

## Stonewall Caucus

In the early hours of June 28th, 1969, the LGBTQIA+ community was harassed by the NYPD at the Stonewall Inn for merely existing. The outrage that followed was led largely by two transgender women of color: Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera.

By refusing to back down in the face of suffocating pressure in and outside of the community, Johnson and Rivera carved their place in history and ensured the gay rights movement included everybody, not just white cisgender gays.

I came of age in the 2000s, and for as long as I can remember, members of the LGBTQIA+ community have a word for each other - Family. Protecting the family was the core of Marsha and Sylvia's message. All of us or none of us.

As we celebrate this pride month, we remember the sacrifices of those who came before us, reflect on our own places in history, and face the coming battles as Marsha and Sylvia envisioned: together.

### Michael Everett Marcheck

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Pronouns: he/him/his

## A Tale of Two States.

### By John Markey

Nothing illustrates the difference between the two major parties regarding labor rights and support for unions than recent events in two states.

Not long ago, Florida was a swing state twice won by President Obama. Today, it is a deep red state whose Republican governor won by 20 points, while Republicans hold supermajorities in both Houses of the state legislature.

Along with other terrible legislation, Florida Republicans just passed laws intended to dismantle public unions. It will forbid public employees from having union dues withheld from their paychecks even though they authorize these withholdings. This is a blatant effort to make it harder for unions to

collect the dues they need to bargain collectively and protect their members' rights.

In addition, if a public union falls below 60% membership, it must recertify by holding a new authorization vote, or be dissolved. Republicans claim this is good for workers. Seeing that they exempted police and firefighters from this legislation, either they don't like the police and firefighters, or they aren't being honest about who they are trying to hurt.

The truth is that they want to get rid of public unions, or at least weaken them.

On the other hand, Michigan was heavily gerrymandered in favor of Republicans with a Republican governor. It was this Republican led regime that passed a "right to work" law in 2012 and repealed the state's prevailing wage law in 2018.

After passage of a citizen ballot initiative that took redistricting out of the hands of the legislature and put it in the hands of an independent commission, Michigan was given fair legislative districts. In the 2022 election, Democrats took both houses of the legislature and retained the Democratic governor. This new Democratic led government repealed the "right to work" law and reinstated the prevailing wage law.

"Right to work" is deceptively named legislation. Union contracts often contain a security clause. These clauses require that all workers covered by the contract become members of the union or pay fees to cover the costs of the union. "Right to work" prohibits these clauses and allows employees to reap the benefits of union membership while passing their share of the costs onto their fellow employees. Its only purpose is to weaken unions and consolidate power in the hands of employers. Security clauses are not automatic, they must be negotiated. Unions often concede something to employers to get a security clause written into the contract, it is that important.

Prevailing wage laws require that large public works projects be bid with wages that prevail in the area where the work takes place. Their purpose is to prevent out of area contractors from winning the bid by bringing in cheaper labor from other areas.

Union membership doesn't cost, it pays!

## VIGINTILLION

**By Gerry Finnegan**

Never heard of that word? Me neither until I looked it up. More about that in a moment.

It has been suggested that the Democratic Party apparatus take steps to deny party resources at election time to Democratic incumbents who act in opposition to the Party's position on but a single issue. Bad idea. There is value in the power we exercise as a coalition of different interests, but that power must be wielded as a scalpel, not a cudgel.

To how many single-issue causes might we apply this rationale? If we use the State Party Platform as a surrogate for the party's position, how many are there? By my last count the 36-page Nebraska Democratic Party Platform took positions on 268 issues.

It should not be surprising that, with an electorate as diverse as ours, elected officials (even party officers) might disagree with several. Indeed, it would be surprising to find any Democrat fully on-board with all 268. In fact, it would be exceedingly unlikely to find any two Democrats completely in agreement with each other on which planks they support or oppose.

How unlikely? Even setting aside nuanced policy differences and simply looking at agree/disagree permutations, there are about thirty-eight thousand quadrillion vigintillion (there's that word) different ways to agree/disagree with those 268 positions. That is 38 followed by 81 zeros, twenty-seven commas. That number is greater than all the sub-atomic particles in all the matter in all the star systems in all the galaxies in the known universe. It is a lot. Such is the nature of political diversity.

Even if we just consider the half that are mostly in agreement it is 19,000 quadrillion vigintillion, still 81 zeros, 27 commas. Now, it might be argued that a single one arouses emotions so intense that it is special, that it becomes a stand-alone litmus test. Of course, many would argue that their particular issue had that special standing. So, how many do we do that for and which ones?

It is understood that some people became Democrats based on a single burning over-riding issue. For them it is an on/off switch, no compromise, scorched earth — think guns, climate, death penalty, abortion, reparations, LGBTQIA+, defense spending, voter suppression, police reform, support of Israel, etc. Zeal is a powerful energy source, and it has its place in electoral politics. But for our purposes, harnessing that zealotry into productive outcomes should be the objective.

Do you seriously think that a grieving parent from Sandy Hook or Uvalde is less passionate about gun violence than others might be about gender affirming care or abortion rights? Is a MeToo survivor less passionate than the climatologist confirming the existential threat of global warming? Or the daughter of a wrongly convicted father on death row?

The chore of crafting a persuasive argument is slow hard work. Is it really the place of party activists, as a shortcut, to browbeat our own elected officials who have actually won at the polls?

The Republican Party seems to think that is the way to go, but we can't just become the mirror-image of that ideological purity. They devour their young at the slightest hint of independent thought. That is not principled leadership, rather it is the result of allowing ideologues to call the shots. Diversity of thought is messy, but it is essential to the survival of the Democratic Party and America's grand experiment.

## A Win for Lincoln

**By Doug Emery**

Congratulations to all of the recently elected office holders locally. It is a huge undertaking to put yourself out there given today's environment and public scrutiny. It took great effort and I appreciate that Democrat candidates stuck to telling voters what their plan was and did not resort to negative campaigning. Hopefully this will reinforce the fact that negative campaigning and simply throwing money at the campaign is not a successful strategy.

Now it is on to the business of making Lincoln a better place for all of us to reside in. We need to be cognizant of the fact that the mill levy needs to be reduced to lessen the impact of huge rises in valuations. We have a need for a secondary water supply and continued work on our relationships with our safety workers. We need to keep fighting to allow Lincoln to control its own management without interruption from misguided state officials. Lincoln voters have spoken and now we must deliver.

## Some Nebraska farmers are protecting drinking water while boosting profit. Here's how.

By [Yanqi Xu](#)

Reprinted with permission from *Flatwater Free Press*, May 2023

Kerry Knuth steers his sprayer across a field, occasionally craning his neck to watch his newest piece of equipment shoot fertilizer at the base of his growing corn.

He purchased this equipment, called a 360 Y-Drop, and attached it to the boom of his sprayer so the corn can absorb nitrogen fertilizer more efficiently – more nitrogen directly to the corn's roots, less lost to the surrounding environment.

The Y-Drop can save him money on fertilizer costs. And, by using less nitrogen fertilizer, he also may be reducing the risk that nitrate enters the groundwater, which supplies drinking water to 85% of Nebraskans. Nitrate, research shows, is linked to a variety of diseases, including pediatric cancer and birth defects.

"We don't relish the fact of polluting groundwater, whether it's nitrates or chemicals," said Angela Knuth, who farms with husband Kerry on family land near Mead.

The state's nitrate-in-groundwater problem is growing worse, especially in parts of northeast, central and southeast Nebraska. The state median nitrate level doubled between 1978 and 2019.

But some Nebraska farmers and researchers are fighting back with technology. They are embracing new methods that can reduce nitrate leaching into groundwater, improve their soil's health and also, they say, boost the bottom line.

Some farmers interviewed by the Flatwater Free Press have completely switched over to "regenerative agriculture," a farming approach focusing on restoration of the environment, which advocates say also ultimately boosts farm productivity.

Others are marrying traditional farming with precision technologies like soil testing and remote sensing, or using more efficient equipment like the Knuths do.

Kerry Knuth can now put on fertilizer at ideal times, instead of having to time fertilizer application with center-pivot irrigation when the crops need water. Nitrate is tied to water usage, as more heavy irrigation tends to wash the nitrogen chemicals down into the soil, where they can eventually convert into nitrate and reach our water table, experts say.

The Knuths say they came to new farming technologies because they thought it was the right thing to do – and because it's what they want to teach their children. More than two decades ago, they used anhydrous ammonia, a cheaper but also more volatile form of nitrogen fertilizer that's more easily lost to groundwater. Kerry Knuth then switched to a liquid fertilizer.

In 2018, he bought the Y-Drop system and started split applying — supplying nitrogen to corn in multiple applications throughout the growing season rather than one full application. Since then, the family uses 15% less nitrogen fertilizer.

As the Knuths' equipment evolved, the science that helps farmers like them make decisions was also evolving.

A formula developed by University of Nebraska-Lincoln agronomists has helped producers determine how much fertilizer they should use for decades. It now suggests that farmers use an average of about 1 pound of nitrogen per bushel of corn.

Some UNL researchers are working on optimizing the formula through field trials. And interestingly, their research shows that using way less nitrogen than the current UNL recommendation – as much as 40 fewer pounds per acre – didn't detract from profits in any significant way, said UNL agronomy professor Javed Iqbal.

The question he's trying to answer: How can we calculate nitrogen usage based on profit, and also environmental cost?

Even though the trial fields produced less corn yield with reduced fertilizer input, the yield still hit the maximum economic profitability range, with savings from fertilizer costs, Iqbal said.

Some farmers have sought natural solutions to cleaning up nitrate biologically. These farmers are leaning into regenerative agriculture and focusing on soil health.

Del Ficke was both figuratively and then quite literally breaking his back farming the traditional way on his family's homesteaded land near Lincoln about 25 years ago. It increasingly felt wrong to the then-young farmer.

"This isn't working, I'm spending a ton of money and I'm getting less and less. My soil's getting worse," Ficke said.

He uses 100% natural ingredients to boost soil nutrients: cattle manure and hydrolyzed fish.

Ficke now also runs a group called Graze Master, focusing on grass-fed beef and providing consulting and other services to farmers.

Others might call him a beef producer. He calls himself a grass farmer.

"A grass farmer title is pretty cool ... we're looking at the forages first in sync with nature and we built a program around it," he said.

Reducing inputs like fertilizer sits at the heart of regenerative agriculture, said Keith Berns, founder of Green Cover Seed – and reducing inputs can make you more profitable.

Farming regeneratively often requires more management, but it can be done at any scale, Berns said.

He helps farmers across Nebraska to find the right cover crops and then helps them time the growth of these crops. Cover crops are one way that many Nebraskan farmers use to manage the amount of nitrogen in their soil.

Cereal rye, for example, is the most widely used cover crop that can "scavenge any leftover nitrogen," Berns said, pulling nitrate out of the soil and reducing the risks of leaching.

When the cover crops die and break down, their nutrients become available to the new crops after being cycled by soil microbes, Berns said.

Regenerative farming needs to be coupled with better testing that more accurately accounts for nutrient availability within biologically active soils, Berns noted.

One example: Farmers can apply less nitrogen when the new crop can utilize nitrogen released by soil microbes from crop residues and organic matter. Traditional soil testing doesn't accurately measure this. But a new test, called the Haney Test, does.

Ward Laboratories, a soil and water testing lab in Kearney, became the first commercial lab in Nebraska to adopt the Haney in 2013.

Haney tests take longer to conduct, said Ray Ward, founder of Ward Labs. But they also are worth it, he believes, because they often help a farmer save money while applying less nitrogen.

"It normally gives us ... between 20 and 40 pounds of extra nitrogen that our nitrate test has not measured. That's a way to ... get at that better nitrogen recommendation or evaluation," he said.

Another way to precision farm is to know when the crop needs nitrogen. Some farmers might tell you they've mastered the science from a lifetime of studying the weather and corn growth. But farmers have another weapon: Remote sensing.

Meet Jackson Stansell, a UNL graduate student who started the company Sentinel Fertigation.

From his computer, he can advise producers how much nitrogen to use and when. The software he wrote pulls in satellite imagery and determines how much nitrogen is already in the crop based on its

reflectance — how green the leaves are. Then the software calculates and spits out recommendations on whether to apply more nitrogen now, or not.

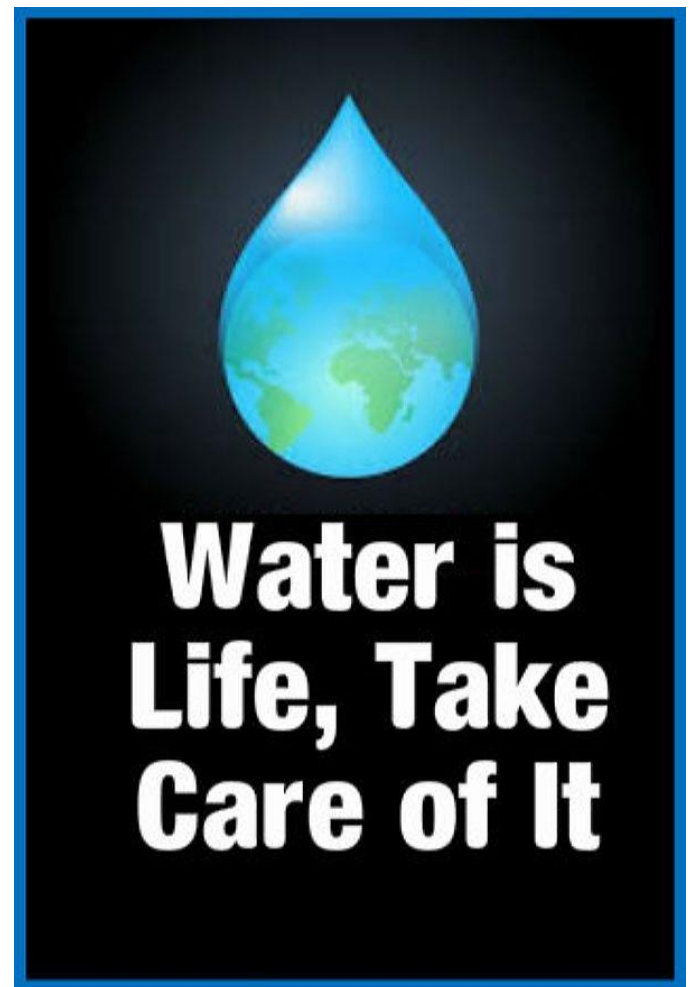
UNL was at the forefront of developing remote sensing technologies for nitrogen management more than three decades ago.

Stansell's software makes these recommendations in real time. It offers serious precision, by varying fertilizer application rates in different spots in the cornfield.

He is currently helping Nebraska and Kansas farmers manage nitrogen on roughly 19,000 acres of land.

On average, his clients used 42 fewer pounds of nitrogen fertilizer per acre last year, Stansell said. Some produced 280-bushel corn with 120 pounds of nitrogen fertilizer, he said. That's less than half of the UNL recommended amount.

"When we're able to execute the method, we've seen that farmers have been able to maintain high yields while reducing nitrogen," he said.





## Opinion

I got a nice surprise this week. My modest teacher's pension with which I supplement my Social Security check jumped up in dollar value a full 10% over just the past couple of weeks. I lost more than I can afford, frankly, in the downturn which has marked the early 2020s, so a significant upturn now feels like very good news indeed.

Thankfully, under President Biden's leadership, the economy has added more than 12 million jobs—more jobs in two years than any president has created in a four-year term—including 800,000 manufacturing jobs. The unemployment rate has fallen to 3.4 percent, the lowest in 54 years.

The Biden plan is rebuilding America's infrastructure, making the economy more competitive, investing in American innovation and industries that will define the future, and fueling a manufacturing boom that is strengthening parts of the country that have long been left behind while creating good jobs for workers, including those without college degrees.

The Trump Administration passed a nearly \$2 trillion unpaid-for tax cut with benefits skewed to the wealthy and big corporations while dramatically increasing the deficit. President Biden cut the deficit by more than \$1.7 trillion during his first two years in office—the largest decline in American history. And the reforms Biden signed into law to take on Big Pharma, lower prescription drug costs, and make the wealthy and large corporations pay their fair share will reduce the deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars more over the coming decade.

And now come the mad bombers of today's GOP, threatening any movement towards widespread prosperity. The Crazies on FOX will, it is clear, throw any moral principle or successful policy overboard in order to block and undermine Democrats' achievements—no matter how popular and productive of the common good.

If the Lowest Common Denominators of the Republican Party succeed in derailing Biden's current economic progress with their debt ceiling shenanigans, it is important to understand who is to blame—Kevin McCarthy, Mitch McConnell and all the bottom feeders they represent.

Sally Herrin, Lincoln  
Retired teacher

## Good News — We Are Winning By Dennis Crawford



This is the second poll in as many days that show President Biden beating Trump by sizable margins, a story the mainstream media doesn't want to tell.

We're winning. That's right. Two new polls indicate that President Biden has opened up a big lead over Donald Trump.

The first one is a Reuters poll that indicates that Biden has gained a lot of ground and has passed Trump after he was hit with a \$5 million verdict for sexual assault and conducted his disastrous townhall meeting on CNN. The GOP and the "liberal" mainstream media like to claim that nothing sticks to Trump. These two polls were taken after this run of bad news for Trump.

On to the new polls.

February

- Trump (R) 42% (+3) • Biden (D) 39%

May

- Biden (D) 44% (+6) • Trump (R) 38%

Net 9-point swing towards Biden and Biden's biggest lead yet over Trump.

- May 16 Reuters/Ipsos poll | RVs

And that's not the only good news. Republican polling firm WPA Intelligence put out a new poll on May 18 that indicated that President Joe Biden would beat Donald Trump by 7 points nationally. The poll also showed independent voters back Biden by a wide 14 percentage points, up from the nine percentage points by which he won independents in the 2020 election. This is the second poll in as many days that show President Biden beating Trump by sizable margins, a story the mainstream media has ignored.

Republicans will scoff that these polls mean nothing since the polls predicted that Clinton would win in 2016. This recent polling data rings true since it has been backed up by actual election results around the country. The GOP is on a bad losing streak.

From the *Washington Post* on May 17: “Republicans haven’t really had a good election day since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* 11 months ago, and that continued Tuesday night (May 16.)

The big news out of Tuesday’s (May 16) slate of non-primary elections is that Republicans lost mayoral seats they have long dominated in two larger cities: Jacksonville, Fla.; and Colorado Springs. But Democrats also got some relatively good signs elsewhere in special elections. Together, this fills out a picture of a 2023 election cycle in which they continue to overperform, as they began to do almost immediately post-Roe.

Tuesday’s elections also featured results in a series of state legislative races that largely mirrored the results of what was a good 2020 election for Democrats.

Elsewhere, Democrats continued to overperform the 2020 results.

All told, according to the *Daily Kos Elections* numbers, Democrats have overperformed the 2020 presidential results by an average of six points across 18 state legislative races this year. (And again, that was a *good* election for them.) They’ve also beaten their 2016 margins by an average of 10 points.

For now, the limited 2023 evidence suggests Republicans haven’t done much to right their ship.”

And that’s not all. In the Wisconsin Supreme Court election last month, the Democratic candidate defeated the GOP candidate by 11 points in a race defined by abortion rights. In contrast, Biden carried Wisconsin by a mere one point in 2020.

Closer to home, Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird over performed in Lincoln on May 2, 2023. Leirion blew out former State Senator Suzanne Geist by a 55% to 45% margin. This was after Geist and her allies spent over \$2 million on dishonest, negative ads.

In contrast, Leirion beat an underfunded Cindy Lamm 54% to 45% in 2019. The fact Leirion did better this year in the face of all those negative ads is truly impressive.


At the same time, the Democrats easily maintained their 6–1 super majority on the City Council. It was a blue wave in Lincoln, Nebraska.

“The simplest explanation for what we are seeing is that those conditions that helped drive 2022 — abortion extremism, ongoing GOP-encouraged gun violence, extremist MAGA candidates prevailing in the

GOP primary (Trump, DeSantis) — are very much still with us in 2023. What is also still with us is a Democratic party, ably led by Joe Biden, continuing to make things better for the American people, and a fired-up Democratic grassroots which continues to, through their donations and hard work —calls, texts, postcards, canvassing—push our electoral performances to the upper end of what is possible (thanks everyone!!!!!!).” - Simon Rosenberg

The biggest obstacle to a Democratic victory in 2024 has now been removed. President Biden’s budget agreement with the House Republicans has staved off a government shutdown and a debt default. The only hope the GOP had for victory next year was a recession. This agreement most likely ensures there will be no recession next year. President Biden and the Democrats will run on preserving a strong economy. In addition, Biden maintained his most important first term accomplishments.

We have every reason to be confident about 2024. It’s America or the MAGA Republicans. The choice is clear. Now let’s get it done!



Celebrate all wins.  
All progress  
comes from little  
tiny wins that  
gather  
momentum.



It is not our differences that  
divide us. It is our inability  
to recognize, accept, and  
celebrate those differences.

## When Senator Robert Kennedy Confronted A Gun Rights Activist

By Dennis Crawford



Robert Kennedy at Portland State University in May 1968.

After his big win in Nebraska, Robert Kennedy's campaign moved on to Oregon for a May 28 primary. The Beaver State was fallow ground for the New York Senator since the electorate largely consisted of middle class and upper middle class white voters. That demographic favored Senator Eugene McCarthy. In the previous primaries in Indiana and Nebraska, Kennedy had done well with blue collar workers, farmers, and African American voters. Oregon was going to be an uphill climb for Kennedy.

On the day before the primary, Kennedy campaigned in southern Oregon, where hunting was very popular. Kennedy's aides advised him that gun rights was the most important issue in that part of the state and that many of the voters did not agree with his strong stand on gun safety.

A gun control act had been introduced in Congress in response to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963. The bill banned the mail order sales of rifles and shotguns, and banned most felons, drug users and people found mentally incompetent from purchasing firearms. The legislation had been held up by conservatives for four years.

When Kennedy and his retinue arrived in Roseburg, they saw numerous signs that said, "Protect Your Right to Keep and Bear Arms." At his campaign events, Kennedy would frequently ask the members of the audience questions in an effort to push out his own message. He also liked to invite people who disagreed with him to ask him questions.

Kennedy asked the crowd if anyone would like to explain why they opposed the pending gun control act. A man who owned a small, local business

and who was a prominent gun rights activist approached Kennedy.

"Is there anything in this bill which says you can't have firearms?" Kennedy asked him. The man answered no but then added, "We think it's a backdoor bill for registration of guns and it will let the Secretary of the Treasury keep a registry of all firearms sales."

Kennedy took back the microphone and in an emotional and even angry response said, "If we're going to talk about this legislation, can't we do it honestly and not say it does something that it doesn't do? All this legislation does is keep guns from criminals and the mentally ill and those too young. With all the violence and murder and killings in the United States I think you will agree that we must keep firearms from those who have no business with guns or rifles."

The crowd did not agree with Kennedy's response. One man booed and yelled, "They'll get them anyway." Someone else shouted, "Nazi Germany started with the registration of guns."

"Well, I don't think the registration of cars and the registration of drug prescriptions destroyed democracy. And I don't think the registration of guns will either," Kennedy retorted.

The candidate left the event shaking his head. The cool reception he received in Roseburg was the harbinger of his defeat the next day. He lost the Oregon primary to Eugene McCarthy by a margin of 44 to 38 percent on May 28, 1968. It was the first loss for any of the Kennedy brothers after twenty-seven consecutive electoral victories.

Robert Kennedy rebounded from that loss to defeat 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. He was well on his way to winning the Democratic nomination and the presidency.

The Gun Control Act of 1968 only gained momentum in Congress after the tragic assassination of Robert Kennedy. President Lyndon Johnson signed it into law on October 22, 1968. Nobody was required to register their guns and nobody's guns were ever confiscated.

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