



The Lancaster County Democrat

April 2025

Thank you so much to everyone who attended and sponsored our 41st Patriots Dinner!
By Hannah Wroblewski

The evening was full of excitement for the upcoming Lincoln City Elections and the celebration of our fearless volunteers who give it their all each and every day. Thank you to our phenomenal artists, Julietta Rabens and Betsy Bobenhouse, who set the mood beautifully with their music. Thank you to Alma Cerretta for her gorgeous photography skills. Thank you to Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird for her keynote address and tribute to former Mayor Don Wesely, NDP Native Caucus Chair Cynthia Lamere for her Land Acknowledgment, and Councilors James Michael Bowers and Brodey Weber for serving as our Dessert Auctioneers. And a huge thank you to our Fundraising Committee Chair, Donna Baur, and the entire Patriots Planning Committee for organizing an unforgettable event!

Congratulations to our 2025 Patriots Award Winners!

Outstanding Young Democrat: Jack Burchess
Salute to Labor Award: Sean Flowerday
Community Outreach Award: Chelsea Johnson
Volunteer of the Year: Annie Baird and Tanner Mitchell
James Garver Legacy Award: Christa Yoakum
Chair's Award: Donna Baur and Ruth Baranowski
Patriots Award: Tammy Ward

See pages 9 to 11 of this newsletter for photos from the event; more photos available at <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YmGLmnGwFmp3AwYRjVJclgH2qA6QeaEQ>. Thanks to Alma Cerretta for being our event photographer!

Thank you to all our Lincoln City Election Candidates for participating in our famous Candidate Dessert Auction, where we exceeded our fundraising goal!

City Council

At-Large (vote for all three)

Tom Beckius*
Bennie Shobe*
Sandra Washington*

Lincoln Airport Authority:

Vanessa Emlich*

Lincoln School Board:

District 1 (vote for one)

John Cartier
John Goodwin

District 3

Barbara Baier*

District 5

Mara Krivohlavek

District 7

Dr. Marilyn Johnson-Farr

(* denotes incumbent running for re-election.)

Learn more about all of our endorsed Democratic candidates and ballot measures here:

https://www.nelancasterdems.org/2025_candidates

Education is a Right

By Barbara Baier



*Nebraska Constitution:
VII-1.*

Legislature; free instruction in common schools; provide.

The Legislature shall provide for the free instruction in the common schools of this state of all persons between the ages of five and twenty-one years. The Legislature may provide for the education of other persons in educational institutions owned and controlled by the state or a political subdivision thereof.

Our state's founders believed in education. As immigrants and refugees from across the globe came to United States, travelled out to homestead in Nebraska and other western states, often experiencing unimaginable challenges, and as they settled section by section, and as they made friends of the Indigenous peoples, they placed a heavy emphasis on education for ALL. Many laws have been passed by the United States Congress, including Civil Rights legislation in 1964 and 1965, that underscore this commitment that ALL people living in this wonderful country have fundamental rights, and primary among them is the right to education.

Yet, our current President refuses to acknowledge 60 years of legislation and jurisprudence by attacking diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). From my youngest years of being aware of laws and politics, it has simply been called equal opportunity. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are concepts that deepen our understanding and work to make this country and state's ideals, including equal opportunity, a reality.

Diversity means everyone. For too long, we as a society have singled out marginalized groups, including Native Americans (First Peoples of America), African Americans, Latino and Latina Americans, and others of color by segregating, by excluding, and ignoring their needs. For too long, the Lesbian, Gay,

Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community members have been prohibited from working and serving in our government, in our military, and even in our schools. For too long, Americans with disabilities have been shoved aside, unable to receive any kind of education, institutionalized, and even abused. Taken as a whole, almost all Americans will fall into these marginalized communities sometime in their lifetimes.

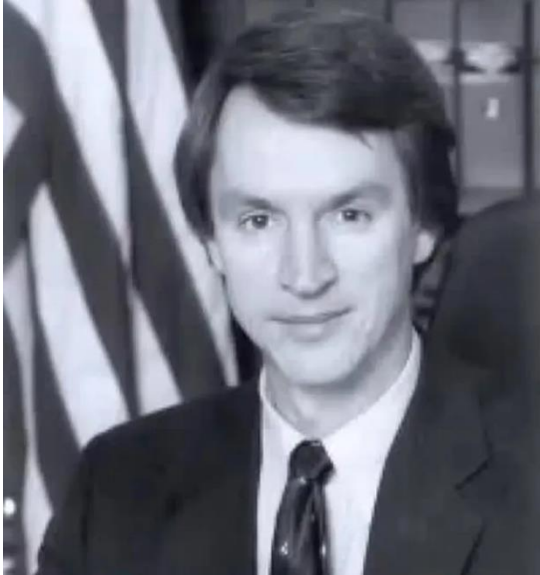
When the United States took these issues on through Civil Rights legislation, the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), we as a country unleashed the economic potential of all our citizens and residents in a way that the world has never seen before. By allowing women and minorities to become fully educated and members of our economic system, this country witnessed productivity increase to unheard of and unimaginable levels.

Now, our nation's political leadership is actively destroying our progress. The Republican Party and its President, Senate, and House of Representatives are eliminating the very civil servants who execute the duly passed laws of the land. Various excuses are put forth such eliminating waste and fraud (by what metrics, where's the proof), eliminating all forms of DEI (including removing pictures from Offutt Air Force Base of Colin Powell, former General, Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and U.S. Secretary of State, Navajo Code Talkers who saved the world from the Nazis, and many other prominent people of color and the LGBT community), and damaging decades, sometimes centuries-long relationships with our allies through punitive tariffs and reneging on treaties and alliances.

As a 20-year member of the Lincoln Board of Education, I am seeking a sixth term in order to retain the stability and vision of our community's excellent Pre-K-12th-grade public educational system. Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) is not exempt from the Republican President, Congress, and Party's attack upon the American people. LPS receives approximately \$67 million annually in federal grants and support, including free and reduced cost lunch and breakfast program, supports for Title I schools serving our lowest income neighborhoods, Special Education services, teachers training and supports, transportation, and more. I am running to ensure that we here in Lincoln continue to ensure that All Means All in providing an education to our community's children and that we follow existing law, including Nebraska's Constitution, Civil Rights, IDEA, and ADA legislation. I would appreciate your vote on April 8th and May 6th.

Unsung Heroes Like Don Wesely Will Keep American Democracy Strong

Local civic and political leaders don't get much attention, but they make local civic life strong
By Mike Lux



One of my mentors and best friends died suddenly a couple of nights ago, and in thinking back on Don Wesely's incredible life, I am struck by how important people like him are to American's democracy.

Don was a state Senator in Nebraska for 20 years. The great thing about Nebraska's non-partisan Unicameral is that Don, with his warmth and kindness to everyone, was able to build bipartisan coalitions on legislation and in terms of leadership in the legislature. Because committee chairs were decided not by a party vote but by a majority of legislators, occasionally Democrats could win committee chairmanships even in a heavily Republican legislature. Even though Don was one of the most liberal people in the Unicameral, session after session he won the role of Chairman of the Health Committee because so many people liked and respected him. What he was able to do in that role was remarkable.

After he was a legislator for 20 years, Don became mayor of Lincoln, where he helped rebuild Lincoln's infrastructure and did great things to build the city, like bringing a minor league baseball team to town.

So Don had a long and honorable life in public service, but what was even more important was the way he contributed in a hundred different ways to Lincoln's civic life. He mentored people like me, brought great people into government, and contributed to his community in so many ways large and small.

One of the things I remember the most was the way he took care of an older friend of ours in his last failing years, the legendary journalist Bob Schrepf. Bob didn't have family in town at the end, and Don did all of the things a good son would have done — took him to events he couldn't have gone to on his own, checked in on him a couple of times a week, made sure he had the groceries and prescriptions he needed. Don did these kinds of unseen, kind things for many different people.

He was also an incredible friend. Every time Barbara and I would come home to Lincoln, Don would take it on himself to organize a big welcome home lunch or dinner with old friends. At these meals, he would love telling stories of strange and funny times in the Nebraska legislature, or on the campaign trail, or just in everyday life.

Don built our city and state, and with his kindness and good humor built a strong community that stuck together through good times and bad — and that loved Don as much as he loved us.

Rest In Peace, Don.

The idea that "heroes are made, not born" suggests that heroism is a result of choices, experiences, and training, rather than being an inherent trait. While some may possess certain predispositions, it's the actions and decisions made in challenging situations that define a hero.

Heroism is often associated with acts of courage, selflessness, and putting others' needs before one's own. These actions are not always instinctive; they require conscious choices and a willingness to act in the face of adversity.



Remembering Carol Broman

By Kandra Hahn

Carol Broman was a breath of fresh air when she showed up at the Lancaster County Courthouse to take her oath and her place as newly elected County Assessor in 1979. She died January 21, 2025 in West Bend, Wisconsin.

She was a Democrat, but it wasn't as unusual in 1979 as it is now for local voters to elect Democrats. Voters broke new ground by electing Carol the first woman Assessor of Lancaster County. And it was notable that she knocked out the incumbent, the somewhat flamboyant Fritz Meyer, a Republican. Fritz liked to argue and that resulted in frequent front-page coverage of matters of property assessment and its near relative property taxes.

Carol was a mother of four and held two degrees in Chemistry from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She had campaigned on the possibility of bringing a more sophisticated electronic assessment system to the Capital city of Nebraska. It was easy for her, as a scientist, to see that real estate assessment was a formula made of Nebraska law and subsequent court decisions and that Lancaster County was lagging in automation of property records. She later called running for office "the hardest way to get a job," according to her family.

She was impatient to make badly-needed change in assessment and laughingly developed the concept of

the "Three P's" that she found constrained successful delivery of her ideas—the county offices of Personnel, Purchasing and Processing (referring to Data Processing which was then usually done with aging, expensive to maintain, mainframe computers and a limited number of City-employed analysts and programmers).

Carol had been a livewire in Lincoln public affairs. She was a member of the local League of Women Voters chapter, which had proved to be a pathway for women to local public office. Among those who got their start through the League were Helen Boosalis, Sue Bailey and Republican County Commissioner Jan Gauger.

In 1972, inspired by a discussion at a League meeting, Carol had organized the founding of the Near South Neighborhood Association at a meeting at her home. The group exists today and continues work to promote organized opportunities to affect the preservation of their neighborhood, one of the original purposes.

Carol and her husband Bob were active Democrats. Before the days of widespread home computing, they would print mailing labels for large mailings by Democratic candidates they supported. Bob had an early home computer and pin printer, an unthinkable luxury in local campaigning. I remember his computer ran all night at their home to produce a set of labels.

Carol kept her promise to the voters to bring in current assessing methods that were internally consistent and based on Nebraska state law.

Then, in 1985 the Bromans left Lincoln for Carol's hometown, Milwaukee, Wisconsin where she was appointed Tax Commissioner of the City of Milwaukee, a city with a population of about 636,000 in a metropolitan Milwaukee area of about 1.217 million. She served through two mayoral administrations.

Carol and Bob then moved to Lawrence, Kansas where she started a clothing consignment business that she managed for many years until they retired to West Bend, Wisconsin. They were married 62 years. Bob died in 2024.

Baseball is Democratic; football is Republican

By Jim Schaffer

When it comes to a harbinger of spring, it's tough to beat the news that "pitchers and catchers are reporting for spring training." Baseball, America's national pastime, may have lost some of its fizz but it still expresses many of our deepest held values.

In our polarized society, we turn to a few areas where we can find welcome unity: the fine arts, humor, and sports. But people increasingly want to polarize those areas too: Donald Trump appointing himself head of the Kennedy Center, for example.

And unfortunately, this polarization has spread to two of our most popular sports: baseball and football. More and more, baseball will remind you of Democratic values, football of Republican ones. The 32 NFL franchises, for example, are incredibly powerful money-making enterprises owned by some of the country's richest people. The Denver Broncos are owned by Walmart heir Rob Walton whose worth is placed at a bit over \$100 billion.

While there are plenty of rich people involved in professional baseball, too, one team, the Atlanta Braves, is publicly owned and traded.

Years ago comedian George Carlin liked to discuss the differences between these two great public spectacles. He thought the differences arose from the way each sport began.

"Baseball is a 19th century pastoral game," he said. "Football is a 20th century technological struggle."

He continued from there, highlighting the brutal, militaristic aspects of football with the good sportsmanship style of camaraderie in baseball.

Baseball, he told us, is played on a diamond, in a park. Football is played on a gridiron, in a stadium, sometimes called Soldier Field or War Memorial Stadium.

Baseball begins in the spring, the season of new life. Football begins in the fall, when everything's dying. Football is concerned with downs—what down is it? Baseball is concerned with ups—who's up?

In baseball you wear a cap, but in football you wear a helmet. That makes sense because football has hitting, clipping, spearing, piling on, personal fouls, late hits and unnecessary roughness. Baseball has the sacrifice.

Baseball has no time limit: we don't know when a game is going to end—it might have extra innings. We can relax and enjoy ourselves. I'm reminded of a time when Nebraska state poet Bill Kloefkorn watched his brother drop his wristwatch

overboard on a float trip down the Loup River—time doesn't matter, after all, when you're on the river. Football, on the other hand, is rigidly timed, and will end on time even if we go to sudden death. Baseball has the seventh inning stretch. Football has the two-minute warning.

In baseball, there's a kind of a picnic vibe in the stands; emotions may run high, but there's not much unpleasantness. In football, on the other hand, you may feel you're capable of taking the life of a fellow human being, provided that he's wearing the silly mascot costume of the other team.

And finally, the objectives of the two games are completely different: In football the quarterback, also known as the field general, must be on target with his aerial assault, riddling the defense by hitting his receivers with deadly accuracy in spite of the blitz; he may have to use a shotgun. With short bullet passes and long bombs, he marches his troops into enemy territory, balancing his aerial assault with a sustained ground attack that punches holes in the forward wall of the enemy's defensive line.

In baseball the object is to go home. And to be safe. "I hope I'll be safe at home!"

We need those baseball values these days.



Joe Biden Was A Good President

By Dennis Crawford



Many people have forgotten that Biden inherited a nation in crisis from Trump. There was an out of control pandemic, 10 million Americans had lost their jobs, 12 million Americans lost insurance, 8 million Americans fell into poverty and the annual deficit increased from \$585 billion to \$3.1 trillion. When Trump “left office, the murder rate was higher, drug overdose deaths had increased, and the abortion rate had gone up for the first time in decades. America was more bitterly divided, and deficits increased each year of his presidency. His early Covid lies helped fuel an immense amount of confusion and almost certainly cost American lives. And his entire sorry term was capped by a violent insurrection fueled by an avalanche of lies.” David French.

By many measures, we were much better off in January 2025 than we were before Biden took office. America experienced a historic recovery during the Biden Administration.

Biden ended the pandemic. When he took office, there was no plan to distribute the lifesaving vaccines. The American Rescue Act of 2021 funded the distribution of the vaccines. Every Republican voted no.

New jobs were created every month. This was a first.

There were 34 straight months of unemployment rate at or below 4.1 %.

Wages were up 4.1% over the past year, faster than 2.7% inflation.

There was the lowest unemployment rate of any outgoing president since Lyndon Johnson in 1969.

16.6 million jobs created under Biden administration.

For reference, average job growth was around 170,000 per month in 2019. Trump claimed that was the greatest economy ever. In contrast, job growth during the Biden Administration was around 250,000 per month. However, Trump’s first term didn’t end in early 2020 — Trump lost 10 million jobs in 2020.

The prime age labor force participation rate was at its highest level in over 20 years.

The S&P 500 was up over 55% during the four years of the Biden Administration. The Dow Jones Industrial Average increased more than 39% over the same period, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite COMP jumped nearly 46%.

On October 31, 2024, the GOP aligned *Wall Street Journal* featured an article said that the next president inherited a “remarkable economy.” Here are the pertinent excerpts:

“Whoever wins the White House next week will take office with no shortage of challenges, but at least one huge asset: an economy that is putting its peers to shame.

With another solid performance in the [third quarter](#), the U.S. has grown 2.7% over the past year. It is outrunning every other major developed economy, not to mention its own historical growth rate.

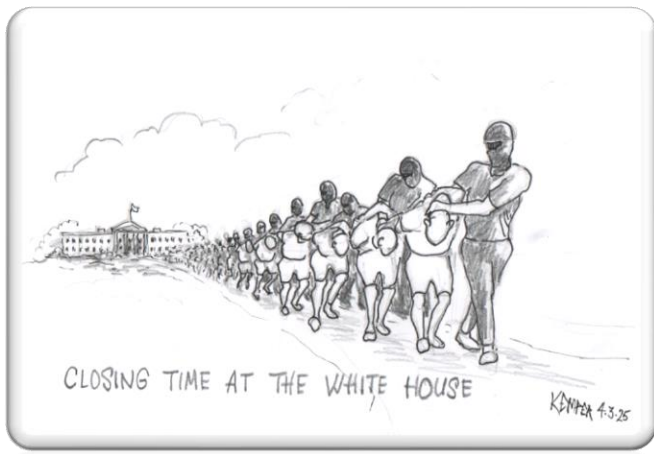
More impressive than the rate of growth is its quality. This growth didn’t come solely from using up finite supplies of labor and other resources, which could fuel inflation. Instead, it came from making people and businesses more productive.

This combination, if sustained, will be a wind at the back of the next president. Three of the past four newcomers to the White House took office in or around a recession (the exception was [Donald Trump](#), in 2017), which consumed much of their first-term agenda. The next president should be free of that burden.”

Biden was the most legislatively successful president since Lyndon Johnson. He passed the American Rescue Act, the Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Act, expanded veteran’s benefits, the Micro Chips Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, marriage equality and gun safety legislation. He passed most of these bills with bi-partisan support.

In the area of foreign policy, Biden has rallied the world to save Ukraine and has expanded NATO. Similarly, Biden organized an international coalition to protect Israel from an Iranian missile attack. He was

In leaving the meeting, our takeaway was that farmers and rural communities have an unprecedented chance to produce energy for domestic consumption while boosting our rural economies and also protecting our air and water. Good landowner leasing on the front end will eliminate concerns and, with good intent, thoughtful county zoning can help guide a company and ensure high standards. We hope to be able to harvest wind and solar on our farms one day, just as we have harvested our corn, soybeans and small grains for over 150 years.



Senator Robert F. Kennedy in Kansas

By Dennis Crawford



When Robert F. Kennedy announced for president, he had no campaign staff or organization in place. On March 17, 1968, one day after he announced his candidacy, Bobby and Ethel flew on a commercial flight to Kansas City, and then took a flight on the Kansas Governor's personal plane to Topeka. Kennedy traveled to Kansas to deliver two speeches that were planned before he ran for president.

On March 18, Kennedy spoke to huge crowds at Kansas State University and the University of Kansas. He was warmly greeted by a crowd of 14,500 at the Ahern Field House in Manhattan, Kansas. The response of the crowd was so positive that a reporter yelled: "This Kansas, ... Kansas! He's going all the way. He's going all the ... way!"

While Kennedy was at Kansas State, one of his volunteers signed up 1,000 people to work for him in Nebraska. After his speech, Kennedy promised an *Omaha World Herald* reporter he would soon campaign in Nebraska.

Kennedy was subsequently greeted by a huge crowd of 17,000 people at the Phog Allen Field House

in Lawrence. When he addressed the crowd, he made these immortal remarks:

"Too much and for too long, we seemed to have surrendered personal excellence and community values in the mere accumulation of material things. Our Gross National Product, now, is over \$800 billion dollars a year, but that Gross National Product — if we judge the United States of America by that — that Gross National Product counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for the people who break them. It counts the destruction of the redwood and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. It counts napalm and counts nuclear warheads and armored cars for the police to fight the riots in our cities. It counts Whitman's rifle and Speck's knife, and the television programs which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children. Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile. And it can tell us everything about America except why we are proud that we are Americans."

Kennedy reprised these remarks in Lincoln on March 28 at a rally on the University of Nebraska campus.

Sources consulted:

Speech transcript for the University of Kansas speech: <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/the-kennedy-family/robert-f-kennedy/robert-f-kennedy-speeches/remarks-at-the-university-of-kansas-march-18-1968>

Witcover, Jules. **85 Days: The Last Campaign of Robert F. Kennedy**. New York: William Morrow, 1969, pp. 73–83.

You read about Robert F. Kennedy's 1968 campaign in Nebraska:

The Road Not Taken By Dennis P. Crawford & Dr. Laura J. Crawford, www.denniscrawford.org

<https://denniscrawford.medium.com/robert-f-kennedy-book-launch-6885753fa17f>

Photos - 2025 Patriots' Dinner

Pictures on this page and the following two pages are from the annual Patriots' Dinner, held on March 21, 2025.

More photos available at:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YmGLmnGwFmp3AwYRjVlclgH2qA6QeaEQ>

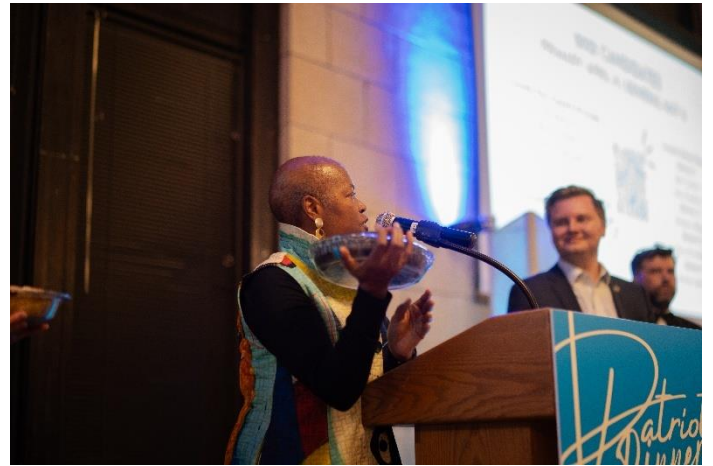
Thanks to Alma Cerretta for being our photographer for the event.



2025 Patriots' Dinner. Elected officials standing.



Juliette Rabens and Betsy Bobenhouse, musicians.



Sandra Washington, Brodey Weber, and James Michael Bowers



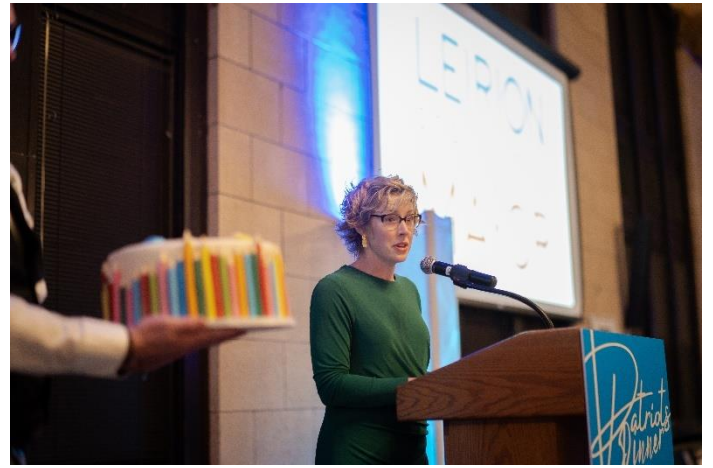
Brodey Weber, James Michael Bowers, and Bennie Shobe



James Michael Bowers, Tom Beckius



Luke Peterson, John Goodwin



Mara Krivohlavek



Brodey Weber, James Michael Bowers, John Cartier



James Michael Bowers, Brodey Weber, and
Dr Marilyn Johnson-Farr



James Michael Bowers, Brodey Weber, Barbara Baier



Tammy Ward



Rachel Garver, Christa Yoakum



Patty Pansing-Brooks



Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird



John Markey



Cynthia LaMere



Ruth Baranowski, Hannah Wroblewski



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contact Jean Sanders, jsanders@neb.rr.com or Jim
Johnson, jimjohnson_1958@yahoo.com.

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Please also consider a donation to the Lancaster County Democratic Party.
Your donation helps support party activities including Get Out The Vote efforts,
candidate support services, political forums and the *Lancaster County Democrat*.

_____ **Sustaining Donor (Monthly Donation – credit card authorization)**

I hereby authorize the Lancaster County Democratic Party to charge the credit card below \$_____ each month.

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_____ **One-time Donation (credit card authorization)**

I hereby authorize the Lancaster County Democratic Party to charge the credit card below for a one-time donation of \$_____.

Signature _____

_____ **Electronic Donation via ActBlue**

I am sending a separate electronic donation via the County Party's ActBlue account:

<https://secure.actblue.com/contribute/page/lancaster-county--ne--democrats-1>

_____ **Check or Money Order Enclosed, payable to Lancaster County Democratic Party**

Make check or money order payable to Lancaster County Democratic Party or charge to:

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