

From the Chair

By John Yoakum

Six months is all I have left as your Chair.

A dozen years ago I was challenged to see if I could have a positive impact on the county party. I did nothing at first. Then I started coming to our monthly meetings. I sat and listened for several months. At that time the only thing we had was a phone line and its number listed in the phone book. People worked out of their cars and met in restaurants or in people's homes.

We charged candidates to be on the slate card and asked them to sponsor all our events. We have not charged candidates for the slate card for over a decade and don't count on candidates to fund the party.

We have built a database to connect with voters. In fact, we have several databases we can use. We have a nice website (LancasterCountyDemocrats.org) and a social media presence. Most important, we have this amazing office where we can hold meetings, phone bank, hold press conferences and store our stuff.

We are not done yet though. Here are my goals for the next six months:

1. Recruit good candidates to fill the whole 2016 slate.
2. Have a successful Patriots' Dinner February 20th.
3. Hold Presidential Preferences Caucuses across the county on March 5th.
4. Have a strong showing in the primary for all our candidates May 10th.
5. Have a successful County Convention in May.
6. Increase the monthly donor program.

None of this will happen without your help. Get involved with the party. Find out how you can use your special skills to help get good people elected.

I will do my best to make the transition as easy as possible. As I step aside, others will step up.

VOLUNTEER

Meet Our Candidates

Rick Vest

Candidate for Legislature District 21



Rick Vest is pleased to announce his candidacy for Nebraska Legislature District 21. This is the seat currently held by Sen. Ken Haar who will be term limited out at the end of next year.

Rick, a lifelong Nebraskan, grew up in Greenwood. There he participated in Church, Sunday school and Boy Scouts. In this setting the values of hard work, self-reliance, trustworthiness and community were planted in him.

Rick spent most of his adult life in Ashland where he raised five children, ran a small business, spent countless hours volunteering in youth activities, and served as a Lay Speaker for the United Methodist Church there.

He retired this January from the BNSF Railway Company after a 40 plus year career. The first 27 years were spent at Havelock Shop where he started in 1974 as a Railway Carman Apprentice. Through BNSF's tuition reimbursement program Rick was able to attend Doane College/Lincoln and graduate Cum Laude with a degree in Human Relations.

This degree allowed him to move to the General Claims Department of BNSF where he spent the last fourteen years of his career. His responsibilities included traveling to accident sites to investigate, and to work with injured employees and other claimants. He helped craft the defense of BNSF in legal action, putting people and information together to effectively present the company's position.

In 1998 he took the required training to become a certified mediator with the State of Nebraska Department of Justice. In the years since he has mediated hundreds of cases that the parties were unable to resolve. Many times through the efforts of Rick and co-mediators the parties grew to understand each other better and were able to find common ground to reach agreement.

These experiences have prepared him to represent the citizens of Nebraska's 21st district. He looks forward to supporting our public schools, maintaining Nebraska's strong business environment, giving our youngest citizens the benefits of early childhood development programs, evaluating our criminal justice and mental health systems, and finding a workable way to expand medical coverage to more citizens of our state.

Meet Our Candidates

Candidate for President



Martin O'Malley is the true candidate for progressive Democrats. With a record of serving as a City Councilman for the City of Baltimore, Mayor of Baltimore, and Governor of Maryland it's clear that he is the only candidate with the record of executive experience. He has set out clear plans of action to deal with important issues like protecting our environment, dealing with gun safety, and putting an end to the detrimental practices of big banks.

O'Malley has centered his campaign upon the concept of new leadership. "We have dealt with the society that is tired of political division that paralyzes us." This promise of new leadership points us back to O'Malley's dedicated work across the partisan divide to ensure that government works first and foremost for its people.

To name a few of O'Malley's many accomplishments:

- Overseeing the top public schools in the United States for over five years (Education Week),
- Holding one of the lowest cost of college tuitions in the nation (College Board),
- Encouraging engagement in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative working to cut greenhouse gas usage,
- Raising the minimum wage to \$10.10,
- Being #1 in Innovation and Entrepreneurship for three years running (U.S. Chamber of Commerce).

Beyond the traditional official roles of the President, as many of us know, he plays a key role as a party leader. He has served two terms as the chair of the Democratic Governors Association and has worked adamantly to support the party in a great many ways.

We also know that it is key to have people helping to implement progressive legislation at all levels, not just the presidency. O'Malley has already invested in local parties, local leaders, and shared his campaign data to help support down-ticket candidates. This is truly the sort of New Leadership that we need to see from our President.

Dear LCDP friends,

I'd like to introduce you to our newest team member at NADP. Brandon Langlois joined our staff as an organizer in October, and he is helping us reach many with a compelling message: we're not going to bring back a broken death penalty. I've asked him to tell you a bit about our work.

I also want to you know that our ballot question committee, Nebraskans for Public Safety (NFPS), is busy developing an aggressive campaign. We have hired an experienced, bipartisan team to lead the campaign, and already are getting widespread notice. NADP is a founding partner in NFPS, along with ACLU of Nebraska, the Nebraska Innocence Project and the Nebraska Criminal Defense Attorneys Association. You'll be hearing a lot more from us in the months to come.

If you would like more information on our efforts to end the death penalty in Nebraska once and for all, or to find out how to get involved, go to nadp.net or call us at (402) 477-7787.

Stephen Griffith, Executive Director
Nebraskans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty

Nebraska Can't Go Back to a Broken System **Brandon Langlois**

In November 2016, hundreds of thousands of Nebraskans will make the trip to their polling places to cast their vote in dozens of races ranging from county and municipal elections all the way to President of the United States. But there's one more item on that ballot that, even though it won't elect anybody to public office, will have a profound impact on our state and its criminal justice system. That issue is, of course, the reinstatement of Nebraska's death penalty.

A brief recap of the more recent developments: earlier this year on May 27, the Nebraska legislature, after overcoming multiple filibuster attempts and a veto from Governor Ricketts, repealed the state's death penalty in a bipartisan effort that made Nebraska the first conservative state in more than 40 years to abolish state executions. In response, a petition drive largely funded by \$300,000 from Governor Ricketts and his father gathered enough signatures to both place the issue on the ballot next year as a referendum and also suspend the effective date of the repeal until election day 2016. We are now in the opening stages of the campaign to educate voters across Nebraska to ensure the death penalty stays repealed permanently.

A vital part of that education is explaining just how broken Nebraska's death penalty is. It is a system which has not successfully executed a condemned criminal since 1997. Where each execution costs taxpayers \$15 million, on average. Where law requires the state to use a specific drug, sodium thiopental, which

is not manufactured in the United States and cannot be imported legally from other countries, regardless of how many times our Governor says he is "working with" the DEA and FDA. Where the greatest factors in whether someone is sentenced to death are not the heinousness of the crime or the number of victims, but *geography, race, and poverty*. Where prosecutors have used the threat of execution to force innocent people into false confessions. This is a system that just plain doesn't work and should be thrown out forever, not reinstated.

Perhaps the most ironic thing about the reinstatement effort is that it won't restore the death penalty. It will put it back on the books, sure, but it will only bring us right back to the same busted system already in place that hasn't executed anyone in nearly 20 years. We'll still go through the lengthy, expensive series of trials and appeals that accompany every death sentence, wasting millions of taxpayer dollars, all to keep inmates on death row for 10, 20, even 30 years where they eventually die of natural causes, just as if they'd been sentenced to life in prison without parole. Nebraska's death penalty is, simply put, a waste of time, money, and lives that could all be put to better use in education, crime prevention, and services for victims and their families. I believe Nebraska can do better, and if you feel the same way, get involved. Talk to your friends and family members about why you oppose the death penalty, support our state senators who took a stand against capital punishment in the 2016 elections, and volunteer with the campaign to make sure the death penalty stays gone for good.

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 cable channel 13, at 10:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, 6:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, and 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays.

Our current guest on the show is State Senator Patty Pansing Brooks (28th Legislative District).

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

Join us for the 2016 Presidential Preference Caucus.

By Debi McGee, Caucus Chair

Plans are moving forward for the 2016 Presidential Preference Caucus on March 5, 2016! The Democratic Party has three outstanding candidates who are ready to lead our country forward. However, before we cast our votes at the caucus, the Lancaster County Democratic Party is hosting several Debate Watch Parties, enabling Democrats and interested voters to become familiar with Senator Bernie Sanders, Secretary Hillary Clinton, and Governor Martin O'Malley. The debates are also a great opportunity to connect with other Democrats. Watch for details on the Lancaster County Democratic Party website: www.lancastercountymocrats.org and via e-mail to those who have provided their e-mail addresses to the Lancaster County Democratic Party.

Upcoming Democratic Presidential Debates Schedule:

- **Saturday, November 14, 2015**—CBS News Democratic Debate (Des Moines, IA). Air Time: 8:00 p.m. CST.
- **Saturday, December 19, 2015**—ABC News Democratic Debate (Manchester, NH). Air Time: TBD.
- **Sunday, January 17, 2016**—NBC News Democratic Debate (Charleston, SC). Air Time: TBD.
- **Thursday, February 11, 2016**—PBS News Democratic Debate (WI). Air Time: TBD.
- **Wednesday, March 9, 2016**—Univision Democratic Debate (Miami, FL). Air Time: TBD.

Voters who are registered to vote as Democrats will have our third opportunity to caucus in Lancaster County on Saturday, March 5, 2016. In order to provide maximum opportunity to Lancaster County Democrats, our caucus will once again be held on a Saturday evening to accommodate as many Lancaster County Democrats as possible. Caucus attendees will also hear from our candidates running for other races, having some face-to-face meetings with many of our Democratic candidates. Attending the 2016 Presidential Preference Caucus in Lancaster County is the first step in the process required to be a delegate to the NDP Convention in Philadelphia, PA July 25-28.

Caucus attendees in other Nebraska counties will be caucusing the same day but may be meeting at another time. As you encourage your friends and family to participate who live in other Nebraska counties, encourage them to check with their local Democratic Party office or that of the Nebraska Democratic Party.

At the March 5th Caucus, attendees will hear supporters of the candidates for President of the United

States, learning more about each candidate and why each candidate's supporters are fired up to see their candidate take the presidential oath of office on January 20, 2017 and what puts the fire in these Lancaster County supporters to be a part of taking the next step for their candidate.

Regardless of the outcome, Nebraskans and Lancaster County registered Democrats know that this is a critical time in our country when Americans can't afford to regress to tough economic times that we have endured under GOP leadership. No one wants to go through another recession like 2008 or legislative decisions such as Citizens United to continue its protection of political spending and contributions by special interests. Likewise, the president elected in November, 2016 is extremely likely to nominate two or more United States Supreme Court Justices. Can we survive another Justice Alito, Justice Kennedy, Justice Roberts, Justice Scalia, or Justice Thomas? Are you fired up and ready to vote?

After the 2016 Presidential Preference Caucus results are tallied, the work is not done for our voters. We will then focus on other races and see you at the polls on Tuesday, May 10th. Every vote counts and our candidates need your votes at every precinct in Lancaster County. When Democrats vote, we win. When we stay home, we lose. Make your vote count and we will see you on March 5, 2016 at the 2016 Presidential Preference Caucus.



Meet Our Elected Officials

Wind Turbine Siting Questions

By Mary Harding, Nebraska Public Power District Board Member



Lancaster County Commissioners have their agenda packed recently with issues about siting wind turbines in the county. They have my empathy: siting utility projects is almost always controversial. At the simplest level, there is always someone who just doesn't want the project in their line of sight or near their property,

claiming everything to the horizon as their own. Deeper into the weeds are the sciences of public health and the environment.

In considering the decisions facing the Commission, I see two distinct problems to resolve. One is the question of what siting guidelines are appropriate and best serve the public interest all across the county. The second is specific to the project currently under consideration: is this a good project for this time, place, and community?

I would like to encourage the Commission to use the proper tool for the job, and not use a sledgehammer where a more selective item might suffice. It would seem helpful to consider the two problems separately.

The resolution prepared for a vote at an upcoming Commission meeting calls for noise limits that create a virtual no-build zone throughout Lancaster County. If adopted, I believe that Lancaster County will be sending a clear message to developers that we are not open for business here.

In addition, the 40 db/32 db levels proposed are not, in my opinion, supported either by peer-reviewed research nor are they reflective of standards adopted all across the country. Lancaster County's Health Department is rich with talent, and I have rarely disagreed with their recommendations. But in this case, I cannot agree, nor do I understand why they opted to go with recommendations that create standards far more stringent than the norm.

I represent all of rural Lancaster County, and would venture to say that I have visited with more county residents specifically on this issue than nearly anyone else. A sizable majority of Lancaster County voters want us to develop more renewable energy. It would be wrong to adopt standards that would preclude this unequivocally.

Which brings me to the second challenge before the Commissioners: is this project the right project for

this time and place? I am not familiar with the proposed project in any detail. I do believe that it is a very long way from becoming a reality. If I am correct, the developer does not have turbines ready for delivery, nor have they even begun the process of applying for transmission rights—a process that can take many months. While they have an interconnection agreement, and general easements with local landowners, no siting work has begun.

The point is, there is considerable time for an answer to this second question to be reached, and many more permitting decisions to be made by the county before this project would become a reality.

It seems obvious that the developer has not created the rapport with local landowners that one wishes to see in this circumstance. And it is understandable that neighbors and decision-makers alike would want a speedy resolution to take this off the table. But adopting excessive standards to regulate all projects anywhere in the county, simply to resolve a largely undefined proposal seems bad policy.

I encourage the Commissioners to adopt more reasonable siting standards, as proposed by the Planning Commission, and to deal with the specific project on its specific merits (or lack thereof as the case may be) using the appropriate permitting processes available to them.

And by the way, Commissioner Bill Avery deserves a high five for keeping the focus on process and sound principles of policy making. Thanks, Bill!

"It's not doing what is right that's hard for a President. It's knowing what is right."

— [Lyndon Johnson](#)

"You can't make decisions based on fear and the possibility of what might happen."

— [Michelle Obama](#)

Meet Our Elected Officials

“A stitch in time . . .”

By Ann Bleed, Lower Platte South Natural Resources District Board Member



At the recent Chamber of Commerce Legislative Breakfast Sen. Colby Coash spent a number of his brief allocation of minutes to describe his experience as a landlord. I am sure I was not the only listener who was wondering why he would waste so much of his brief time before us describing how much he appreciated particular long-time tenants who paid their rent on time and never

complained. However, he went on to explain that when he checked the house just before the tenants moved out, he found there had been a number of chronic problems, including a leaky roof, which had caused a lot of damage. When asked, “Why didn’t you tell me about these problems?” the tenants’ response was, “We didn’t want to bother you.”

Not fixing the problems as they arose proved to be very costly. Sen. Coash went on to say that several of the State’s major current challenges are the result of past inaction. This story resonated with this Grandma, who was raised on such adages as “A stitch in time saves nine,” and who is concerned about what kind of a world our generation will leave our grandchildren.

For this reason, I am very proud of the Lower Platte South NRD, which has made a point of maintaining the upkeep of its flood control projects. The Lower Platte South NRD operates and maintains 190 flood control dams and grade control structures, 13.5 miles of levees, 12 miles of streams stabilized with gabions and streambed stabilization practices, and a dozen wetland properties, many of which proved their value when they prevented a lot of costly damage during last May’s flood events.

Annually the NRD budgets funds to take care of these projects, which includes inspecting and completing maintenance on drainage pipes, gates, spillways, and controlling vegetation. However, many of these structures are over 50 years old and now require additional maintenance. If we are to continue to provide flood and drainage control it will be important for the Lower Platte South NRD to continue to place a high priority on maintaining these flood control systems, including the very important Salt Creek Levee System. Putting off maintenance and repairs today will not only jeopardize the flood protection for the district, but will result in increased maintenance costs in the future.

The city of Lincoln also maintains and operates significant infrastructure to provide a safe water supply to its citizens. As just one example, Lincoln has about 1200 miles of water mains, which on average are about 42 years old. However, about 12% (160 miles) of our water mains are more than 80 years old. The city has evaluated how often a water main breaks once its condition begins to deteriorate. When a water main breaks customers are without water, damage can occur to roadways and property, and traffic can be interrupted so keeping breaks to a reasonable level is the city’s goal. Based on this analysis, the city determined that we should be replacing at least 7 miles of water mains each year to keep our break rate at around 14 breaks per 100 miles. However, this plan is only a short-term solution. Replacing 7 miles each year results in about a 200 year replacement cycle. Water mains don’t last this long, so unless this replacement rate is significantly increased, we will experience a much higher rate of water main breaks in the future. And, just like a leaky roof, a break in a water main can cause significant damage.

As a taxpayer and ratepayer, I am like everyone else. I do not like to see my taxes and utility bills raised. However, as a Grandma, I am even more concerned about the multitude of problems our grandchildren will be facing in the future. Some of these problems will be difficult to solve, but we do know what we need to do to maintain our flood control projects and water mains. Thus, we have no good excuse for not making the necessary repairs today to prevent larger problems tomorrow. Nobody likes to spend money just to fix the roof, or raise taxes just to maintain an existing water system, but even worse in my book is trying to explain to our grandchildren why we decided they should pay the price so that we could maintain our low tax rate.

“Destiny is not a matter of chance. It is a matter of choice. It is not to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.”

- William Jennings Bryan

Shutdown Talk Jeopardizes National Security
By Rep. Brad Ashford, Nebraska 2nd District:
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In September, Congress came within hours of a government shutdown—the second shutdown threat in two years.

Congress agreed on a short-term continuing resolution (CR) to temporarily fund the government through December 11th. However, as this deadline approaches, Congress continually fails to act with the appropriate urgency.

The threat of a government shutdown is irresponsible rhetoric and has a damaging effect on national security. Crisis governing creates crisis management. The lack of a stable budget impedes military readiness and planning, hurts troop morale, impacts recruitment, and puts our country at risk.

Failing to pass a budget and governing through CRs endangers military readiness. We cannot expect our armed forces to plan effectively for the future when Congress cannot get its fiscal house in order.

Numerous ongoing international threats demand significant attention and resources. Our military needs a long-term planning process based on predictable revenues and multiyear budgets.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I've asked our nation's top military experts about the effects of a shutdown. Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work testified that readiness is at risk, "Strategy is all about ways and means and when you have no idea what your means are it is almost impossible to have a good strategy. [We] are limited to do what you told us to do last year, rather than doing the things we need to do this year."

Uncertain funding can have an adverse impact right here in our community. Critical infrastructure projects—like restoring the runway at Offutt Air Force Base—could be jeopardized without stable, long-term resources.

Planning is not the only facet of readiness that a shutdown threatens. Appropriate staffing levels are also essential to ensuring that our military can keep our country safe. The 2013 shutdown cost the Pentagon \$600 million in lost productivity and 1.6 million lost work days—nearly a quarter of the furloughed work days forfeited by the entire federal government.

Shutdown rhetoric also damages troop morale and recruitment.

Admiral Michael Rogers, Commander of U.S. Cyber Command, recently testified, "The single greatest perturbation I've experienced with my workforce has



been even the hint of a shutdown. . . The workforce is very open with us that they aren't sure they want to be part of an organization where there's this lack of control and [they] can't count on stability."

A government shutdown and civilian furloughs would dramatically slow or halt military administrative functions and impact key civilian-run services such as military health care, child care, and commissaries.

Most concerning is that a shutdown would provide ample opportunity to our enemies to do our country immediate harm. If our defense experts are furloughed and our facilities understaffed, we endanger mission readiness including the vital space, cyberspace, nuclear, and reconnaissance missions of U.S. Strategic Command and Offutt AFB.

In the words of Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, "What better time for a cyber-attack by an adversary [than] when much of our expertise may be furloughed?"

Congress must break the cycle of crisis governing and pass a bipartisan, long-term funding package. We need to provide the Department of Defense the proper means required to execute its missions and protect the American people.

"The budget is not just a collection of numbers, but an expression of our values and aspirations."

Jacob Lew

"What we're discussing privately and publicly, is a budget which is a blueprint for the future which creates jobs, which educates our children, which provides healthcare for all Americans, which takes our deficit down, which gives a tax cut for 95% of the American people."

Nancy Pelosi

Labor's Perspective

Creating an Economy that Works for All of Us By John Kretzschmar

In a nation dedicated to the proposition that we're all created equal and endowed with inalienable rights, it only seems fair that we should have an economy that advances the general welfare of the entire nation.

Unfortunately, an economy driven by the need to maximize short-term profits for investors appears incapable, on its own, of living up to such a standard. Senior corporate decision makers have to focus 24/7 on that goal, or they will lose investors. That push overrides any loyalty to the U.S. workforce and the communities in which they live.

Organized labor is rightfully concerned about the dismal seven-year recovery from the Great Recession. This recovery finds corporate profits and CEO compensation soaring, while the creation of jobs that pay a living wage is missing in action. This is the weakest recovery from an economic turndown in 70 years. Consumer spending accounts for roughly 70 percent of the economy, and for everyday Americans it's the weakest since the end of WWII. Back then, our economy was working in a way that allowed President Kennedy to speak of it as "lifting all boats." Today, our current economic recovery is only lifting the yachts. The current economy is responsible for worsening the income inequality that is hurting the majority of American families.

The American labor movement wants an economy that works for all of us; one that, as in the quarter century following WWII, has real wages growing, thereby opening doors for those at the bottom of the economy to have a fair shot at the American Dream.

In our consumer-driven economy, the best friends of Main Street merchants are well-paid workers. Unfortunately, our current income inequality predates the Great Recession, and has been hamstringing wage earners' consumer spending. Nick Hanauer, a multi-millionaire venture capitalist, noted in a 2009 TED Talk that while he makes hundreds to thousands as much as the median employee, he doesn't buy hundreds to thousands as much goods and services. Millionaires and billionaires who are benefitting from income inequality cannot make up for the lagging aggregate demand created by income inequality; they don't buy as many homes, automobiles, washing machines, etc. as a well-to-do middle class does.

The well-being of our economy is also inextricably tied to the economies of other nations. Some elected officials look at international trade as being part of the solution to our anemic economy.

Specifically, they are advocates of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement that says it will help spur our economy. Can the TPP correct the path that our recovery is currently taking? Current evidence says it won't, because U.S. based multinational corporations are sitting on billions of dollars in cash and presumably looking for places to invest. They have scrupulously avoided investing their surplus cash in the U.S.

From what's known of the TPP through leaked texts, organized labor believes that the TPP will worsen income inequality by opening doors to U.S. multi-nationals to relocate to nations that have cheaper labor costs and non-existent worker and environmental protections.

The creation of an economy that promotes the general welfare of the entire nation is needed. We had such an economy coming out of WWII. Maybe it's time to revisit what worked back then to ensure our consumer-driven economy can once again work as it's supposed to. We need an economy that has a surplus of good paying jobs, and which creates the demand for goods and services that keeps Main Street merchants in business.

"Let every nation know that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe in order to ensure the survival and success of liberty."

"The labor movement is people. Our unions have brought millions of men and women together, made them members one of another, and given them common tools for common goals. Their goals are goals for all America - and their enemies are the enemies for progress. The two cannot be separated."

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

"The American Labor Movement has consistently demonstrated its devotion to the public interest. It is, and has been, good for all America."

John F. Kennedy

What a Year!

By Kamryn Sannicks



Hi Lancaster County Democrats!

As I was looking at my calendar to schedule a phone bank last week, it dawned on me that it has officially been a little more than a year since I started volunteering and helping out when I could with party events. This past year while there have been some negatives there have been a lot more positives with

being involved. All of the people that I have met have been nothing but kind and willing to help me learn. The voters at the door and on the phone continue to provide great conversation no matter their party affiliation. The Lancaster County Democratic Party is definitely a group I enjoy being a part of.

The day that started it all was a hot and sunny September afternoon for a joint canvass for Patte Newman and Dave Domina. I was pretty eager to see what I was getting myself into. Brodey Weber and I got out and knocked about 80 doors that afternoon. We had a pretty decent contact rate for our first time and definitely wanted to continue helping out. From that afternoon I have been hooked on helping out whenever I could. Nothing has deterred me from that so far. The late night calls on the Domina campaign, or the frigid door knocking on Meg Mikolajczyk's campaign last winter, or even convincing people it's not too early to be talking about Anna Wishart's state legislature race this summer. The lessons that I've learned over this past year are invaluable.

There are several people who have helped get me involved, but there is one in particular that I would like to thank. That person is Meg Mikolajczyk. Meg has not only taught me the do's and don'ts on a campaign, but has also become a friend and a mentor. The day that I met Meg, I would have never guessed she would have given me my first job or my second. I surely wouldn't have guessed she would become a campaign advisor for the Girls State Governor and Girls Nation President. It feels like I have known her for a lot longer than a year with everything she's taught me. My favorite lesson would probably be that "the best lessons are learned outside of the classroom." Meg is definitely right about that one. Thank you, Meg, for continuing to be a great friend and mentor.

And, thank you to the Lancaster County Democratic Party as a whole. Your input and advice has also been very helpful. Finally, becoming an official member of the Central Committee was a great feeling. I look forward to many great years of fun and excitement to come.

Time for Giving Thanks

It takes a village to put together a monthly newsletter. The Lancaster County Democratic Party newsletter is a function of the Communications Committee chaired by Jim Johnson.

Special thanks go to:

- Jim Johnson for layout and event pictures;*
- Gerry Finnegan for hard copy distribution and mailing;*
- Roger Eschliman for encouraging and supervising database expansion;*
- Marlene Cupp for soliciting and securing historical information as well as contacting some contemporary issues writers;*
- All our writers who help us learn about our candidates and help us to understand and clarify issues;*
- Most important, thanks to our readers for giving us a reason to communicate with you.*

Thank you all for the opportunity and privilege to serve as your Lancaster County Democratic Party Newsletter Editor.

Jean Sanders

*“In this world of sin and sorrow
there is always something
to be thankful for;
as for me, I rejoice
that I am
NOT,
a Republican.”*
— H. L. MENCKEN

Planned Parenthood at the Grocery Store

By Karen Amen



It was a lovely fall afternoon; the grocery store was filled with cheerful clerks and with people enjoying the shopping experience. I was one of those pushing my cart through all the aisles, grabbing a great assortment of snacks: a box of chocolate covered

almonds, containers of fresh cut fruits, an assortment of spreads and dips, a variety of crackers and chips, some Halloween cupcakes, a multitude of exotic cheeses, and even some “sipping chocolate” to add a touch of luscious decadence.

I was on a mission, inspired by my finally emerging from the overwhelming feeling of helplessness I’d experienced after watching the House Oversight Committee’s intense, bizarre, and misguided grilling of Cecile Richards on September 29th of this year. As a former Board Chair of Planned Parenthood of Nebraska and Council Bluffs, I was intimately acquainted with the high quality health care and compassionate counseling that our staff provided daily while under constant duress. But now, years later, the attacks on that venerable organization were reaching a level of hysteria that quite literally felt like a Salem witch hunt to me. I was nearly paralyzed with despair, wondering what in the world I could do to affirm, publicly and privately, the good works of this organization that I care about so deeply.

One answer was to let the staff know how much they were appreciated. So I picked up a pot of blooming chrysanthemums, added them to my cart, and headed to the checkout line. There, an attractive mid-40’s woman began tallying up the prices one by one and then looked at me: “Wow, you have a lot of nice snacks here. Are you having a party?” Well, a small moment of truth had arrived. I could have answered, “Just treats for a group of friends.”

But at that moment, I decided to be vocal about my unending support for the PP mission and activities rather than being concerned that someone might be offended or call me a murderer or even worse. “Not exactly a party,” I answered, “but a kind of celebration. I’m taking these to the staff at Planned Parenthood to thank them for not giving up, for their respectful ways of taking care of every person who comes to them for health care.”

I had no idea who this clerk was or how she would view me. It really didn’t matter, because I needed to be public about where my heart was. And here’s the rest of the story. That woman at the cash register stopped

for a moment, looked me in the eye, and said: “Planned Parenthood saved me when I was young and pregnant with my daughter and helped me get ready for motherhood. And then, sixteen years later, when that daughter was in high school, we went together to Planned Parenthood classes on sex education for mothers and daughters. It made such a difference in her life, too. Tell those people my story.” So I did, as I turned over the grocery bags to some friends in the Planned Parenthood administration offices.

When I told Jean Sanders that I wanted my column this month to be about Planned Parenthood rather than about LPSNRD’s water policies, she enthusiastically gave me the go ahead. At first, I’d thought I’d write an emotional piece about what it was like during my college years when there was no sex ed, no birth control, no access to abortion. All of us in my generation have stories of that time.

Then I thought I’d write a rational, fact-filled, powerful advocacy piece, one that documented the benefits of reproductive health for individuals and society as a whole. But Sue Ellen Wall has recently done that magnificently. See her op-ed piece in the *Journal Star* for one of the best articles I’ve seen on these issues: [Journal Star Op-Ed](#).

So what I most want to say for now is this: If all of us regularly speak up about Planned Parenthood in respectful and non-confrontational ways, even in casual conversations with people we don’t know, we might just re-energize the vast network of supportive people who can quench the anti-choice movement at the polls and in our public forums.

County Party Committees – Monthly Meeting Schedule

All committees meet at the County Party office, 830 L Street.

Central Committee: third Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.

Executive Committee: first Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.

Communications Committee: first Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.

Fundraising Committee: second Wednesday, 7:30 p.m.

Issues Committee: second Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.

Membership Committee: second Monday, 7:00 p.m.

History Committee: Quarterly, last Tuesday of November, February, May, August, 7:00 p.m.

Caucus Committee: meets as needed.

Schedules are subject to change; if you want to confirm a meeting time contact the LCDP office, 402-476-2268.

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