



The Lancaster County Democrat

December 2014

Labor's Perspective

Message Framing Makes a Difference

By John Kretzschmar

Now that the elections and Thanksgiving are behind us, it's time to re-examine messaging aimed at progressives and "persuadables" in our state. Surprisingly, from a graphic I saw, Nebraska led the nation in turnout gain over the 2010 elections. The most impressive gain was in South Omaha where the 2014 turnout in some precincts jumped roughly 26% over the 2010 numbers. In my opinion, the improvement wasn't due to some logical argument that relied on statistics and data. Facts always play a role, but to be properly taken in and digested they need to be framed in a narrative that focuses on values, principles, and a belief that collectively we can do more than we can individually.

Some of this is basic civics. Another part of it is laying out the proper role of government in people's lives. The dominant conservative mantra in Nebraska comes from President Reagan, i.e., "government is the solution, government is the problem." The idea hidden in that meme is that government serves no real purpose except to find ways to make things easier for the so-called free market "to work its magic." Right wing talking heads are consistently finding ways to portray government as the "interferer in chief."

The counter to conservative talking points is to highlight the reality that without government working to create a civil society, Nebraska's good life would be impossible and the private sector would be unable to function. Moreover, when left to its own devices the so-called free market is once again gaining an ever larger control over all of our lives, e.g., retail workers missing Thanksgiving with their families so they can help sell stuff to the rest of us on that holiday. Progressives need to explain government as a "leveler of playing fields" so that everyday wage earners have a fair shot at the American Dream.

I believe it can be convincingly laid out that government has an active role to play in protecting us from the excesses of an under-regulated market economy. As early as 1890, the Sherman Anti-Trust Act was passed because people had a clear understanding about how the economic elite of the nation were running both the economy and government. The 1890 law was both flawed and poorly enforced, but it was a response to a grassroots groundswell against corporate control of people's lives. Five years later, the role that enormous wealth played in politics was highlighted by Mark Hanna, Presidential candidate William McKinley's campaign chief. Hanna remarked, "There are two things that are important in politics. The first is money and I can't remember the second."

Every message needs a value based frame to have maximum impact. For decades well-funded conservative talking heads on TV, radio, and in the press have understood this concept. Now that it looks like we're returning to the Gilded Age with its Robber Barons and Huddled Masses, it's time that progressives start applying those lessons more consistently as well.

Save the Date!

The annual

Lancaster County Democratic Party Patriots' Dinner

will be held on

Saturday, February 21, 2015

at the Center for People in Need

3901 N. 27th Street

Watch next month for more details!

Meet Our Elected Officials

Lincoln Mayor, Chris Beutler

With the end of the year approaching and the holiday season upon us, it's a good time to reflect on the success that we've enjoyed over the past year. There is so much to be thankful for in our City of Lincoln, Nebraska.



The beauty and abundance of our Nebraska home surrounds us with golden prairie, green parks, and an endless sky. Our neighborhoods are safe, our economy is thriving, and Lincoln is nationally

recognized as a top place to live and work. Our spirit of community cooperation and determination has never been higher. It is truly remarkable to live in a community that offers such a richly diverse partnership of talents, cultures, and ideas. Our Lancaster County Democrats are a shining example. Lincoln is blessed with people who hold both a high standard for excellence and a deep compassion to neighbors in need. These values unite us.

Our public consensus and unity is the result of a shared vision of what we, as a community, hope to accomplish and the will of many, many individuals to be a part of that solution. People want to be involved in something larger than themselves. We are all rightfully proud that the place we call home is a national leader in business opportunity and quality of life in dozens of categories.

Because of our partnerships, hard work and a common vision, our community is now experiencing rapid growth. We see expansion projects in all quadrants of the City. Our unemployment rate is down to 2.8 percent, and the number of people employed has hit an all-time record. Sales tax and property tax revenues are increasing, building permits have rebounded, and plans are being developed for business expansions and additional development opportunities.

Our smart investments in infrastructure and economic development help to maintain the core services that are essential to our residents: our police, fire and public safety programs; our strong neighborhoods and award-winning parks and trails; our human service programs that help families in need; all the many workers and

volunteers who help protect our high quality of life here in Lincoln.

The ongoing success of the Pinnacle Bank Arena, the West Haymarket and a host of new dining and entertainment options have all helped create an energy and excitement that attract a new wave of minds and entrepreneurs. We are in the beginning of what might be referred to as a "golden age" that is a defining uplifting period in the history of our community.

With all our achievement however, I can't help but feel that the best is yet to come. Across our city, there is a tremendous sense of energy and enthusiasm for the future of Lincoln. It is a blessing to be Mayor of such a unique and wonderful city. Perhaps then, we are most thankful for this boundless optimism and opportunity. Thankful to see that together we can do more, be more, give more and dream more. Thankful to know that our children are growing up in a city full of accomplishment, promise and potential.

As we move into the new year, I look forward to continuing to work with all of you. We've come a long way together, but we will have more work to do. I'm excited at all the possibilities before us and know that we will take on the challenges ahead with the same kind of effort and enthusiasm that continue to define our success. In the words of John F. Kennedy, "Things do not simply happen. Things are made to happen."

We will continue to be thoughtful. We will continue to seek consensus. Most importantly, however, we will never be afraid to take advantage of the opportunities before us and take action to better the lives of all of those around us.

"The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don't wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope."

— Barack Obama

Meet Our Candidates

Megan Mikolajczyk, Candidate for Lincoln City Council



Hello, Democrats!

I am honored to have the opportunity and thrilled to be running for the Northeast Lincoln City Council seat this spring. Less than two years ago, I announced my At-Large City Council candidacy. With less than three months to run and being virtually unknown, I surprised

everyone when I took the top place among Democrats and second overall in the primary. Although I did not prevail in the general, I am stronger, wiser, and more ready than ever to earn the votes needed to be a City Council woman.

I moved across the street from Wesleyan in the University Place neighborhood as a new Lincolnite several years ago. I spent many days studying at Mo Java as a law student, running in Mahoney Park and on the Mo Pac trail as a cross country coach at Lincoln Lutheran, and learning about the rich history of Northeast Lincoln while working in Havelock. Now, my husband and I are enjoying raising our family in our East Campus neighborhood home, volunteering at North Star High School (Aaron is a TeamMate, I sponsor the recently founded Young Democrats group), and finding ways to give back to our community.

I know and love the district. I share the values of my fellow Northeast Lincolnites, and I will be their strongest advocate and voice on the Council. Although my platform may undergo updates as I learn more from my constituents at the door, the issues and goals I focused on during my 2013 candidacy remain the same.

Let's keep our neighborhoods safe. All Lincoln neighborhoods deserve to be within range for adequate emergency response times, and Lincoln Firefighters deserve to have sufficient resources to handle those emergencies when responding. I also know that strong, safe neighborhoods require making sure our sidewalks are paved, well lit, and in good condition. I will focus on and tackle both of those issues when I'm elected.

Let's continue our focus on the environment and implementation of green policies. Green policies make economic sense, and the City of Lincoln has worked hard on implementing these policies to date. But, there is so much more to be done! Public transportation needs more attention and I am ready to improve our transportation options, maximizing our resources while ensuring Lincolnites can get where they need to, when they need to. All of us, especially working families, students, and senior citizens, deserve to have a means to move about a city this size and this much on the rise with ease.

Let's continue to fund the services that build community. Libraries, parks, community centers, and pools strengthen our neighborhoods. These are places for friends and families to connect, learn, and thrive. Each service must continue to receive attention; and where neighborhoods identify a need, we must bring new, or expand existing, services to them.

Rain, snow or shine, I have been pounding pavement since early November and am loving every minute of it! By far the best part of campaigning is meeting so many wonderful neighbors and new friends at the doors and learning about their concerns for the direction of the city. Doug Emery's shoes will be tough to fill, but I am ready to give it my best effort. **Let's do this together!**

From the Chair

John Yoakum, Chair Lancaster County Democratic Party



I would like to take a moment to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season.

There have been victories and triumphs and disappointments at local, state and federal levels for Democratic candidates and for progressive issues.

We should reflect on the wonderful people who have helped the country party throughout this past year. I'm privileged to be able work with so many passionate people. All the candidates and volunteers have been great to work with.

Please enjoy your family and friends this season.

Then get ready for the fun and exciting City elections this spring.

Midterm Examination of the Nation By Maggie Mae Squires



Congratulations to the newly elected public servants. Thank you to all the candidates, Nebraskans are proud of you.

Public service is an important role in a democratic society. Young people become responsible citizens when they understand the investment we each make in our communities. The key to the future of our great nation is participation in local politics.

In the 2014 midterm elections, only 10 states had an increase in voter turnout compared to the 2010 midterm. Nebraska was the highest with a nearly 7% increase from 38.70% in 2010 to 45.10% in 2014. (Others to show increases in voter turnout were Colorado, Arkansas, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Florida, Maine, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Kentucky.)

Gallup public opinion polls suggested that fewer Americans cared about this election than in previous years.

Nebraska had several interesting races that drew a higher turnout at the polls.

Some states lack competitive races that draw voters. Other states have cut early voting periods and poll hours, costing votes. Some states are losing voters by imposing new voter ID laws.

Gallup's poll presents a problem. Why do a majority of Americans not care about who is elected to represent them and who make the laws that affect their well-being?

On a grand scale, quality candidates are lacking on both sides (and part of the problem is a two-party system that many voters find dull and disengaging). The Elizabeth Warrens and Bernie Sanders of American politics are in step with the beliefs of the majority of Americans. Yet, the representatives elected as leaders of Congress and Senate are typically far-out in comparison to the majority of Americans they represent.

How does this happen? Have we been duped?

Media is a large part of the problem, causing divisiveness that may not exist otherwise. Label, hatred, and divide and conquer tactics cause a great deal of bitterness and misunderstanding that major news networks thrive on to create ratings (that bring in the big bucks from McDonald's and other sponsors).

Lack of intelligence and respect is becoming common among the talking heads. Every piece of information known to humankind is available to us at our fingertips. There is no excuse to believe what we are told without question. Mainstream media accountability is lacking and we should be very well aware of it.

On average, populations who were likely to avoid the polls are also the populations who are likely to vote Democrat. This presents a problem for the Democratic Party.

If a nation is to be correctly labeled a democracy, it is important that each citizen feels a responsibility to their community and becomes engaged in local policy-making.

There needs to be fundamental changes in how the game of politics is played in the United States.

Patriotic citizens cast votes. Corporations are not people. Money should be kept out of politics. Election day should be a national holiday. (Insert your ideas here: _____.)

If we do not make voting a priority as participants of a democracy, the system will not continue to work.

As a nation, we risk losing more than votes.

“When politicians start talking about large groups of their fellow Americans as ‘enemies,’ it’s time for a quiet stir of alertness. Polarizing people is a good way to win an election, and also a good way to wreck a country.”

— Molly Ivins

Columnist

Patte Newman



First of all, as a past candidate for office, I would like to thank the 8,579 voters who cast their votes for me on November 4th. I am grateful for the support so many wonderful individuals showed me in so many ways; financially, helping walk a precinct, allowing a yard sign, and helping get my message out in other ways. We knew it was an uphill battle and were only short by 555 votes. I am really proud of how the campaign was run and how well we did.

I also want to say that I do not remember any ballot, since returning to Nebraska in 1993, with so many dynamic candidates at all levels of government. It was a pleasure to be able to fill in the ovals this time and realize the talent, intelligence and passion we could have had representing us on the federal and state level. I was proud to share that general ballot with so many amazing candidates.

The question raised by many on November 5th is what could we have done to turn the numbers around in Nebraska? I looked at the numbers in the County Board race in Lancaster County to try to answer that.

First of all, for those who didn't follow the redistricting after the last census, the map for county board did change dramatically, as shown below:

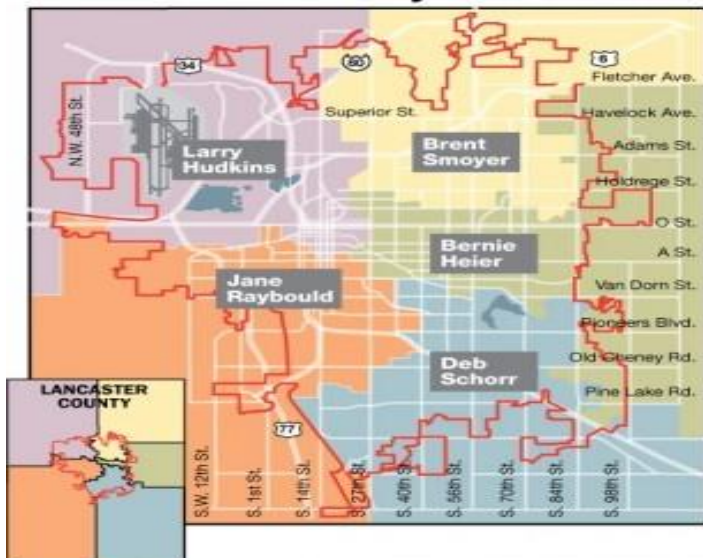
My understanding is that the Lancaster County Planning Department developed several maps for discussion and consideration over a long period of time. Instead of voting on one of those, a new map was presented to the Republican majority board and accepted. It consisted of taking a swath of the very Democratic center of Lincoln for District 1 and splitting the remaining Republican areas into four. The breakdown of the districts, who currently holds the seat, comparison of Republicans to Democrats with majority number and with totals including nonpartisan and libertarian registrants is:

District 1 (Raybould):	R 8,566	D 14,387
	D +5,821	Total 31,722
District 2 (Hudkins):	R 11,143	D 10,705
	R + 438	Total 29,468
District 3 (Schorr):	R 19,604	D 11,927
	R +7,677	Total 39,473
District 4 (Amundson):	R 20,000	D 14,443
	R +5,557	Total 42,968
District 5 (Smoyer):	R 17,017	D 13,560
	R +3,457	Total 38,971

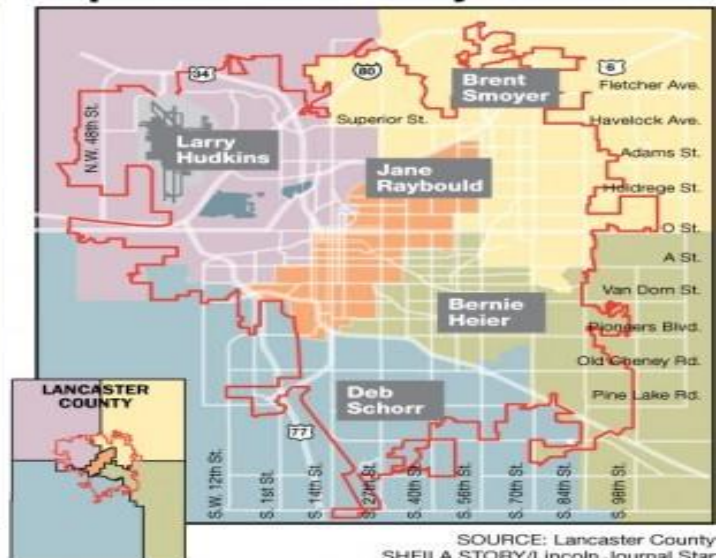
With these numbers in mind, what could a Democratic candidate on a partisan ballot have done differently? I don't think anything.

Comparing the precinct numbers where I walked and talked to voters, with results of places I didn't reach out, I don't see that it made a lot of difference. Every rural precinct was lost definitively to my opponent including the Waverly neighborhoods I walked. My husband and I hit over 7,500 houses with another 450 walked by other volunteers. That was a substantial chunk of real estate covered with no way to analyze whether it made a

Current Lancaster County Board districts



Proposed Lancaster County Board districts



SOURCE: Lancaster County SHEILA STORY/Lincoln Journal Star

difference. I enjoyed it and would do it again, but I don't

know whether it works. I don't believe my opponent worked as hard in so many neighborhoods, so I question what exactly in his message was more on target for voters than mine.

Looking at the final numbers – here is what I will throw out as things I found interesting.

For those who say when democrats vote, democrats get elected – you're right. Clearly, looking at the numbers of the 46 precincts in district 5, in only 13 did the numbers of Democratic voters exceed those of Republican voters. I carried each of those Democratic majority precincts. In many precincts, the Republicans who voted outnumbered the Democrats two to one. I take some personal satisfaction in the fact that in 44 of the 46 precincts my total votes exceeded the numbers of Democrats who voted. My opponent can only lay claim to exceeding the number of Republican voters in 12 precincts, with 2 precincts matching the Republican voters exactly. (Strangely, one of those precincts has only 12 registered voters with 3 ballots cast, all for my opponent.) Call it silly, but that was a small victory for me.

For those who understand, both parties need to look at NP votes. In this district, 29% of the voters were NP or Libertarian and that is a huge issue for both parties. People truly are fed up with partisan gridlock in Washington. That much was made pretty clear while knocking on doors. Who they blame and how to fix it is the bigger unresolved issue.

For those who saw how low the turnout was nationally. Registered voters in District 5 turned out at rates ranging from about 26% up to 66.2%, with all the neighborhoods south of O Street with fairly solid turnout percentages of 55% or more. Waverly voters had a school bond issue on the ballot and the three Waverly areas averaged a 54.2% turnout. Tallying up all the votes in these 12 high turnout south Lincoln precincts and 3 in Waverly shows that only 32% were cast by Democrats.

For those who say all politics is local. The most disturbing number from District 5 was how many did not get to the down-ballot items. Of the 19,447 ballots cast, 1,734 did not vote for county board. If all politics is local, that figure should really resonate. Understandably, big money plays a huge role in who gets elected to the offices that are at the top of the ballot. The offices people skip over at the bottom of the ballot make a huge difference in local property taxes, environmental decisions that impact us in our backyards, and judicial and public safety issues here and now. What is the excuse for voters who take the time to drive to their polling places and yet do not fill in the ovals for local candidates? Do they educate themselves on state or

federal candidates and not those who live in their neighborhoods?

So the take-away from this election? Obviously voting is considered a burden to the vast majority of our citizens. Completing the entire ballot is even more of a burden. We can talk about trying to make it easier for people to register to vote, or easier to vote. But in District 5, the overall rate was 50%. That's 19,447 votes that didn't happen that would have made a huge difference to some of the candidates. Citywide or statewide it's a much more dramatic number. Any of us could guess at what works and what does not to convince people that a representative democracy is supposed to be representative of all voices and not just some.

The Watchful Citizen

In case you haven't discovered the County Party TV show on community access TV, check us out! The show airs on Time-Warner Cable Channel 13, at 10:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, 6:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, and 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays.

Beginning in December we are planning a discussion of the Affordable Care Act. After the first of the year we will begin interviews of candidates for the 2015 City elections.

And check our video archive on Youtube:
<http://www.youtube.com/LancasterCountyDems>.



Cartoon courtesy of Steve Kemper

After The 2014 Mid-Terms: Early Reflections
By Dave Domina

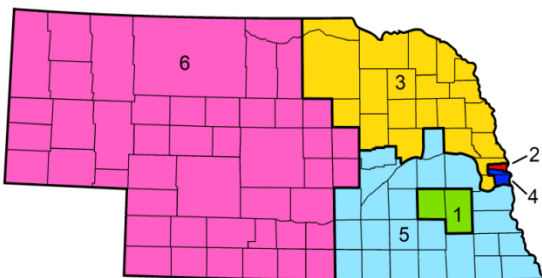


Reflections on the midterm elections are offered by invitation. As a *soundly* defeated candidate for statewide office, my own inability to make an effective presentation that was persuasive to voters is clear. And, it is no real credential for the words that follow.

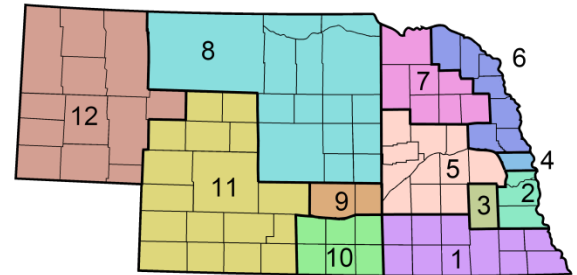
It is the invitation that I write that prompts the writing. Kindnesses of Lancaster County Democrats will not be forgotten soon. All the quirks and irregularities of my own candidacy are set entirely aside. My campaign was neither typical nor successful. Perhaps it has some value as an experiment that might offer thoughts to an observer. In the worst of defeats, there are positive lessons to learn. But, reflections aside, consider these questions; they are questions read and asked since November 4 by many persons in many places:

1. In Nebraska, what is the *value* of the Democratic brand outside the half dozen counties with party organizations that are functional?
2. Is the Democratic brand essential to be “present” at the general election because Independent candidacies were utter failures too, or is it a liability to be overcome?
3. Can the brand of the Nebraska Democratic Party be recast and become a center for ongoing, active consideration of real issues?

- a. Can it be recast without renaming?
- b. Can it be recast without a 49 Legislative District focus, or a 6 District (Supreme Court Districts) structure:



Or 12 District (State Court Judicial Districts) structure:



- c. Is it time to abandon counties as the basic statewide organizational structure?
- d. What can be done to reach and invigorate these groups on an ongoing basis with events at least twice annually sponsored by the NDP without transparently doing so:

- Voters Under Age 25
- Voters Focused on Issues of Women’s Rights
- Voters Interested in Education
- Voters Interested in the African American Community
- Voters Interested in the Native American Community
- Voters Interested in the Latino American Community
- Voters Interested in Issues Affecting Veterans
- Voters Interested in Environmental Issues
- Voters Interested in Concerns to Persons over 60

Can programs be issues driven and interesting? Will a debate/town hall format work? Must Civics be taught? If so, what will get people out?

- e. How can Legislators devoted to nonpartisan service who are registered Democrats resist party based “caucusing” in the Legislature?
- f. Can fun and invigorating annual events, like regional dinners, be held and made successful?

- g. What are the benefits, and the risks, of focusing state party resources on Lincoln municipal elections to the apparent exclusion of other matters?
- h. What can be done to help Douglas County Democrats overcome historic hurdles and make a difference as an active group?
- i. How can teachers, and labor, be invigorated and support from both be grown?
- j. What disloyalty to the Party Platform can be tolerated from State Party officials (not candidates for public office, but party officials)?
- k. Can the State Party platform be written in tight, short sentences and bullet points with an outline to reform government?
- l. Can/should the State Party propose aggressive reform ideas for controversial areas like property taxation? Income tax credits? Renewable energy?
- m. Can serious candidate recruitment begin now, with focus on every local office, then up-ticket from there?
- n. Can the State Party develop, and give freely to candidates, basic tools, lists, structural assistance, and invitations to State Party fundraisers to which the candidates are not expected to spend money to attend?
- o. Can the State Party employ and support persons who are other-centered, all inclusive, and persons with uniting personalities?
- p. Can our party come to grips with the need for an honest conversation about why people don't vote? And about the perception that those who do vote, often cast ballots against themselves?

- q. Will enough Democrats volunteer energy to give real consideration to these and other questions?

Carol and I are interested in, and searching for, a way to reach people to take these issues up. The Party is challenged to make major changes and reach out in new and untried ways. Some disappointment must be expected. Can some success be expected, too? I think so.

Meet Our Volunteers



Jaci Hammer, Lancaster County Democratic Party Membership Chair

A short time ago, Amy Birky resigned as Chair of the Membership Committee. She had been Chair for some time and left quite a legacy. John Yoakum asked me (Jaci Hammer) to assume the Chairmanship and it is hard to say “no” to someone who does so much for the Lancaster County Democratic Party.

My interest in the Lancaster County Party began in 2008 with the Presidential candidacy of Barack Obama. I was impressed with his message and wanted to become involved in helping to get him elected. On election day that year, I went to Omaha to canvass in north Omaha. It was such a rewarding experience. The night of his election to the Presidency I was so proud of the Americans who voted for him.

I continued to become involved by attending the Central Committee meetings of the Lancaster County Democrats. Soon I was recruited to the Membership Committee and then became secretary. I am amazed at all the activities with which the Membership Committee is involved. Most important of its duties is to increase and support membership. Committee members are also asked to host events and volunteer for things like the Democratic booth at the Lancaster County Fair.

We are in need of more committee members and would really appreciate more of the Central Committee members getting involved with the Membership Committee. Our committee could be even more effective if young people would get involved and help us plan events that would encourage new members.

To volunteer, contact Jaci Hammer at jaci2323@windstream.net or call the County Party office at 402-476-2268.

Lancaster County
Democratic Party
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<http://www.LancasterCountyDemocrats.org>

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Join the Lancaster County Democrats today!

Your membership helps support party activities including GOTV efforts, candidate support services, political forums and the *Lancaster County Democrat*.

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I would also like to volunteer: _____ Prepare Mailings _____ Phone Banking _____ GOTV