



The Lancaster County Democrat

March 2025



Patriots Dinner
Friday, March 21
Lincoln Station Great Hall,
201 N 7th St, Lincoln, NE 68508

5:30PM Mayors Reception
6:30PM Doors Open
7:00PM Patriots Dinner

We hope you can join us at the 41st Annual Patriots Dinner on Friday, March 21 at the Lincoln Station Great Hall as we honor our esteemed volunteers and rally behind all of our Democratic candidates in the 2025 Lincoln City Elections! Featuring guest speakers, awards presentations, and our candidate dessert auction - this is an evening you won't want to miss! To secure your spot, reserve your tickets by March 14th via the link below or by mailing a check to Lancaster County Democratic Party, P.O. Box 83213, Lincoln, NE 68501.

<https://secure.actblue.com/donate/2025patriots>

Contact LCDP Chair Hannah Wroblewski at Chair@NELancasterDems.org with any questions or if you are in need of a sponsored ticket. It is our hope that everyone has the opportunity to participate in this special evening.

Lincoln City Elections
Primary Election: April 8
General Election: May 6

Vote for the Democrats on your ballot:

City Council (vote for all 3)
Tom Beckius
Bennie Shobe
Sandra Washington

Lincoln Board of Education

District 1

John Cartier

District 3

Barbara Baier

District 5

Mara Krivohlavek

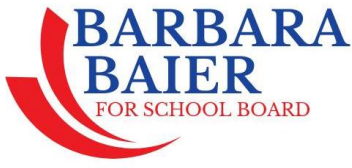
District 7

Dr. Marilyn Johnson-Farr

Lincoln Airport Authority
Vanessa Emlich

Check your voter registration at:

<https://www.votercheck.necvr.ne.gov/>



Barbara Baier, Candidate for Reelection to Lincoln Board of Education

By Barbara Baier

With five terms of experience, I can provide stable leadership on the Lincoln Board of Education. It is important in these changing times that we maintain a



thorough understanding of the value of public education for our community's children and families and for the maintenance of our fine democracy. With three long-term board members choosing not to run for reelection, it is important to maintain stability to achieve our District's strategic plan. My campaign platform focuses on:

- Continue advocacy for ALL students, inclusive of LGBT and minorities, so they can realize their potential.
- Address teacher need for respect and support.
- Create opportunities for interested people so they can pursue a career in education.
- Address increased student mental health needs.

During my service, I have been instrumental in passing three school bonds resulting in the construction of six elementary, two middle schools, and two high schools, including Northwest and Standing Bear High Schools. I have ensured that all zip codes and neighborhoods benefitted from the bonds. I have ensured fairness for the Arnold Heights neighborhood by facilitating the construction of Arnold Elementary and Schoo Middle Schools, and not a K-8 alternative. Additionally, I have championed the opening of more Early Childhood Education options, serving Northwest Lincoln and other neighborhoods.

I have advocated for equal access to benefits for LGBT staff and advocated for transgender students and staff. I was instrumental in developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Lincoln Public Schools and the City delineating the roles for administrators and School Resource Officers (SROs) regarding student discipline and development of data collection tracking disparities in discipline and juvenile

justice referrals among minority, low-income, and SPED students, resulting in a reduction of disparities.

For 25 years, I have worked as the City of Lincoln, Nebraska's Grants Administrator-Writer raising well over \$100 million in federal, state and private philanthropic sources with funds going toward parks and recreation, before- and after-school programming, prairie preservation, Lincoln streets and roads, StarTran multimodal transportation center, affordable housing, Lincoln Fire & Rescue, restoration of Sunken Gardens, Centennial Mall, and related projects, and numerous special projects serving all neighborhoods in Lincoln.

Prior to the City, I worked as the Lincoln Action Program's Development Director securing multiple grants funding Head Start, Early Head Start, VISTA, AmeriCorps, and numerous programs helping low-income heads of household achieve economic self-sufficiency and family stability. My other community board service includes: The Salvation Army, Lincoln Arts Council, Lincoln Children's Museum, Lincoln Municipal Band, Sacred Winds Church, People First. My wife of 38 years (10 years legally married), Lin Quenzer, and I have a son, now 25.

Please come to my Kickoff Party on Thursday, March 13th, The Post, 20th & M Streets, from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. Mike Mattison will be playing Americana music for our entertainment. Charcuterie cups. Donations encouraged. Hope to see you there!

How the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Helped Me

By Tom Green

Like all of us, I am angered and dismayed by the wholesale destruction of our federal government. Often, we hear about all these programs but don't know exactly what they do or how they help Americans. So, I thought I would share how the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) helped me when I had a dispute with my bank.

All of this happened several years ago. I've always paid my mortgage check on time every month for the same amount of money, let's say \$2000 each month. Then one month I noticed that the check was cashed by the mortgage company for \$200 not \$2000. I can see a picture of the check on my online bank, and it was written correctly. I called my mortgage lender to tell them that they cashed the check for the wrong amount. After being on hold for a while and explaining what happened they are not sure why it happened, but they won't assess a penalty and that I should simply pay the difference.

I go ahead and pay the \$1800 that should have been taken out of the first check and that would be the

end of the story, except that the exact same thing happened again a couple months later.

One time is a mistake, but multiple times is a trend. Once again, I call, wait on hold, and finally talk to someone with basically the same answer. This time, however, I want to understand why it is happening and how we can make sure it won't happen again. What if I didn't notice it, then I would be late on a mortgage payment, and would they assess penalties and how would that affect my credit score?

The person on the phone couldn't give me any satisfactory answers. They said it might be my bank and not theirs. I told them that if the machines they use to read checks can't read them right then that doesn't give me much confidence. I do investigate further and call my bank and talk to someone there. My bank is local, so they were easier to get ahold of. My bank says it is not their fault, and the mortgage lender is the one only asking electronically for \$200 instead of \$2000. I believe them because I haven't ever had this problem with any of my other checks.

Feeling like my mortgage lender is not being helpful and continuing to mess up what I would consider a basic function; I decided to file a complaint with the CFPB. They, at that time at least, had a form you could fill out on their website to file a complaint. I filled it out not even thinking anything would come from it.

A couple weeks later I got a phone call from my mortgage lender. I don't answer unknown calls, so I let it go to voicemail. The voicemail was from a woman with a Vice President title calling about my complaint. I called the number back and it is a direct line to her. She apologizes for the error, guarantees that there won't be any penalties, and she will make sure that there is no effect on my credit score. I asked why it was happening in the first place, and she says that they are replacing some old equipment and that should take care of the problem. She also offers to help me set up automatic payments. I thank her for her time and for calling me back. She asks if that addresses my concerns in the CFPB complaint and I say that it does.

That's when I knew that the CFPB had real regulatory authority over the banking sector. My complaint was rather minor, I hadn't suffered any financial harm, just annoyance, but by filing the complaint I got quick action on my concern. Unfortunately, this is exactly why Trump, Musk, and the Republicans want to destroy the CFPB because they care more about big banks than they do regular folks. Just one more example of Democrats (thanks Senator Elizabeth Warren!) fighting for us but Republicans rolling all back.

Democrats are the Party of Labor

John Markey

The Republicans in the Utah legislature passed a bill banning collective bargaining by all government employees. This includes the police, firefighters and teachers. The bill was signed this February by Republican Governor Cox and made into law. No Democrat in either the Utah House or Senate voted in favor.

The same anti-union sentiment swept across the country in 2011. Many state legislatures proposed legislation attacking public sector unions that year, including Nebraska. Neighboring Iowa banned public unions from negotiating anything except base wages with a limit of the CPI index or 3%, whichever is smaller. It also forced every public union to recertify before each contract.

Most famous of them was Wisconsin's Act 10. Protests against the proposed law were massive. Wisconsin Senate Democrats even left the state to deny a quorum, but Republicans stripped the bill of budgetary items to remove the quorum requirement. The bill was passed and signed into law by then Governor Scott Walker.

The Wisconsin law exempted police and firefighters, which led to it being recently struck down in a county circuit court. This ruling makes the coming Wisconsin Supreme Court election and keeping Democrats in control even more important.

In Nebraska, Democrats, led by Steve Lathrop, chair of the Business and Labor Committee, stopped the attempts to ban collective bargaining. This led to a bipartisan effort to reform the Commission of Industrial Relations, which handles impasses between public unions and their employers.

Since 2011, The Republican led legislature has become more divided and extreme. I worry more anti-union attacks are coming in the near future. Organized labor desperately needs more Democrats in the legislature to prevent this from happening.

I sometimes hear people claim the Democratic Party is no longer the party of labor, they couldn't be more wrong. Whether it's the U.S. Congress and the President or state legislatures and governors, working people and unions can only count on the Democratic Party.

Is there a place for race in space?

By Jim Schaffer

Racial equality, something hard to find on earth, may be just as challenging to find out among the stars. At least that's the case if the Trump administration revokes promises made by the government space agency about future astronauts.

Under Trump's first administration, NASA pledged that the next moon landing would include a woman astronaut. Under President Biden, NASA broadened that promise to include a "person of color."

Now, however, all bets are off. Within his first two days of taking office, President Trump signed a series of executive orders aimed at curbing what he described as "illegal and immoral discrimination programs."

NASA has promoted diversity and inclusion for decades. Consider the most recent class of astronauts, for example, which reported for duty in January 2022. Five of the twelve astronauts chosen were women. One astronaut is Hispanic, one is Turkish-American, two are African-Americans, and one is the son of Ukrainian and Indian immigrants. Two of the group are from the United Arab Emirates.

But Trump's EO is changing things on the ground fast. Although the new orders affect all federal agencies, they are hitting especially hard at NASA. In 2020, Trump appointee Jim Bridenstine, then head of NASA, added inclusion to the agency's list of core values, joining safety, integrity, teamwork and excellence. That fifth value has now been scrubbed from many NASA websites.

"How do you go from something being so important that it's a pillar [of the agency], to being so reviled that it's off of everything?" asks Julie Rathbun, a planetary scientist at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

Signs of efforts to make outer space available for everyone are disappearing. In the corridors of NASA buildings, Pride flags and pictures celebrating women in science are being taken down. Scientists are putting planetary stickers on their laptops to cover those that displayed rainbows and other symbols of LGBT+ support. Employees are stripping pronouns from their e-mail signatures and trying to avoid using any pronouns at all.

"I get a sinking feeling in my stomach when I have to check my [work] email," said one NASA scientist. "Every time I reload it, it's like 'oh god, will there be some new heinous missive in there?'"

A culture of inclusivity

Since 1978, every new group of NASA astronauts has included women and also reflected a multiplicity of races and ethnicities.

That is not simply by chance. With so many outstanding applicants, choosing a diversified, highly qualified group of candidates has been achievable, said Duane Ross, who worked as manager of NASA's astronaut selection office from 1976 until he retired in 2014. "You didn't lose sight of wanting your astronaut corps to be reflective of society," he said.

Arguably, the most "inclusive" space mission ever was probably the tragic Challenger flight in 1986. The flight was unusual because it included Christa McAuliffe, chosen as America's Teacher-in-Space. Never before had NASA taken an ordinary citizen along as a "passenger" on a space flight. (Full transparency: I was one of Nebraska's two finalists for the TIS program.)

McAuliffe wasn't the only crew member who represented a departure from the public perception of astronauts, shaped by the first group chosen—the Mercury seven, as they were known—all white men in early middle age who had been test pilots.

The Challenger crew included Commander Dick Scobee, an Air Force engine mechanic who took night courses to qualify for pilot training. His first shuttle mission was designed to retrieve and repair a disabled satellite. Pilot Mike Smith, a graduate of the Naval Academy, came closest to the old Mercury stereotype.

The five other crew members were distinctive, each in their own way. Three were "mission specialists" and included Judy Resnik, a biomedical researcher, who became the second American woman in orbit and the first Jewish person. A second specialist, Ron McNair, attended segregated schools in South Carolina before completing his Ph.D. in physics at M.I.T. He became the second Black American in space. Ellison S. Onizuka, the last of the mission specialists, was Japanese-American. He earned two degrees in engineering from the University of Colorado.

The final two members of the Challenger crew were not federal employees at all. Greg Jarvis, a payload specialist, worked for Hughes Aircraft and won a spot on the shuttle crew after a competition against 600 other Hughes employees. His job was to gather information on liquid-fueled rockets. And finally, the teacher in space herself, Christa McAuliffe. She was chosen from among more than 11,000 applicants nationwide. Recalling the Apollo moon landing in her application essay, she wrote that "I watched the Space Age being born and I would like to participate."

There was no great financial windfall for McAuliffe. NASA paid her what she would have earned on her teacher's salary as she took a year's leave from Concord High School in New Hampshire. Nevertheless,

her presence on the Challenger created great public interest and excitement.

Beyond partisanship

Over most of its history, NASA has risen above partisan bickering, with broad support in Congress from Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals. But the makeup of its most visible employees—its astronauts—could now collide with President Trump’s crusade against programs that promote diversity, equity and inclusion.

The actual requirements to be an astronaut are fairly minimal: U.S. citizenship; a master’s degree in science, engineering or mathematics; and three years of professional experience. Nothing is said about diversity but that has always been a consideration in selection.

The embrace of inclusion was evident last March when NASA issued a call for new astronauts. April Jordan, the current manager of the astronaut selection office, said the agency wanted to choose a group that was reflective of American society.

“The astronauts are the face of NASA,” Jordan said on the podcast “Amplify Talent.” Being able to see a Black astronaut or a woman astronaut on our missions, I think, is important. So I feel a sense of responsibility in making sure that we continue to build diversity into our astronaut corps.”

How well is NASA doing on this score? Cheryl Warner, a NASA spokeswoman, said the astronaut selection was moving ahead as planned. “NASA remains focused on attracting and selecting the best astronaut candidates based on their qualifications, skills and experience to help the agency accomplish its human spaceflight goals,” she said.

To add NASA astronaut to your résumé remains one of the hardest goals in the world. The astronaut acceptance rate is less than 0.13 percent. Being accepted by Harvard, the California Institute of Technology or another highly selective college is much easier.

“Let me say that 100 percent, we never picked anybody that we didn’t feel was fully qualified just in order to include a minority or female,” said Ross. “That didn’t happen.”

Garrett Reisman, a retired NASA astronaut, said he did not recall a specific conversation discussing race or gender or diversity when he served on the selection board that chose astronauts in 2009.

“It was known to be one of the things we were going for,” he said. “If you had two people that were completely equal in all other regards, then yes, it would be an advantage to have somebody who brought more diversity to the office.”

Reisman said that a key part of the astronaut’s job is to inspire the next generation. “We wouldn’t be able to inspire every kid in America if they didn’t see themselves represented,” he said.

He recalled a Fourth of July parade in downtown Houston in 1998 when he was a newly selected astronaut. He and the other members of his group were riding on several fire trucks.

“There were a lot of people of color along the parade route watching the parade,” Reisman said. But the spectators were “almost disinterested.” Then when children caught sight of his fellow astronaut, Leland Melvin, who is Black, “You could just see their eyes light up and they got up on their feet and they started clapping.”

“The impact he had just by standing on that fire truck,” Reisman said, “his ability to get these kids excited about space exploration without doing anything, just by being there, was so powerful.”

“And if you can’t connect to those kids, you’re leaving a whole group of people behind.”

(This story includes material from articles by Kenneth Chang in the *New York Times* and Alexandra Witze in *Nature*.)

- The Boston Public Library suggests the following
[VOTE](#)
- [Candidates and Issues](#)
- [Fact Check!](#)
- Fact Check!

Fact Checking Websites

- [FactCheck.org](#) -- A nonpartisan, nonprofit “consumer advocate” for voters. It is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.
- [Politifact](#) -- Compiled by the staff of the *Tampa Bay Times* newspaper, Politifact aims to rate the truthfulness of statements made by candidates and pundits.
- [GovTrack](#) -- Launched in 2004, GovTrack is built on open data. It helps everyone learn about and track the activities of the United States Congress. This is a project of Civic Impulse, LLC. GovTrack.us is not a government website.
- [Vote411](#) -- Find Information on all candidates running in your district. Run by the National League of Women Voters.
- [OpenSecrets](#) is the website of the Center for Responsive Politics, which tracks money given

to candidates and the effects of money on politics, public policy, and elections. Includes fundraising and other data on current members of Congress as well as data on money spent in various Congressional races, and also the candidates running for president. Includes information also on "dark money" and money spent by PACs (Political Action Committees), and other lobbying/interest groups.

- Resources for Avoiding Election Misinformation

There is a lot of election information that is circulating in media, social media, and beyond. But how do we know if the information we are consuming is factual, accurate, and trustworthy? Below is a roundup of fact-checking resources and media literacy tools to help.

- The News Literacy Project's [Misinformation Dashboard: Election 2024](#) — The News Literacy Project is a national education nonprofit offering nonpartisan programs that teach news literacy. This misinformation dashboard tool tracks the topics and tactics of 2024 election misinformation.
- [The S.I.F.T method](#) — Developed by digital literacy expert Mike Caulfield, the S.I.F.T method is composed of four quick moves to help readers evaluate digital information.
- [Election misinformation](#), Brennan Center for Justice
- [VOTE](#)
- [Candidates and Issues](#)
- [Fact Check!](#)
- Fact Check!

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- [FactCheck.org](#) -- A nonpartisan, nonprofit "consumer advocate" for voters. It is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.
- [Politifact](#) -- Compiled by the staff of the *Tampa Bay Times* newspaper, Politifact aims to rate the truthfulness of statements made by candidates and pundits.
- [GovTrack](#) -- Launched in 2004, GovTrack is built on open data. It helps everyone learn about and track the activities of the United States Congress. This is a project of Civic Impulse, LLC. GovTrack.us is not a government website.
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- [Election misinformation](#), Brennan Center for Justice

Kennedy's Remarkable Meeting With Oakland's Black Caucus

By Dennis Crawford



Kennedy at Oakland's Elmhurst Park.

Robert Kennedy's loss to Eugene McCarthy made the June 4 California primary must win for him. The California primary was especially significant because the state had a unique winner-take-all rule for the delegates.

Every other state allocated delegates in rough proportion to the candidates' share of the popular vote. In contrast, California awarded all 174 delegates to the popular vote winner.

Back in 1968, around 66% to 75% of the delegates were chosen by party leaders in caucuses and conventions that they controlled.

There were only 13 primaries. Candidates ran in primary elections to prove to the party bosses that they were the most electable general election candidate.

If Kennedy were to win California, that would cause party leaders — like Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago — to move the large blocs of delegates they controlled to support the New York Senator. Kennedy and McCarthy would thus engage in a furious round of campaigning in California. The stakes would be high.

One of the more fascinating events of Kennedy's 1968 campaign was an unscheduled and unannounced meeting at Oakland's Taylor Memorial United Methodist Church on May 31 with the city's Black Caucus. Other local participants in this meeting were the Black Panthers, government workers, attorneys, teachers and local NAACP officials.

California Assemblyman Willie Brown had organized the meeting and would moderate the discussion. (Brown went on to become the first black mayor of San Francisco and the Speaker of the

California State Assembly.) On the way to the church, Kennedy warned former astronaut John Glenn and Olympic athlete Rafer Johnson to expect a hostile reception. Kennedy said he was going there to listen and respond respectfully.

The meeting lasted over two hours and the local participants were not shy about discussing their charges and grievances. Kennedy was right about the reception he would receive. The participants alleged that white politicians only came to black areas when they wanted something and even claimed that the government was building concentration camps for blacks. Kennedy pushed back and denied the existence of concentration campaigns. The crowd responded that they didn't believe him.

There were even attacks on the Kennedy family.

Rafer Johnson wanted Kennedy to walk out of the meeting, but Kennedy said "No. This is between them and me." A member of the Black Panthers demanded that the Kennedy family open up a bank in West Oakland. He said: "I don't want none of your shit. What the goddamned hell are you going to do boy? You want this vote? Put up a black bank."

Kennedy responded by touting the Bedford-Stuyvesant project in Brooklyn that he pushed through in the U.S. Senate. This project created a private-public partnership to build affordable housing. Kennedy said a similar project might work in Oakland, but he made no guarantees.

Despite the rancor, the meeting ended up helping Kennedy. Willie Brown declared that everybody at the meeting was going to help the New York Senator. The next day, many of the participants called the Kennedy campaign headquarters and volunteered to work for his campaign. In addition, members of the Black Panthers called for respectful behavior towards Kennedy and walked beside his car to protect him from the crowd. Kennedy had earned their trust.

Sources consulted:

Greenfield, Jeff. *Then Everything Changed*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2011, p. 117.

Sullivan, Patricia. *Justice Rising: Robert Kennedy's America in Black and White*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021, pp. 434–435.

Proposal aims to beef up ag worker protections in Nebraska, lower egg costs

By Cindy Gonzalez - February 25, 2025

State Sen. Guereca says meatpacker and poultry workers are at greater health risk, including for bird flu. *Republished online and in print under Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-ND. Nebraska Examiner.com*

LINCOLN — Nebraska lawmakers are considering a measure to beef up protections for meatpacking and poultry workers and ensure emergency plans in situations such as bird flu outbreaks.

Legislative Bill 573, which requires certain ag operations to implement disaster mitigation plans for workers and the food supply, should fortify the state's economic backbone, said sponsoring State Sen. Dunixi Guereca of Omaha.

It calls for full workers' compensation for injuries and illnesses at larger industrial operations during crises such as animal disease outbreaks or weather calamities.

And for omelette lovers, the bill might even lighten the toll at the neighborhood diner.

"My constituents are sick of the rising cost of eggs and ask what I can do to help alleviate the costs," Guereca said during a public hearing on the bill Monday. "My theory is that if we protect the workforce and (food) supply chain, we can eventually restore access to affordable eggs."

Bird flu, superbugs

Guereca said the "re-emergence of bird flu and other superbugs" amplifies the need for lawmakers to consider what he sees as a "proactive" Meat and Poultry Workers and Contract Growers Protection Act.

So far in Nebraska this year, the highly contagious avian influenza, or bird flu, has been confirmed in three flocks. The deadly flu in some cases can force the slaughter of birds, with the loss of laying hens leading to rising egg prices.

Guereca said he had Lincoln Premium Poultry of Fremont in mind when he included contract growers. The company, which produces chickens for Costco, includes 1,200 employees and about 100 farms under contract to grow the chickens, a representative said.

On Monday, the Legislature's Business and Labor Committee heard from a half-dozen proponents of the bill, including a homeowner who lives near a poultry operation, a Grand Island landlord and an epidemiologist.

Jessica Kolterman, director of administration for Lincoln Premium Poultry, was one of two opponents to testify.

Kolterman told committee members that her company already has emergency plans in place, and that protocol for situations such as avian influenza are controlled and guided generally by the U.S. and Nebraska Departments of Agriculture.

Disaster mitigation plans under the bill would require of certain larger operations a description of potential disaster events that affect animals, and a plan to ensure the animals have food, water and shelter during extreme weather events. The plan must address how to dispose of dead animals and provide protective worker equipment and other safeguards addressing public health threats.

"We believe we are prepared," Kolterman said. "We support the intent of keeping workers safe, but not the legislation."

Bill highlights

Among other highlights of LB 573:

- Creation of a state task force to monitor practices.
- At least two years of health care for covered workers impacted by a disaster event.
- Also at certain operations covered under the law, at least 12 weeks of severance pay and six months of lost wages for workers impacted by disasters.

Ryan McIntosh, representing the National Federation of Independent Business and Nebraskans for Workers' Compensation and Equity and Fairness, objected to the provision he said would extend workers' compensation coverage for two years to non-employees.

"That is a huge change in the history of workers' compensation and unprecedented," he said. "That would have an effect on workers comp premiums for employers of all sizes all across the state."

Said McIntosh: "It's one thing to require mitigation disaster planning. It's quite another to add these significant changes in liability being shifted onto businesses that don't even employ some of these individuals."

Questions by lawmakers

State Sen. Tony Sorrentino of Omaha, a member of the committee, said he wanted more information about what the legislation might cost employers.

State Sen. Teresa Ibach of Sumner, in questioning Guereca, said she believed some components of the bill already were in place, such as

the call for employers to have a plan for dead animal disposal.

Guereca — picking up the efforts of predecessor former State Sen. Tony Vargas, who also sought worker protection legislation — said he would do further investigation on that point, but said the bill was designed holistically to strengthen the industry.

Among those who voiced support for the bill was Edison McDonald of GC Resolve, which advocates for family farmers and impact on communities. McDonald said recent outbreaks of avian flu have increased volatility in commodity prices. He said, for example, egg prices have increased about 38% nationally since January.

He believes the planning and response mechanisms called for under the bill would help manage outbreaks and disruption of the food supply chain.

Robert Wallace, an evolutionary epidemiologist, said committee members might wonder why a public health professional who studies diseases would care so much about agriculture.

He said most new infections today are emerging out of agricultural practices, livestock and poultry. Hence, said Wallace, better protection of meatpackers and contractors who take care of animals should lead to less risk to the broader population.

“Whether or not a new pathogen emerges from inside Nebraska, the provisions of this bill will, in the course of protecting farmers and meatpackers, help protect the whole of the state of Nebraska,” he said.

Penalties, state costs

A legislative fiscal analysis said 26 Nebraska agribusinesses currently meet the definition of a “covered industrial operator” under LB 573 — meatpackers and slaughterhouses with over 250 employees.

The bill would require those operators to implement the guidelines regarding disaster mitigation plans and cover affected workers. The Nebraska Department of Labor would monitor compliance and could assess civil penalties of up to \$15,000 against an operator violating the law.

The bill also calls for covered industrial operators with at least 25 employees to provide workers information about labor unionization rights.

The fiscal analysis projects related costs of LB 573 to be about \$815,000 in the first year, largely for six employees to administer the Act, including three bilingual labor law specialties.

Of those who submitted written comments on the bill, 30 were supporters and five were opponents,

according to committee chair State Sen. Kathleen Kauth of Omaha.

The committee did not take action on whether to advance the bill to the full Legislature.



The cough heard round the coop!

Franklin Roosevelt's Finest Hour

By Dennis Crawford



Wounded soldiers from the fighting on Saipan are carried to FDR's car to meet the President, July 29, 1944.

In late July 1944, President Franklin Roosevelt traveled to Pearl Harbor to meet with General Douglas MacArthur and Admiral Chester Nimitz to discuss strategy in the war in the Pacific against Japan. Perhaps the most important strategic decision was Roosevelt's authorization for McArthur to attack and liberate the Philippines. McArthur had famously said: "I shall return" when he left those islands in 1942 when they were under attack by the Japanese.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this visit to Hawaii was when Roosevelt spent several hours visiting with wounded troops on July 29 after the conference. Initially, several wounded soldiers were brought to Roosevelt's car on stretchers where he chatted with them. Very few people knew that Roosevelt couldn't walk, and he would frequently meet his fellow Americans while he sat in the back seat of an open car so he could maintain the illusion he wasn't crippled.

What followed these chats was one of the most remarkable events in Roosevelt's life. A Secret Service man pushed Roosevelt on his wheelchair through wards of a hospital that housed men who had lost limbs in battle.

Roosevelt aide Samuel Rosenman accompanied Roosevelt and observed his conversations with America's heroes. "He insisted on going past each individual bed. He had known for twenty-three years what it was like to be deprived of the use of both legs. He wanted to display himself and his useless limbs to those boys who would have to face the same bitterness. This crippled man on the little wheelchair wanted to show them that it was possible to rise above such physical handicaps. With a cheery smile to each of them, and pleasant words at the bedside of a score or more, this man ...was living proof of what the human spirit could do to conquer the incapacities of the human body...Here, in the presence of great tragedy, he was doing it on a grand, heroic scale. The expressions on the faces on the pillows, as he slowly passed by and smiled, showed how effective was this self- display of crippled helplessness."

Roosevelt insisted that our wounded heroes see him in his wheelchair to show that he could identify with them through his disability, and how he overcame it. That was only one of three times he allowed people outside his inner circle to see him requiring help. Roosevelt sent the clear message that they could overcome their disabilities and lead a happy and productive life.

This encounter with wounded veterans was an excellent example of Roosevelt's compassion and love for the American people. That's one of the many reasons why Roosevelt was elected president a record four times and is widely regarded as one of our greatest presidents.



Lancaster County Democratic Party
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