

LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

AIRPORT AUTHORITY

**Leirion Gaylor Baird
MAYOR**

VOTE MAY 2ND LINCOLN CITY ELECTIONS

DISTRICT 1

DISTRICT 2

DISTRICT 3

DISTRICT 4

On Tuesday, April 4th, we had a strong showing for our candidates up and down the ballot! With higher than usual voter turnout at 33.38%, our candidates advanced in every race. Congratulations to all of our candidates who are moving on to the May 2nd General Election!

Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird
James Michael Bowers for City Council District 1
Bailey Feit for City Council District 2
Justin Carlson for City Council District 3
Brodey Weber for Lincoln City Council District 4
Piyush Srivastav for LPS District 2
Annie Mumgaard for LPS District 4
Bob Rauner (NP) for LPS District 6
Vanessa Emlich for Lincoln Airport Authority
Nathan Janulewicz for Airport Authority

Now these next few weeks are critical. We need to show up again on May 2nd to support our candidates. Sign up today to make calls or knock on doors to get out the vote: <https://www.mobilize.us/nebdems/>

You may not realize it, but your life is affected by government, laws, and elected representatives every day. We think that [Common Cause](#) put it best when they said: “**There is not a single aspect of daily life that isn’t affected by your government.** The roads you drive on, the air you breathe, the water you drink, the food you eat, the schools that teach your children, and the parks you visit — are all a function of

Patriots Dinner 2023

By John Markey

The 39th Patriots Dinner was a great success this year! We are back to the attendance levels we had before the pandemic. Many thanks to the volunteers who helped to set it up, the candidates who contributed desserts for the dessert auction, the businesses and individuals who contributed items for the silent auction, everyone who purchased tables and seats and attended, and thanks go to County Party Chair Hannah Wroblewski for her hard work and dealing with the stress involved in set-up. Success isn't possible without everyone.

The annual Patriots Dinner is an important event in many ways. It provides a venue for Democratic voters to meet and interact with candidates and elected officials. It is a fundraising event to keep the doors of the county party office open, send out voter guides and provide other means to get Democrats elected to office. It is also a chance to recognize people for their contributions to the Democratic Party and its ideals.

Rev. Penny Greer opened with a Declaration of Democratic Values, a welcome alternative to a traditional prayer or invocation. The declaration made it clear we welcome people of all faiths and people who hold secular ideals.

For entertainment, but also for a show of support, we hosted the GOTV Drag Show. Tia Pet, Jackie Oh Kennedy, Jaja Adore Deveaux and Phillippa Adore all gave wonderful performances. As state legislatures across the country level attacks on the LGBTQIA+ community, it's so important we stand in solidarity.

Precious McKesson stepped in and spoke for Jane Kleeb, who was unable to attend.

Justine Sandoval, our keynote speaker, joined us from Colorado and shared her experiences in progressive activism and reproductive rights.

Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird spoke of the successes of her administration and made a compelling case for her re-election.

And the awards...

Brad Stewart, James Garver Legacy Award

When the Lincoln community lost Brad Stewart last year we lost not only a great comedic talent, but a wonderful activist as well. Brad ran the weekly comedy show, "Zoolarious," at the Zoo bar every Sunday that brought national comedic talent to Nebraska. Brad was a staunch supporter of Democratic Party values: inclusion, community, activism, and public service. He utilized his talents to raise money for organizations such as Planned Parenthood and OutNebraska as well

as causes like helping foster dogs get adopted. He was an integral part of our community and will be greatly missed.

Mili Samal, Outstanding Young Democrat

Mili Samal has played an integral part in a number of campaigns in the past two election cycles. Mili worked on Adam Morfeld's campaign for County Attorney as well as the Nebraska medical cannabis campaign. Mili has persevered through some of the toughest campaign work an individual can endure and persists to keep fighting for a better future, even today working as a campaign manager for James Michael Bowers' re-election campaign. Mili truly sets an example for the impact Young Democrats can have on our local community and we cannot thank her enough for her tireless efforts.

Goldenrod Printing, Salute to Labor Award

Goldenrod Printing is the go-to print shop for the Lancaster County Democratic Party. They have donated so much time and materials to the many events we put on every year, they have provided so much design help, and even when we give them a tight deadline, they always finish with plenty of time to spare. We could not reach as many voters as we do as quickly as we do without their business acumen and devotion to democratic causes. Goldenrod printing has made it possible for us to send out postcards and mailers quickly, efficiently, and to the most number of Lancaster County residents. We appreciate their wholehearted support of the Lancaster County Democratic Party.

Michael Marcheck, Volunteer of the Year

Whenever a volunteer is needed, a phone call needs to be made, connections need to be strengthened, or a fire needs to be put out, Michael Marcheck is the person who can get it done. Whether it is getting sponsorships for a drag show, putting together the drag show, making chili for 100 people or cooking and baking for a fundraiser, Michael is the person we count on to help us succeed in everything we try to do. Besides being a person you can count on to promote Democratic values and do everything he can to get out the vote, he lights up a room in his sparkly clothes.

Ruths for Choice: Mo Neal, Judy King & Thia Hartley, Community Outreach Award

These three are pillars of protest and activism in Lincoln, Nebraska. They are known for calling out hypocrisy and being very visible in their activism. They

started Ruths for Choice to counter protest the anti-choice propagandists who protest at Planned Parenthood in Lincoln Nebraska. Ruths for Choice have been involved in grassroots activism by showing up to protest former Senator Ben Sasse whenever his campaign RV was seen in the area. They do girls journalism by asking the tough questions of Republican—and in some cases Democratic—leaders that many of our news agencies won't ask and posting these on Facebook. They have been diligent and staunch supporters of Democratic values and Walk the Walk not just talk the talk.



John Markey, Chair's Award

John has led fundraising efforts for the county party through the pandemic and through uncertain economic times. He has been a liaison for many years between the party and IBEW 265 and he represents both well. We are forever grateful for John's tireless efforts for LCDP and growing our relationship with our union brothers and sisters. Patriots Dinner wouldn't be possible without John's hard work and on the eve of his final Patriots as our Fundraising Chair, we were pleased to present him with this award and thank him for his service. Congratulations to John on his election as President of the Lincoln Central Labor Union!



Hon. Patty Pansing Brooks, Patriots Award

Throughout her legislative career and her Congressional campaign, Patty's Democratic values never waned. She held strong to her values and her dedication to Democrats and to the Democratic platform. It often wasn't the easy way to go but consistently, Patty was on the side of the people, of those most underserved and overburdened. She has been an outspoken and unapologetic advocate for reproductive rights and has been a loving leader and protector for LGBTQIA+ rights. This defender of rights is the very definition of Patriot.





Jim Pillen: The Incredible Shrinking Governor

By Dennis Crawford



Senator Machaela Cavanaugh has led the opposition to the GOP's extreme culture war.

Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen and the Republicans had an ambitious agenda when they were sworn in earlier this year. They had plans to limit spending to 1.3% per year and to cut property, income and corporate taxes. Pillen and the Republicans also proposed to increase aide to public schools and spend taxpayer money for private school tuition. With 32 seats in the 49-seat legislature and \$1.9 billion in the rainy day fund, the GOP had every reason to feel optimistic.

However, those same Republicans had other, more controversial ideas. Pillen and the Republicans also wanted to declare a full-throated culture war in Nebraska. The Nebraska Republicans proposed to ban most abortions and to end gender affirming medical care for minors.

The declaration of the GOP culture war caused a fierce response from the Democrats in the legislature. Omaha Senator Machaela Cavanaugh began to filibuster every bill to stop the anti-LGBTQ legislative blitz. Cavanaugh promised to continue filibustering unless the radical right dropped their Trump-like culture war. She promised: "I will burn this session to the ground."

Despite that warning, the Nebraska legislature voted last week by a 30–17 margin to advance the hateful anti-transgender rights bill. The 30 senators who voted for this bill want to take away freedom from parents to make decisions about their children's medical care. Instead, they want to put the likes of career GOP politicians, right wing preachers and judges in charge of children's medical care. That is really, really big government.

Senator John Fredrickson of Omaha maintained that the bill permits "too much government interference in personal healthcare issues and rips

away the freedom of parents to make medical decisions for their children." Fredrickson said he couldn't help but think of his mother, who accepted him for being gay. "Regardless of what happens today, heads up, chins up," Fredrickson said, addressing LGBTQ Nebraskans. "We're survivors. Me standing in this room is proof of that."

Lincoln Senator Danielle Conrad made a last-minute appeal to the senators to "save the session" and to allow bills dealing with workforce development, public school funding and other issues deemed significant, by voting against the anti-trans rights bill. The radical right didn't listen to Conrad.

The Republican senators have blamed Cavanaugh for the legislative meltdown. "People are trying to blame me for the outcome of today," Cavanaugh said. "I do not have control over your fingers. I do not have control over your buttons. You vote for it, or you don't vote for it."

Cavanaugh believes the sponsors of the anti-trans rights bills are taking their cues from national figures who are whipping up a hateful frenzy over transgender issues. "Until this year, we had never faced anti-gay bills, or bathroom bills, or bills banning gender-affirming care," Senator Megan Hunt told the *Washington Post*. "The legislature had never even debated a bill about banning abortion until last year."

The opponents of the GOP culture war have now vowed to shut down the legislative session with more filibusters. From the *Lincoln Journal Star*: "Omaha Senator Megan Hunt, said she considered the cloture vote 'the final vote' of the session. Along with Cavanaugh and Sen. Jen Day of Gretna, Hunt said she intends to bring the work of the Legislature to a crawl—even on bills she supports." Senator Jane Raybould told me that she plans to join this effort.

"People think, well, 'You're not gonna get your stuff passed.' I was never gonna get my stuff passed. Ever. None of them were ever going to let me pass a bill. That's a problem of their own making. They decided they were going to take everything away so that I had no reason not to fight. And they succeeded. They did a great job of that." - Machaela Cavanaugh.

The Legislature has now completed 50 of the 90 business days scheduled for this session, without passing a single bill. At this same point in the last 90-day session, 15 bills had been passed and signed by then Governor Pete Ricketts.

The response of the Republican senators to the failed session isn't to compromise with the Democrats. Instead, they want to change the rules in the middle of the game. Speaker John Arch wants lawmakers to consider changing the rules so the 2023 session can

proceed without endless filibusters. Apparently, Arch wants to gut the filibuster rule.

The current rules allow an individual senator to gum up the works by introducing amendment after amendment. This had made it possible for one senator—Cavanaugh—to slow things down. Former Senator Ernie Chambers adopted similar tactics in the past and forced the other senators to compromise. The legislature's rules also require 33 votes to end debate and to proceed to an up or down vote.

We might as well just shut down the legislative session. The agenda of Pillen and the GOP senators is simply radical and outside of the mainstream—even in red Nebraska. This extreme agenda deserves to be blocked. No progressive or even moderate bills would have been considered anyway.

Jim Pillen and the 32 Republican senators are entirely responsible for the failure of this session. They decided, against the will of Nebraskans, that they would prioritize anti-LGBTQ and anti-choice legislation. This is an attack on our freedom. I'm incredibly proud of the Dems who are standing up to these attacks.

Pillen and the Republicans have a decision to make—they can either back off from this culture war or have a failed session. Pillen is the Governor, and he needs to lead. He should compromise by abandoning this Fox "News" inspired culture war.

It's not a good look for Jim Pillen and the Nebraska GOP. The state has \$1.9 billion in its cash reserves. It could have been a very productive session. In recent sessions, Democrats have worked across party lines to pass budgets and cut taxes. Instead, it's a disaster due to Pillen's failure to lead and the radicalism of the GOP. Your move, Governor Pillen.



Trump and DeSantis fight over the dead carcass of the Republican Party

Jimmy: How do I love you? Let me count the ways.

By Eileen Novotny

Solar Panels

Heating only (Did not produce electricity)

Windmills

Ethanol

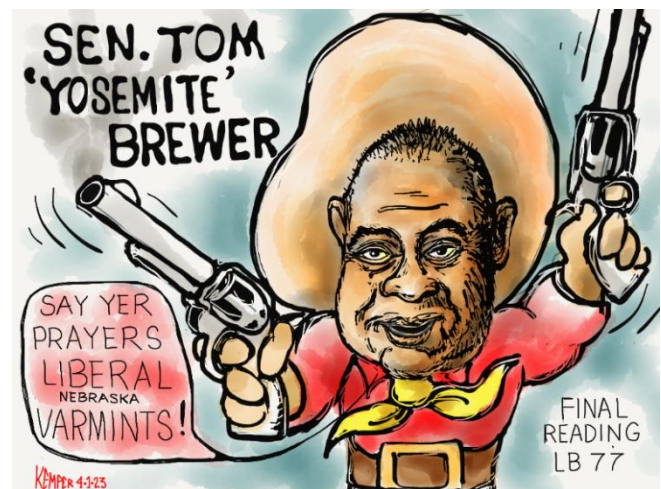
Jimmy put solar panels on the White House. We put solar panels on our new house. They heated the entire house during the day when we were not home. We had a wood stove to heat the house when the sun wasn't shining.

Jimmy encouraged windmills to generate electricity. We tried to make a windmill, but it was too cumbersome. We invested several \$K in a windmill startup. The management decided not to keep going and they gave us back our investment money (try to tell anybody that this really happened in the 1970s given today's culture).

Ethanol. I was one of six women in the entire United States that had an actual Federal permit to make homemade ethanol. Basically, we built an alcohol producing still. Borrowed several bushels of corn from the neighbor. Ran it through our still. Produced 3 gallons of 196 proof alcohol. Gave the corn remains back to the neighbor. Used a little of the alcohol to mix with gasoline. Viola! We had gasohol.

Another experiment we did was try to produce hydrogen power. Three of us syphoned off hydrogen from a battery that had water in it. H_2O = Water. We caught it in a rubber container that had a fuse attached. We put the rubber container 50 feet away from anything. Lit the 10-foot fuse and ran as far away as we could. That was the loudest BANG I have ever heard in my life.

So, Jimmy, you enhanced my life.
We offer our prayers for a peaceful rest of your life.



The Lancaster County Democrats Condemn White Nationalism

Resolution Submitted by Rachele Walter
Adopted by the Lancaster County Democratic Party
Central Committee March 21, 2023

WHEREAS, White Nationalism and white nationalist hate crimes have been on the rise over recent years and recent Department Of Homeland, Security threat assessment have found violence by white supremacy extremists to be most persistent threat in the United States; and

WHEREAS, one of many heinous elements of White Nationalism is its perversion of religion to make their hateful message seem more palatable; and

WHEREAS, white religious nationalist ideology is advanced by a vocal yet powerful minority, and does not represent the values of the majority of Americans, either of faith or of no faith in the United States, or within the Democratic Party; and

WHEREAS, Christian clergy and evangelical leaders across the nation have signed onto an open letter, noting the "perversion of the Christian faith" and "radicalism" that plagues people who "support the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi ideology" or groups included in those that attacked the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, like "the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, QAnon, 3 Percenters, American Firsters, and similar groups"; and

WHEREAS, theocracy is incompatible with democracy and religious freedom in a pluralistic society; and

WHEREAS, the United States Constitution was the first governing document to establish a secular democracy, with separation of religion and government; and

WHEREAS, white religious nationalism has used the cloak of patriotism to foment and inflame hate by provoking cover for racism, antisemitism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, and Islamophobia; and

WHEREAS, Republican leaders have succeeded in their decades-long efforts to overturn Roe v. Wade, distorting a legal definition of a "religious liberty" to include discrimination, denial of public accommodations, denial of healthcare, and bodily autonomy; and

WHEREAS, Republicans have succeeded in conflating the meaning of "religious liberties" to mean defunding public schools and the social safety net, restricting cultural and historical teachings all while gaining unfettered access to taxpayer dollars that their institutions can use to proselytize and discriminate; and

WHEREAS, Nebraska has the dubious distinction of having the largest number of hate groups in the country; as well as having an organization out of Omaha, Nebraska that has trained the likes of the Bolsonaro family;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Lancaster County Democratic Party recommits to condemning White Nationalism, including white religious nationalism, in all forms, and considers it an eminent threat to Democracy and to commit to educating voters and its own members about white nationalism, and the rising threat of white religious nationalism and reiterates the call to protect the rights of each and every Nebraskan, and never amplify or legitimize the voices of racism, misogyny, antisemitism, anti-Muslim bigotry, homophobia, transphobia, atheophobia, or white supremacy, and protects the right of each Nebraskan for the free exercise of those of faith and of no faith, and to maintain the separation of church and state enshrined in our constitution.



Robert F. Kennedy's Remarkable Campaign Stop in Lincoln

By Dennis Crawford



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. 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. Most of his aides advised him to stay out of Nebraska. However, Nebraska native Ted Sorenson advised Kennedy to run in Nebraska and believed that he would run well there since Ted's brother Phil Sorenson was available to manage the campaign. Phil Sorenson already had an

established political organization in Nebraska because he had served there as lieutenant governor between 1965 to 1967 and had been the Democratic nominee for governor in 1966.

Kennedy made it clear early on that he planned to campaign in Nebraska. After delivering a speech at Kansas State University on March 18, Kennedy said that he planned to make appearances in Nebraska. "I will be there," he told an *Omaha World Herald* reporter covering the Kansas State speech. "I'm just not sure when." The New York Senator couldn't be certain because he had no staff, no organization, and no fundraising operation in place at the time.

Before he campaigned in Nebraska, Kennedy launched a national campaign and barnstormed through sixteen states, directly addressed close to a quarter of a million people and was seen by several hundred thousand more. Everywhere he went, Kennedy was mobbed by the crowds and received a tumultuous reception.

Robert Kennedy was the first candidate who campaigned in person in Nebraska. On March 26, the Kennedy campaign announced that the New York Senator would hold a rally at the Coliseum at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus on March 28. At the same time, the Kennedy campaign began organizing. Kennedy's Nebraska campaign team was announced on March 26 and was headed up by Phil Sorenson.

Kennedy's appearance in Lincoln exceeded all expectations. Kennedy was greeted at the Lincoln airport by seven hundred boisterous supporters. He briefly addressed the crowd and asked them for their help in bringing about new leadership. When Kennedy plunged into the crowd to shake hands, several people narrowly escaped getting hurt. An *Omaha World Herald* photographer helped a young mother protect her baby from the onrushing crowd.

Fifteen thousand people greeted Kennedy at the University of Nebraska campus, both inside and outside of the Coliseum. An estimated eleven thousand people packed into the building, where there was standing room only. When Kennedy arrived, the crowd roared, and one reporter compared Kennedy's reception by the crowd to the reception enjoyed by the Beatles. It was the biggest turnout for a political rally in Lincoln since 1952 when candidate Dwight Eisenhower was greeted by thirty thousand voters.

Kennedy's speech at the rally was well received and would largely reflect his message throughout the Nebraska campaign. Kennedy opened up his remarks by addressing the Vietnam War. Per usual, the New York Senator opposed both the widening of the war and a precipitous withdrawal of United States troops. He

simultaneously supported negotiations and a compromise peace with the National Liberation Front or the Viet Cong.

His proposal for negotiations with the Viet Cong was met by a smattering of boos, to which Kennedy responded as follows: "A lot of people say the front is communistic and should play no role in Vietnam. But unless we kill every one of them, women, and children as well, we will have to deal with them."

Kennedy then transitioned to domestic policy and the economy by questioning the accuracy of GNP (gross national product) in measuring the actual value of our economy. This led to the most memorable line from Kennedy's speech:

"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."

Another staple of Kennedy's college campuses talks were comments directed at the students and their responsibility to use their degrees to better society and not just themselves. At the University of Nebraska rally he told them, "You are the most exclusive minority in the world. You have a college education. Will you use it to gain economic advantage over your neighbor or to make a meaningful contribution?"

He then turned to discuss agriculture, beginning by bemoaning that commodity prices were lower, and farmers' overhead was higher in 1968 than it was in 1947. Kennedy then placed the agriculture economy into its larger national context: "Agriculture is the root

of our economic strength, with twice the workers and four times the assets of any other industry. If you in Nebraska cannot get a fair return on your labor, if you must pay exorbitant interest rates for your credit, then it must follow that men in Michigan will not sell their tractors and trucks; men in New York will not sell their clothing and books, and those losses will reverberate across the land."

Kennedy concluded the event by opening up the floor for questions and answers. Kennedy thrived in this format and usually asked the first few questions himself to explain his views and prompt the audience. He usually did this by asking for a show of hands from the voters on the most salient issues of the day.

Perhaps the most interesting question came from Nebraska starting fullback Dick Davis, an African American. (In Nebraska, football is virtually a religion.) Davis was a standout athlete and an Academic All-American. Davis asked Kennedy if he considered the United States to be a racist society. "No," Kennedy responded. "But we have dealt with the Black and other minorities unjustly. The solution is to provide jobs, working through the private sector, with tax incentives." Davis told a reporter at the event that he wasn't satisfied with Kennedy's answer because he wasn't specific enough.

Kennedy's team was thrilled by the huge crowd and the positive reception. "We really wowed 'em. That was the spark we really need to get this thing rolling," said Hans O. Jensen, Kennedy's state campaign co-chairman. That groundswell of enthusiasm for Kennedy resulted in the return of twelve thousand volunteer pledge cards.

The Nebraska press was equally impressed by Kennedy's campaign rollout. Veteran Lincoln reporter Don Walton wrote: "The Kennedy campaign soared in Nebraska last week beyond all expectations within the senator's campaign organization. There were real apprehensions among staff members as to whether Kennedy could fill the Coliseum. Well, fill it he did . . . Perhaps more surprising than the mere surprise of the crowd was its enthusiasm."

Kennedy had begun his Nebraska campaign with a bang but there were no guarantees he would prevail on May 14. The Nebraska Press still regarded Lyndon Johnson as the favorite and McCarthy had already launched a serious campaign to contest Nebraska's delegates to the Democratic convention in Chicago. The Minnesota senator began organizing in Nebraska as early as February and announced plans to knock on every Democratic door. The hotly contested Nebraska campaign was just getting started.

Progressive agriculture groups rally for land access, climate-smart policies in farm bill

By Adam Goldstein

Reprinted with permission from the March 10, 2023

Nebraska Examiner, <https://nebraskaexaminer.com>

Farmers and leaders from more than 20 progressive agricultural groups gathered this week to march on the U.S. Capitol and promote climate solutions and underserved producers as priority issues for lawmakers in the upcoming farm bill.

"As farmers, we are close to the land. We love the land. We understand the sanctity and the sacredness of water. We understand the essence of life," said Duane "Chili" Yazzie, a regenerative farmer in New Mexico and member of Shiprock Chapter of the Navajo Nation, to dozens of demonstrators at Freedom Plaza Tuesday.

"We demand that we — as small farmers, as the BIPOC farmers, as the farmers that need a helping hand — must have the provisions in the farm bill that make sense to us."

During the three-day ["Rally for Resilience,"](#) headed by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, attendees met with lawmakers and hosted a demonstration at Freedom Plaza. Organizers called for sustainable practices, decreased industry consolidation, and improved land access for people of color and family farmers.

The farm bill is a multiyear omnibus spending law which authorizes an array of agricultural and food programs, including federal crop insurance, food stamp benefits, international food aid and farm resource conservation.

The roughly \$500 billion bill is renewed close to every five years, and includes mandatory spending that must be in line with previous farm bills. The legislation is up for renewal in 2023.

Sustainable agriculture and climate change

Speakers at the Rally for Resilience lobbied for legislators to embrace regenerative agriculture in the upcoming farm bill, and help farmers become part of the climate solution amid worsening growing conditions.

Regenerative agriculture is a set of farming and grazing practices that work to restore soil ecosystem health and can sequester carbon dioxide while increasing resilience to climate change.

"It makes me angry, and it makes me frustrated to see people in positions of power deny the reality and the severity of climate change," said Marielena Vega, a farm worker organizer with the Idaho

Organization of Resource Councils, at the Tuesday demonstration.

Vega said that extreme heat is making summers increasingly difficult for farmworkers in Idaho, who face rising threats of heat stroke and dehydration along with the ever-present concern of pesticide exposure.

Norysell Massanet, a farmer from Puerto Rico, spoke Tuesday about the devastation of the island's agricultural community after [two major hurricanes in 2017](#). She said that Puerto Rico's basic infrastructure is still recovering, and these hurricane events will only become more frequent as the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean warm.

"We need climate solutions that consider the well being of all lands, and all people," Massanet said.

She urged Congress to provide a farm bill that "follows the science" and places renewable agriculture and rural development at its forefront.

David Senter, a founder of the American Agriculture Movement, [which mobilized a 1979 Tractorcade in Washington](#) for industry reform, lobbied for regenerative and small-scale family farmers as part of the climate solution.

"Family producers care about the soil and water," Senter said at the Tuesday rally. "Corporations care about the bottom line."

Yadi Wang, a first-generation regenerative farmer in Tucson, Arizona, said that he is part of a growing number of farmers who believe land stewardship is more important than land ownership.

Wang said regenerative practices have allowed his employer, Oatman Flats Ranch, to maintain a resilient and profitable grain-and-livestock operation in [one of the driest climates in the country](#).

"Congress needs to invest more money on land management, on soil and water conservation so that we can truly have viable land and farmers can continue to grow food for the people," Wang said at the Tuesday rally. "Regenerative agriculture is the way forward."

Antitrust and consolidation

Democratic U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna of California joined rally organizers for a Wednesday media event and said farmers' ability to be a part of the climate solution has been muted by corporate consolidation of farmland and "monopolistic concentration of power." He touted his just-introduced [Farm System Reform Act](#) as a potential tool to curtail some of these business models.

"A lot of the people who are running a lot of these farms don't live in the communities where those farms are," Khanna said. They don't care about the

pollution. They don't care if they're destroying the land but maximizing profits."

Johanna Chao Kreilick, president of the Union of Concerned Scientists, said at the Wednesday press event that farmers live and work on the front lines of the climate emergency.

She added that corporate farms, and the resource-intensive inputs they depend on, are a key driver of this increased volatility in farming.

"We need to be super clear about the role that corporate agriculture, Big Ag, has played in our agricultural system and how it's contributing to the climate crisis," Chao Kreilick said.

Angela Dawson, a fourth-generation reclamation Black farmer from Sandstone, Minnesota, said at the Tuesday rally that people are aware that over the last 50 years, the farm bill has set the stage for a highly consolidated food system. Dawson defines reclamation farming as reclaiming and working the farm her family lost two generations ago.

She added that [five major egg corporations](#) control the grocery sector, [four large companies](#) control the beef industry, and [two companies](#) control the bulk of the commodity seed market.

"We're calling on Congress to create a farm bill that puts community over corporations, people over profits, and reduces and repairs the harm that has been done to the environment," Dawson said.

Lindsay Klaunig, who runs a regenerative produce-and-livestock farm near Athens, Ohio, spoke at the Wednesday event and added that more work must be done to reduce consolidation in seed sales, especially as overseas supply chains experience disruption and regenerative regional agriculture grows.

"We need publicly supported, farmer-driven breeding and research to ensure that all growers at any scale, in any setting, have access to locally adapted seeds without the restrictions of privately-owned companies," Klaunig said.

Land access, support for underserved producers

Other speakers pointed to the opportunity for the farm bill to rectify historical injustices, including land access for farmers who are people of color, and increased health protections for farmworkers.

Dorathy Barker, a Black dairy farmer from Oxford, North Carolina, spoke at the Wednesday press event to advocate for land access and increased technical assistance for farmers of color.

Barker said she does not believe there has been a farm bill "written with Black people in mind," amid a "bleak climate" for these producers. She said Black farmers are often manipulated by predatory buyers and legal advisers into lowering prices for their goods and problematic land sales.

"We as Black women, we speak up for our rights," Parker said. "But over years and years — in some states for over 400 years — we have been traumatized and marginalized. Always the lack of markets."

Julietta Saucedo, a small-scale farmer from El Paso, Texas, spoke at the Tuesday rally about a lack of land access for marginalized farmers. She said that oftentimes, these underserved producers only have land that has been ruined by decades of mismanagement and extractive farming.

"When I see soil erosion by wind and water, when I see depleted soil, depleted lands from monocropping, soil so compacted that it will break your shovel, I also see it as the consequences of old and modern slavery," Saucedo said.

She advocated for increased access to farmland for small producers and people of color, along with holding corporations accountable for the damage done to the land.

Klaunig said that a theme she heard repeatedly during the event resonated: farmer-led solutions should come first.

"Too often farmers are handed directives from — maybe well intentioned — institutions, but they're out of touch," she said. "Farmers know how to find cheap, effective and adaptable solutions to our climate crisis, let them and help them."



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