open to slavery on land from which slavery had been excluded since the 1820 Missouri Compromise.

Creation of the Republican Party did not “begin organized political opposition to slavery.” That started in 1837 with protests over the murder of abolitionist newspaper editor Elijah Lovejoy by a pro-slavery mob in Alton, Illinois. From these protests, the first anti-slavery party, the Liberty Party, was formed in 1840. It was succeeded in 1848 by the more broadly based Free Soil Party. At its start, the Republican Party was an amalgam of the Free Soil Party, most Northern Whigs, and anti-slavery northern Democrats.

The formation of the Republican Party caused a major political realignment. The Whig Party broke up over slavery while the Democratic Party, which had pushed through the Kansas-Nebraska Act, was weakened in the North and strengthened in the South. In Michigan, this realignment ended Democratic political dominance that had existed since statehood in 1837. With anti-slavery Democrats joining Whigs and Free Soilers in the Republican Party, it immediately became the state’s dominant party, beginning with the 1854 sweep of statewide offices and lasting until 1932 with rare exceptions.

Barton also erred in stating that Howard served in the Michigan House of Representatives from 1838 to 1842. Howard only served in the Michigan House in 1838. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1840 and served one term, declining to seek reelection in 1842.

**Dave Hornstein**  
Birmingham

## Response from the Author

The first paragraph in Dave Hornstein’s letter is at best misleading. The Under the Oaks Convention was not limited to protest of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Jacob Howard’s seventh resolution demanded repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Those are the two acts of Congress to which I referred and about which Hornstein apparently believes I should have been more specific.

There was opposition to slavery in almost every significant political party before 1854 but no “fusion” (as it was called then) movement or party. The Liberty Party did not fill that void, but Under the Oaks and later similar conventions in other states did.

Hornstein’s third paragraph is essentially correct but does not really relate to my article, which is about Jacob Howard and not the history of the Republican Party.

Hornstein’s last point is correct. The final article combined Jacob Howard’s service in the respective Houses of Representatives as though they were at the same level and continuous.

**Bruce A. Barton**  
Jackson



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