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HAGELIN ANNOUNCES PARTY ALLIANCE

By Eun-Kyung Kim
Associated Press Writer

Alexandria, Va. (AP) - The Natural Law Party has announced an alliance with disgruntled Reform Party members, a union that founder and party presidential nominee John Hagelin says is a "marriage made in heaven."

"This is the birth of a union that is historically unprecedented--a powerful coalition of America's leading political parties that can credibly challenge the stranglehold of the two parties in our political process," said Hagelin, saluting the blending of his party with a faction of the Reform Party opposed to the presidential candidacy of Pat Buchanan. Hagelin announced the union Thursday at the Natural Law Party's convention, which was attended by about 400 people, roughly half of them delegates.

The Iowa physicist and his running mate, Silicon Valley entrepreneur Nat Goldhaber, assured the crowd that a general election victory is possible. They cited the Minnesota victory by Gov. Jesse Ventura. Hagelin also said he had hired a former Ventura aide to manage his campaign.

Hagelin sought the Reform Party nomination last month at the party's convention in Long Beach, Calif. Buchanan, a former Republican, defeated him by a nearly 2-to-1 margin in a primary ballot count, but the anti-Buchanan delegates declared the process fraudulent. They then held a convention of their own and nominated Hagelin.

Both factions are seeking \$12.6 million in federal campaign funds and are awaiting a ruling by the Federal Election Commission....

"I am running as a scientist trying to bring principles to a government that has none," Hagelin said in his acceptance speech Thursday.

He focused on health care, saying that 70 percent of diseases are preventable and yet the government spends barely 1 percent of its budget on stopping them. He also said campaign finance laws must be changed to end the control of special interests.

"The candidate who spends the most wins. What kind of expertise is that?" he said. Hagelin also pledged to strengthen the nation's military, saying the government spends too much on flawed weapons and pays too little attention to personnel and readiness.

He said an alliance between the Natural and Reform parties "makes complete sense." The coalition already has been in the works in some states, with candidates in one party often stepping down to support candidates from the other party, he said.

Hagelin noted that Ventura, a former Reform Party member, "was nowhere in the polls three

weeks before the election" and went on to win Minnesota's 1998 gubernatorial race.

"We now have three months to achieve what Jesse Ventura achieved in three weeks," he said. With that, Hagelin introduced his new campaign manager, former Ventura aide Doug Friedline.

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