

LANCASTER COUNTY
DEMOCRATS

The Lancaster County Democrat

July 2022

Patty
PANSING BROOKS
CONGRESS



The fight isn't over. The election results from June 28th showed an unprecedented future for our campaign. Nebraska's first congressional district has never seen a race as close as this special election was, and we are so excited for our path towards November. Patty Pansing Brooks needs all hands on deck as she continues her race to Congress in November!

With the recent decisions from the Supreme Court, Congress needs a representative like Patty who will defend and protect women's reproductive rights and bodily autonomy, LGBTQ+ rights, and access to birth control and IVF. The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* has put many lives at risk as states across the country are banning abortions without any exceptions. This will not stop abortions from happening—it will only get rid of safe abortions. Because of this decision, same-sex marriage could be

stripped away from the American people as well. Patty will ensure that these rights are codified and protected. The conservative bench will not succeed.

Another recent decision by the Supreme Court has stripped away restrictions on emissions from power plants, carving a path towards increased climate damage. With climate change on the rise, as we can see from devastating floods to extreme drought conditions across Nebraska and the country, our climate must be protected. Patty will always support legislation that protects our environment because the earth cannot survive on this path. Patty Pansing Brooks believes in science and will put in the work to make sure the earth is habitable for future generations.

There is so much excitement and hope looking forward to the general election, and we must keep going strong. That means Patty Pansing Brooks needs your help! Visit pattyforcongress.com to learn about how you can help support Patty through donations and volunteering! Let's get Patty Pansing Brooks to Congress! Vote for Patty **one more time!** We can do this!





My name is Rachel Garver. I'm honored to be the first woman to serve as the Lancaster County Treasurer and I'm running for re-election on November 8, 2022. My office has implemented new online services to better serve our residents. The most popular new service has been scheduling an appointment for Motor Vehicle title/registration services. I will continue to research new services and listen to residents to better serve our communities.

Thanks to Marty Ramirez, for showing us around and to Elsa Moody for introductions at [Parroquia de Cristo Rey Lincoln](#)'s Hispanic Festival. It was nice to see Senator [Patty Pansing Brooks](#), Congressional candidate and Lin Quenzer, Clerk of the District Court candidate.



It was great to see everyone at the Waverly parade. Thanks to everyone who walked with me, family, friends and Luke Peterson, Natural Resources District Board Director.



If you'd like to help my campaign, please volunteer or donate at rachelfortreasurer.com. Thank you for your support.

The Public Defender's Office: What It Does and Why It Matters

By Kristi Egger

My name is Kristi Egger, and I am the Democratic candidate running for Lancaster County Public Defender in the November 8th General Election.



A lifelong resident of Lancaster County, I grew up in the Firth/Hickman area, graduating from Norris High School. I have always felt a strong sense of mission to help others, especially those Nebraskans who needed that help the most. This is what led me to pursue a career as a Public Defender.

After graduating from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with an emphasis in the court system, I took a year off to earn money for law school. While attending the UNL College of Law, I worked as a clerk in the Lancaster County Public Defender's Office. This experience confirmed for me my calling to serve the public, practicing as a Deputy Public Defender.

Since I began my campaign back in January, I have canvassed across much of Lincoln and Lancaster County. To date, I've been to approximately 14,000 households and spoken with people from all walks of life, all political persuasions, and people of varied economic status. Regardless of who I talk to, there are several topics that frequently come up. Probably the most important themes can be summed up in these two questions: "What does the Public Defender's Office do?" and "Why does it matter?"

First, it is important to understand that the right of individuals to legal counsel is fundamental to a free society and, as such, is guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution, Amendment VI.

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to . . . have the Assistance of Counsel for his defense.

This is echoed by Nebraska Constitution, Article 1, Section 11.

In all criminal prosecutions the accused shall have the right to appear and defend in person or by counsel.

Clients are appointed to the Public Defender's Office by the Juvenile, County, and District Judges, and Appellate Courts in cases where a loss of liberty is possible, and the client cannot afford to hire a

private attorney. For example, a juvenile who is accused of being truant or committing a law violation is entitled to an attorney. People who are accused of committing a misdemeanor or felony offense are entitled to an attorney. People who are alleged to be suffering from a mental illness which makes them a risk of harm to themselves or others are entitled to an attorney.

While many in my field of law work as private attorneys, I decided to serve the people of Nebraska as a Deputy Public Defender, first in Hall County for one year, then for 32 years in Lancaster County. Although it could be more lucrative to work with a private firm, where the attorneys may *choose* the clients they wish to represent, the work of the Public Defender's Office is crucial to protecting the Constitutional rights of all people, regardless of their financial status. Most attorneys who choose to work in a Public Defender's office have a strong sense of mission to help those in need.

In my discussions with people while canvassing door-to-door, I have found that many folks are confused about the roles of the County Attorney's Office and the Public Defender's Office. By design, our criminal justice system is founded on a system with three distinct parts.

In general terms, the role of the County Attorney's Office is to prosecute and to represent the interests of the victims and/or Lancaster County.

The role of the Public Defender's Office is to provide legal services for indigent clients and advocate zealously for each individual. Just as you

would expect and demand that a lawyer you hired to advocate on your behalf, Public Defenders are ethically and legally required to do the same for their clients, regardless of their ability to pay. The matter of guilt or innocence as well any sentence imposed is the sole responsibility of the Judiciary.



It is vital that all three of these entities act independently of one another to ensure a fair and equitable system of justice. Each part must work in earnest toward the shared goal of finding the truth of each case. They all should work to achieve outcomes that balance the needs of the community while preserving the Constitutional rights of the individual.

This November, the race for Public Defender is exceedingly important for Lancaster County. It is crucial that we elect a Public Defender who has the experience and knowledge needed to competently lead the Office. This is a complex job that requires an intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the office. You need to know the attorneys, paralegals, investigators, social workers, and support staff and have a deep understanding of how all these people function and interact together to best serve clients.

It is also vital that the Public Defender's Office be independent and not defer to the County Attorney. I am the only candidate running for this office that has served in the Lancaster County Public Defender's Office. For over 30 years I have devoted myself to this calling. I have the proven dedication, integrity, and experience the job of Public Defender demands.

Thank you all for your support, your encouragement, and your vote!

Kristi Egger

www.kristiegger.org

<https://www.facebook.com/EggerForPublicDefender/>



As professionals, public servants play a vital role in society.



Democracy is
based upon the
conviction that there
are extraordinary
possibilities in
ordinary people.

✕

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK



Opinion

Fairness

For the second time this year Lincoln is facing the prospect of holding a vote on the civil rights of its LGBT2QIA+ population. This issue is something many in our city, and in our community have been working on since the city's first vote on this issue in 1982. That year Lincoln voters rejected LGBT2QIA+ protections with 78% voting against. In the following four decades Lincoln has made significant progress. We elected our first three openly LGBT2QIA+ identified City Council members, our first out gay man to the Lower Platte South NRD, our first out gay man to Lincoln's Airport Authority, our first out lesbian woman to the LPS Board, and more elected officials who have run on LGBT2QIA+ equality. Thanks to the leadership of City Councilor James Michael Bowers, we were also able to ban conversion therapy in the city of Lincoln.

Like Lincoln, a handful of other locales have had to pass these updates through a public ballot initiative, and we have seen mixed results. The most politically similar situation happened in Houston, TX in 2015 with the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, or the HERO act. That year, Houston had an out lesbian Mayor and a Democratic majority City Council. Unlike "Let Lincoln Vote", the proponents of HERO were willing to fund a campaign, raised \$1,918,557 and lost 61%-39%. HERO lost at the ballot because opposition messaging against the transgender community is effective in these ballot initiatives and requires strong organization and significant funding to counter in front of voters. In Anchorage, AK proponents had a full year between introduction of a "fairness ordinance" in their City Assembly and what they knew would be an inevitable vote, not the 3-month timeframe "Let Lincoln Vote" would like to impose for Lincoln. They were able to raise in excess of \$500,000 and squeaked by with a 53%-47% victory.

In both examples, proponents of LGBT2QIA+ legal equality spent months preparing and fundraising prior to placing the issue in front of voters. Those preparations are necessary for the prospect of success in any ballot initiative that centers on trans people using bathrooms, which is how our opponents will frame this issue when the time comes to have this vote. When we lost this issue in front of voters in Lincoln in 1982, it took our city 30 years before the political environment was conducive enough to allow another attempt. If we hold a vote without the proper groundwork and lose, it could be several decades before we could attempt again.

Our opposition to a fairness ordinance vote this year is not about a lack of will or want to see these protections in our city for active-duty military, people with disabilities, tribal affiliations, racial minorities, and all other people who are like us and call Lincoln home. It is about stark political, funding, and organizational realities that must be addressed before such a significant undertaking could be reasonably mounted. We will continue to advocate for advances for our communities that we have the capacity to seek and which carry the lowest amount of potential harm. An earnest effort for legal equality in Lincoln will come, but we must be serious about our intention and intentional about our planning. It is with dutiful consideration of these realities that we ask all Lincolniters who care about our legal progress to not act in haste or with emotion on an issue where we will have but one chance, and to not sign the "Let Lincoln Vote" petition.

Natalie Weiss (she/her)
Chair, Nebraska Stonewall Democrats

Michael Marcheck (he/him)
Vice Chair, Nebraska Stonewall Democrats

Luke Peterson (he/him)
Treasurer, Nebraska Stonewall Democrats

Hannah Wroblewski (she/her)
Chair, Lancaster County Democrats

Lee Langlois (they/them)
2nd Vice Chair, Lancaster County Democrats

Rachele Walter (she/they)
Chair, Secular Democrats of Nebraska

Sarah Walker (she/her)
Former Chair, Nebraska Stonewall Democrats

Adelle Burke (she/her)
Former CD 1 Director, Nebraska Stonewall Democrats

Eric Reiter (they/them)
Former 1st Associate Chair, Lancaster County Democrats

Cassey Lottman (she/they)
Former Candidate, Lincoln City Council

Kam Neeman (he/him)
Community Organizer in Lincoln

On June 22, 2022, the Lancaster County Democratic Party (LCDP) Central Committee unanimously approved the following resolution introduced by LCDP Issues Committee Chair Mechelle Walker:

WHEREAS The Supreme Court of the United States released its decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* today.

WHEREAS This ruling has the potential to eliminate accessibility to numerous reproductive rights such as, but not limited to: medical procedures to end pregnancy; in vitro fertilization; and access to gender affirming care.

WHEREAS The State of Nebraska currently provides legal protection of the aforementioned rights.

WHEREAS The constituents in Nebraska have utilized these rights for the past 49 years successfully following the affirmation of these rights in the case *Roe v. Wade*.

WHEREAS The March 2022 poll executed by the ACLU of Nebraska showed that 55% of Nebraska voters would oppose the proposed ban on reproductive rights.

WHEREAS The Nebraska State Legislature has already upheld Nebraskans' reproductive rights this year by rejecting the proposed LB 933 during their regular session.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Lancaster County Democratic Party reaffirms the organization's opposition to bills attempting to limit the personal freedoms and reproductive rights of Nebraskans. The Lancaster County Democratic Party further opposes a call for a Special Session of the Legislature for the purposes of such restrictive bills.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The Lancaster County Democratic Party calls upon all Nebraska State Senators to provide efforts and propose legislation that supports affordability and accessibility for reproductive care and preventive services, such as, but not limited to: free or reduced birth control; access to accurate age appropriate sexual health education; affordable reproductive services; and/or supports to assist people experiencing unexpected pregnancies; such as Planned Parenthood, Voices of Hope, The Friendship Home, and The Bethlehem House in Omaha, Nebraska which is a homeless shelter for pregnant people that provides supports to establish self-sufficiency.

Abortion: The Red States Enforcement Nightmare

By Dennis Crawford



Leila Cohan ✓
@leilacohan

If it was about babies, we'd have excellent and free universal maternal care. You wouldn't be charged a cent to give birth, no matter how complicated your delivery was. If it was about babies, we'd have months and months of parental leave, for everyone.

Expect the police to raid doctor's offices and women's homes to enforce their big government abortion bans.

Now that *Roe v. Wade* has been overruled, the red states will now be free to ban abortion. In approximately 25 red states, there will soon be a total or near total ban without any exceptions for rape and incest. (Thirteen red states have so-called "trigger laws" that already banned all abortions once the six Republicans on the Supreme Court overruled *Roe*.) Once these abortion bans are passed, it will be up to police and prosecutors to enforce the new laws.

Once a red state bans abortion, many people could potentially be indicted for murder. For example, women who have abortions, health care providers who perform the procedure, and even drivers who transport women to appointments for abortions could be subject to criminal liability. Prosecutors and police could potentially investigate and prosecute a large number of people for being part of an alleged conspiracy to commit murder.

"Well, our legal concern is to make sure that we are sounding an alarm bell about the wave of expansive prosecutions that we are certain will follow any significant curtailment or reversal of *Roe vs. Wade*. So, we know that existing state conspiracy laws, attempt aiding and abetting, accomplice liability, subjects a wide range of individuals beyond just women who are seeking abortions. We're talking about the doctors performing them, the friends, the parents, the boyfriends. All those people will be exposed to criminal penalties, which opens up the floodgates to overcriminalization and mass

incarceration." Lisa Wayne, executive director of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.

The most controversial aspect of these prosecutions will be the kind of evidence necessary to prove murder beyond a reasonable doubt. Inevitably, it will require police to raid doctors' offices and seize women's phones and computers. The enforcement of these big government bans will require a major commitment of law enforcement resources.

"[A]s soon as a prosecutor or police officer in a deep-red state finds 'probable cause' in a case involving a woman who allegedly has had an illegal abortion, a state judge (likely elected and subject to the whims of the public) can issue a warrant. It will all be technically correct and procedurally pristine, but since the 'crime' takes place in a woman's womb, the enforcement mechanism by necessity will be intrusive." Jennifer Rubin of the *Washington Post*.

Other red states like Texas and Oklahoma allow private enforcement of their abortion bans. If somebody has an abortion, private parties can sue anybody involved in the procedure for money damages. The reality is that the Fourth Amendment only applies to government action. That constitutional protection doesn't apply in the context of civil litigation and a private lawsuit. These private bounty hunters that will enforce these laws are not restricted by the Constitution at all.

When the Texas anti-choice law was passed in 2021, Robin Fretwell Wilson of the University of Illinois law school wrote: "The encouragement of 'voluntary espionage' between neighbors hints at forms of totalitarianism that most Americans would publicly rail against."

Another form of totalitarianism that many Americans won't tolerate stems from the fact that many women track their menstrual cycle on apps on their phones and computers. "Privacy groups and abortion advocates have warned in the months since the bombshell Supreme Court leak that data from period-tracking apps and other information could be used to target people seeking abortions and possibly lead to criminal action in states where the procedures would become illegal without federal protections." *The Hill.com*. Currently, there are no legal protections in place for this type of intimate data.

Already, numerous women are rushing to delete period tracker apps out of fear the data will be used against them in the red states where abortion is now banned or will soon be banned. Experts advised erring on the side of caution. "If I lived in a state where abortion was actively being criminalized, I would not use a period tracker — that's for sure,"

University of Edinburgh researcher Andrea Ford told *NPR*.

A prominent conservative has proposed a less intrusive way to enforce the GOP's big government abortion bans. Dr. Jay Richards of the Heritage Foundation has introduced what he has labeled as a "thoughtful proposal" to commit women who have abortions to "mandatory psychiatric custody." Richards isn't some marginal figure on the right. Instead, he's a Director at the Heritage Foundation — the most prominent and prestigious right-wing think-tank going back to the Reagan presidency.

Closer to home in Nebraska, Governor Pete Ricketts and Speaker Mike Hilgers plan to call a special session of the legislature to ban abortions, without any exceptions for rape and incest. There are currently 32 votes to ban abortion. The GOP needs 33 votes to break a Democratic filibuster. Senator Justice Wayne of Omaha is on the fence and may be the deciding vote. I would recommend that you call your state senators. Please don't demonstrate at their homes and give the right a phony issue.

"You know what will not happen in Nebraska after they attempt to completely ban abortion: — They won't pass paid parental leave — They won't fully fund our child welfare system — They won't increase benefits to needy families — They won't increase access to contraception. How do I know? Because they have defunded or defeated all those proposals while they tried to ban abortion for the last eight years I have been in the Legislature." Senator Adam Morfeld.

We are in the current predicament because many Democrats stayed home or voted third party in 2014 and 2016. In the 2014 cycle, Democratic apathy allowed the Republicans to regain control of the Senate. In 2016, third party votes for Jill Stein allowed Trump to carry Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania.

The time is now to resist. Call your state senators! Volunteer for a campaign! Vote! We can win this fight!



Recent conversations overheard at the ammunitions factory.

Perseverance is a great element of success. If you only knock long enough and loud enough at the gate, you are sure to wake up somebody.

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The Case for Ethanol

By Sally Herrin

Putin-driven gas prices are one of the challenging impacts of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While Joe Biden didn't have a lot of options, on the scale he needed to land a body blow to the world's newest mad dictator on the march, the U.S. has gas price reduction options right here at home and at the ready. One option is higher ethanol blends in gasoline using our existing infrastructure.

Biden's energy envoy was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, March 9, 2022, "this conflict has made it clear that we must double down and triple down [this administration's push towards clean renewable energy] as a way to reduce reliance on Russia and other hostile nations." [west-needs-to-accelerate-clean-energy-push](#)

"Ethanol industry experts say that current, idled plant capacity can help bring more liquid fuel into the gasoline fuel market and help lower prices at the pump," says my friend Gale Lush, corn, soybean and wheat farmer from Wilcox, NE. "Modern corn farmers use no-tillage farming practices that reduce erosion; use less water; less fuel; less energy; less fertilizer; less pesticide and less labor per acre, while increasing yield. New corn varieties produce more ethanol per bushel and economic development, including rural jobs. Ethanol is a clean burning fuel that reduces carbon and as an octane enhancer cuts air pollution reducing toxins and pollutants in gasoline.

"And there is no 'food vs. fuel' issue, because roughly 90% of the yellow field corn used for ethanol would have gone to livestock feed anyway, not direct human consumption. A co-product of ethanol plants is high-protein distillers' grains that still go for livestock feed. Just a couple of years ago the US had so much excess grain that airfield runways were being used for storage, so there's no food shortage issue connected to ethanol production."

Princeton University's Carbon Mitigation Initiative likewise urges doubling and tripling down—as a national strategy to address climate change—on wind, geo, solar and other clean renewable power, not least on liquid biofuels. CMI notes that ethanol production *already* exists at a scale to match the scale of the climate emergency. cmi.princeton.edu/stabilization-wedges

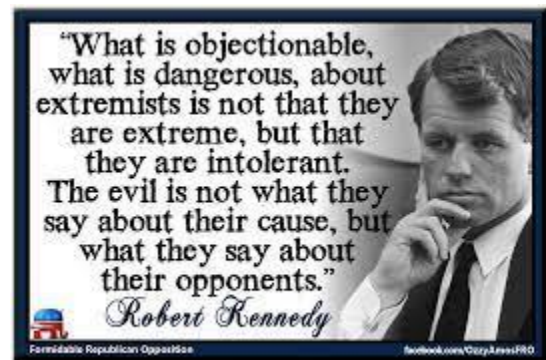
Electric vehicles are only as green as their power source, which in much of the US is still coal. The rare earths needed for motors, and the lithium required for batteries, are problematic to source. Do we want to rely on China for these components or to strip-mine the ocean floor? It will be a decade before

liquid fuel vehicles are in the minority, much less gone from the roads. These are facts, like the fact that climate change is here *now*.

I hope Biden's envoy was signaling support for a ramped up renewable fuels standard to E30, a blend that could potentially make the US carbon-neutral by 2050. [Biomass-Resource-Assessment.pdf](#) Research conducted recently on Nebraska's state patrol fleet approved E30 for all vehicles, full stop.

Besides drawing down atmospheric carbon and toxic emissions, ethanol makes fuel cheaper at the pump. While the world economy shudders at inflation, Joe Biden can steady the price of gas here at home, which helps determine the cost of just about everything else, by raising the RFS immediately. Dead serious about the RFS, Biden can build confidence in rural America by backing ethanol, the most significant driver of the rural economy for the past two decades.

Recently Jeremy Martin of the Union of Concerned Scientists acknowledged that there is a place for ethanol and biofuels in a sustainable fossil-fuel-free future. Biofuels complement electric vehicles—a clean fuels economic dynamic duo.



Robert Kennedy's Remarkable Speech at Creighton University

By Dennis Crawford



Kennedy addressing the crowd at Creighton on May 13, 1968.

Nebraska in 1968 was critical because it was one of only fifteen states that held a presidential primary election. In the era before the 1972 reforms which required the vast majority of states to hold primary elections, most delegates were chosen by party insiders and leaders in caucuses and conventions which they controlled.

Since only fifteen states held primaries, that meant that only 900 delegates out of 2,600 were selected in the primaries.¹ Presidential candidates ran in primary elections to prove to the party bosses that they were electable in the general election. They hoped that a series of victories in the primaries would convince these influential party leaders to support their candidacy.

The Democratic nomination fight in 1968 was dominated by the war in Vietnam. Minnesota Senator Eugene McCarthy announced his candidacy for the presidency in late 1967 in what looked like a quixotic bid to take out President Lyndon Johnson. McCarthy shocked the world by winning 42% of the vote in the March 12 New Hampshire primary to Johnson's 49%. The incumbent president had been expected to win by a wide margin in the Granite State.

Partially, as a result of his poor showing in New Hampshire, Johnson surprised the country with his announcement on March 31 that: "Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President." Vice President Hubert Humphrey began to lay the foundation for his own presidential campaign shortly after Johnson withdrew.

Meanwhile, Robert Kennedy announced his presidential candidacy on March 16, 1968, and his first major primary contest was in Indiana on May 7. The Hoosier State was make or break for Kennedy — and there were no guarantees he would win. McCarthy was riding a strong wave of momentum from his near upset in New Hampshire and a popular Democratic governor was on the ballot as a stalking horse for Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

One of Kennedy's many good qualities was just his sheer political courage. He wasn't afraid to speak his mind and disagree with the voters at his events. It was the genesis of what was later described by John McCain as "straight talk" in the 2000 and 2008 presidential election campaign cycles.

One of the key factors underlying Kennedy's straight talk was that he was a devout Catholic. Jerald Podair, a history and American studies professor at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin wrote that: "Kennedy viewed his faith as a summons to heal the world, making it a more equal and just place. It was . . . Kennedy's firmly believed Catholic view that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities."²

At a campaign stop at Indiana University Medical School, Kennedy gave a group of privileged medical students a strong dose of candor. When he addressed this largely hostile crowd, Kennedy came out for universal health coverage. During the contentious question and answer session that followed his speech, Kennedy was asked where the money was going to come from to pay for his proposed programs. He answered bluntly: "From you!" He then pointed at various students in the hall and kept shouting: "From you! . . . You! . . . You . . . You!"³

Despite his sometimes blunt rhetoric, Kennedy won the Indiana primary with 42% of the vote. The favorite son candidate who supported Hubert Humphrey finished second with 31% and McCarthy finished last with 27%. Kennedy won with a remarkable coalition of blue-collar whites, farmers, and urban minorities.

The critical Nebraska primary was one week later, on May 14. Once again, Kennedy campaigned hard — he visited 25 counties and campaigned in every town or city with a population in excess of 8,000.⁴

The New York Senator's most interesting and controversial campaign appearance was at Creighton University on May 13, 1968, on a beautiful spring day. Kennedy delivered his speech around lunch time on the then eastern edge of the campus. It was estimated that this campaign stop

was attended by approximately 4,000 people, who largely consisted of middle class, white students.

Kennedy's speech was initially well received because his address echoed the Jesuit message that one's education should be seen as a tool for improving the lives of the poor: "The worst sin is to be passive in political matters. A college education gives you a license to avoid the problems of the underprivileged. Or it can give you the knowledge to see your obligation to get involved. This is an important campaign, more important for your generation than for the older one. Now we have the capacity to destroy all mankind. We must decide whether man can survive."⁵

Kennedy's opening remarks drew a good round of applause and then the New York Senator opened the event for questions. It all began on a jocular note in which Kennedy showed his considerable charm and humor — which was a staple of his campaign stops in Nebraska.

After one of the students asked him what differentiated himself from McCarthy, Kennedy quipped: "Charm, sense of humor. I think he's occasionally ruthless." (Kennedy had a reputation for being ruthless when he was his brother Jack's campaign manager and Attorney General.) Kennedy added: "I don't mean that. I don't want a headline, Kennedy charges McCarthy. I'm the one who is ruthless."

After more playful exchanges, Kennedy changed the subject to the draft. Things then got more interesting when Kennedy came out for replacing the student deferment aspect of the draft with a lottery system. After hearing some boos from the students, Kennedy asked for a show of hands asking the students to indicate if they supported student deferments. Most of the hands went up.

Kennedy responded to this show of hands passionately and this remarkable exchange followed. Kennedy: "In some parts of the country, a high school graduate has only a fifty-fifty chance of having a good eighth grade education. Negroes have twice as much chance to be drafted because, in many cases, they can't attend college."⁶

He went on: "How can you possibly say . . . Look around you. How many Black faces do you see here? How many American Indians? How many Mexican Americans? The fact is, if you look at any regiment or division of paratroopers in Vietnam, 45% of them are Black. How can you accept that?" This elicited boos from the audience again. Kennedy continued: "What I don't understand is that you don't even debate these things among yourselves. You're the most exclusive minority in the world. Are you going to sit on your duffs and do nothing? Or

just carry signs and protest?" We can't possibly go on as we are."

A student then asked: "But isn't the army one way of getting people out of the ghettos . . . and solving the ghetto problem?"

Kennedy was shocked and shot back: "Here, at a Catholic university, how can you say that we can deal with the problems of the poor by sending them to Vietnam? There is a great moral force in the United States about the wrongs of the Federal Government and all the mistakes Lyndon Johnson has made, and how Congress has failed to pass legislation dealing with civil rights. And yet, when it comes down to yourselves and your own individual lives, then you say students should be draft-deferred."⁸ You should be the last people to accept it in this country. So there!"⁹

Kennedy went on to say: "I think we should improve life in the United States. Will you work with me to bring whites and blacks together, to bring decent jobs, to bring decent housing for all?" Most of the students yelled yes, but there was a smattering of loud no responses. Kennedy went on: "Work with me so the next generation of black people has a better opportunity than you have had."¹⁰

Dave Thompson of the *Omaha World Herald* wrote that the students appeared "stunned" by what he called Kennedy's "stinging remarks." The *Washington Post* reported that by the end of this appearance, Kennedy had "shamed the Creighton students into a red-faced silence"

Kennedy's passionate and unscripted remarks at Creighton reflected his strong opposition to draft deferments. He believed that college draft deferments were unjust due to his own family's history of military service and sacrifice.

Jack was badly injured in 1943 when PT-109 collided with a Japanese destroyer. Joseph, Jr. was killed in a plane explosion in 1944 over the English Channel while participating in a dangerous mission. Robert himself volunteered for duty in the Navy when he was seventeen years old and was anxious to be deployed overseas. As it turned out, Robert did stateside duty in the Navy and received an honorable discharge in 1946.

Kennedy's heated exchange at Creighton didn't hurt him. The next day, he beat McCarthy decisively by a 52% to 31% margin. Once again, as in Indiana, Kennedy did well with blue-collar whites, farmers, and urban voters. The New York Senator carried 60% of the farm vote and 60% of the blue-collar vote. Kennedy carried 88 out of 93 counties. It was an impressive victory that made a strong case for his electability in the general election cycle.

The campaign moved on to Oregon for a May 28 primary that McCarthy won 44% to 38%. It was the first loss for any of the Kennedy brothers after 27 consecutive electoral victories. Kennedy rebounded from that loss to beat McCarthy in California and South Dakota on June 4. On that evening, Kennedy and his staff were already planning ahead for the crucial New York primary on June 18.

As we all know, Kennedy's life was tragically cut short by an assassin's bullet that night in Los Angeles. One of the great what ifs of history is: What if Kennedy had lived?

There were no guarantees he would have won the Democratic nomination over Hubert Humphrey. The Vice President had played the inside game very well and held the lead in the delegate count by June 1968. Nevertheless, historians Larry Tye and Thurston Clarke have discovered that influential Chicago Mayor Richard Daley had promised to endorse Kennedy if he were to win the crucial California primary on June 4.^{11, 12} That might have opened the door to Kennedy winning the nomination.

I'm convinced that Kennedy would have defeated Richard Nixon in the general election. The Democratic Party would have been united in support of Kennedy since Humphrey had agreed to campaign for him if he was the Democratic nominee. As it was, Nixon defeated Humphrey by a mere half of a percentage point in the popular vote in November 1968. (That's equivalent to Al Gore's margin of victory over George W. Bush in the popular vote in 2000.) A Democratic party united behind Kennedy would have won the general election.

If Kennedy had been elected, he would have ended the Vietnam War much earlier than Nixon did. Needless to say, that would have saved thousands of lives.

Kennedy at Creighton — Footnotes

1. Dominic Sandbrook, *Eugene McCarthy and the Rise and Fall of Postwar American Liberalism* (New York: Anchor Book 2004), 212.
2. "Robert Kennedy's Catholicism was part of his personal life and politics," CatholicPhilly.com, June 11, 2008.
3. Thurston Clarke, *The Last Campaign* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008), 187–188.
4. @RfK50th, May 14, 2018.
5. "RFK, Creightonians Banter Draft Issue," *The Creightonian*, May 17, 1968, 3.
6. "RFK, Creightonians Banter Draft Issue," *The Creightonian*, May 17, 1968, 3.
7. Thurston Clarke, *The Last Campaign* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008), 190.
8. "Kennedy Scolds Students On War," *New York Times*, May 14, 1968, 31.
9. "Get Off Your Duff, RFK Tells C.U. Youth," *Omaha World Herald*, May 14, 1968, 4.
10. "Get Off Your Duff, RFK Tells C.U. Youth," *Omaha World Herald*, May 14, 1968, 5.
11. "Robert Kennedy was a raw idealist cut down just when the presidency seemed within reach," *USA Today*, June 15, 2018.
12. Thurston Clarke, *The Last Campaign* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008), 269–270.

About The Author

Dennis P. Crawford graduated with a B.A. degree from Creighton University in 1982 and a J.D. degree from The Catholic University of America in 1985. Crawford has practiced personal injury and workers compensation law in the Lincoln, Nebraska area since 1986. He was the Democratic nominee for the U.S. House in Nebraska CD01 in 2014 and served as Second Associate Chair of the Nebraska Democratic Party between 2012 and 2016. The author has been married to Diane since 1984 and they have three adult children.



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