



### Renewing an Old Strategy

**Vic Covalt**  
State Chair

The Secretary of State's records show there were 1,157,000 registered voters in Nebraska for the 2008 election.

There were 195,000 registered nonpartisans, 393,000 registered Democrats and 588,000 lost souls registered as Republicans. There are 167,000 more registered Republicans than registered Democrats. Even if all the Independent voters voted Democratic, we would still be about 50/50 with the Republicans.

There is a basic need to correct this imbalance. We cannot simply talk to Democrats or meet with Democrats or urge Democrats to get out and vote. The Democratic Party can become dominant in Nebraska only by registering new voters and converting the misguided. We must become better organized.

We must organize down to the grassroots level. We must build layers of organization across the state. The "93 county strategy" sounded good and remains a good goal; however, there are only 80 counties which have chairs listed on the Democratic roster. Several counties have no more than a chair, or a few volunteers or a small group of people as the "county party." We must help link these small groups together and help them reach out to develop a true party structure.

The State Central Committee is already organized into 49 Legislative Districts. This gives a natural base to build intermediate organizations. In the three large counties, the county party can be the intermediate organization to help coordinate the LD Teams. Our SCC members in these larger counties should work closely with each other and the county party with a goal of precinct and neighborhood organization.

Other Legislative Districts include several counties, some of them without county parties, or even a county chair. In these LDs, our SCC members can be the leaders who help build the county organizations which will reach into villages, small towns, and rural neighborhoods to find volunteers and candidates.

Only by layers of organization can we penetrate into all the neighborhoods and precincts. The goal is to elect candidates who support our democratic principles to serve in local, legislative, statewide and federal offices in Nebraska.

*The State Central Committee is and should be a working body coordinating these activities. Each SCC member should be the core of an LD Team which helps recruit and encourage candidates, county parties, and local volunteers. These LD Teams should focus on improving county and community organizations on a geographic basis and within demographic groups.*

A rural fire department model should be used for our lowest levels of "grassroots" organization: a network of people trained and ready to answer the call for good candidates and on all issues of importance. Our LD teams and County Parties should focus on creating contact and communication with local people everywhere.

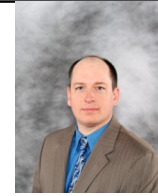
We must provide people with a product of value to them. We need to offer information, training, and access to elected officials. We must provide a method of communicating on issues of importance and a way to both receive and disseminate information.

We need to create and maintain lists of persons who are willing to help us. We need to provide volunteer and candidate training across the state. We need to help people understand the issues. We need to help good candidates connect with these people for a dialog which will create better government.

Finally, we must use everyone's time wisely. We must make sure our activities as a party and as a social network are entertaining, informative, and satisfying.

This party really should be, ultimately, a network of good people who will introduce our candidates to their friends and neighbors and carry our message door to door and by telephone, precinct by precinct, neighborhood by neighborhood, social group by social group. When we have a reliable network of volunteers ready to help, we can build a better Nebraska.

### Hello, Fellow Democrats!



**Jim Rogers**  
Executive Director

It has been about 40 days since I stepped into the shoes of the Executive Director spot at the Nebraska Democratic Party. Most of my time has been spent trying to meet with as many folks as possible for introductions, insight and assistance. We may be coming off a tremendous election cycle nationally by recapturing the White House, but the work must continue. We currently have municipal elections in Omaha and Lincoln: the balance of both city councils and the mayoral seat in Omaha are up for grabs. Currently, the mayor of Omaha is a Democrat and we are working hard to retain that office.

We have elections just around the bend for our Congressional offices, Constitutional offices, and half of our legislative seats—not to mention numerous local and county offices all around the state. We will have to out-organize and out-work our opponents in order to achieve victory, and I know we can get there.

#### A little about me...

I have spent many years as an organizer and worked on numerous campaigns, all in Nebraska but one. Through the years and the campaigns I have met many great people all across the state. These people are part of my affinity for politics and to all of you who let me stay at your home, made calls, organized events and those who will continue to do the same, I say, "Thank you!"

Recently I purchased a home in South Omaha, the community in which I grew up. I am fortunate to call my state senator, Heath Mello, a close friend. My girlfriend, Shelly, and I have two Labs, one black and one yellow, and a rabbit as pets. No, the dogs don't get to chase the rabbit around the house.

I look forward to meeting more of you as I work with the Democratic Party and as we continue to build our organization.

## Party People



**Charlene  
Ligon**  
State  
Secretary

Charlene is a grassroots Democrat who was born and raised in Norfolk, Virginia. She has lived in Bellevue, Nebraska since 1992. She served in the United States Air Force as a Weather Forecaster and retired at the rank of Master Sergeant after 20 years of service. Charlene is Co-Chair of the Sarpy County Democrats Research and Information Committee and the representative for LD3 on the State Central Committee. Charlene and her husband, Robert, have three children and five grandchildren. Charlene was appointed Secretary of NDP in November, 2008.

In November 1963, Charlene's mother, Evelyn Thomas Butts of Norfolk, filed the first suit in federal court challenging the constitutionality of the Virginia poll tax and thus helped extend the right to vote to all citizens. Charlene says that she regrets that her mother, who died in 1993, did not live to see the election of the nation's first black president. "We are really proud of my mom. She was a brave person and she did a lot. She was a person of limited resources. All you have to do is have the will to carry on and you can do anything. She taught me that."

Mrs. Butts was honored as an *African-American Trailblazer in Virginia History* at a ceremony in February..



**Mary Doyle**  
CDI  
Associate Chair;  
Madison County  
Chair

Mary says, "I have always enjoyed politics, but from the outside. I was asked to become County Chair three years ago and, as they say, the rest is history. I am learning as I go, sometimes understanding, and sometimes frustrated. I have been a rule-breaker my whole life and someone who dislikes a lot of structure, so sometimes Robert's Rules of Order annoys me, although I understand the reason for it. When we are not supportive of our fellow Democrats, I get annoyed. I am excited when I feel as if we are making progress and moving towards a more level playing field. It won't happen overnight but, with passionate people, we will make a difference."

Mary, 48, retired from Nucor Steel as a Sales Representative, She is now a professional volunteer. Her husband, Jim, is a dentist in Norfolk and they have four children: Jack, Kate, Darren, and Halley.

Mary enjoys golf, boating, fishing, drinking with her friends and spending time with her grandbaby and family.

Mary organized a very fine SCC meeting in Norfolk on March 7, 2009. Thanks to Democratic Norfolk Mayor Sue Fuchtman and Mary Doyle for their hospitality.



**Bud  
Pettigrew**  
Chair of Chairs

Bud Pettigrew, Cherry Co. Chair, was elected Chair of Chairs at a caucus on March 7, at which 23 County Chairs were present. Tom Dorsch, Mary Doyle, Mel Luetchens, and Deb Quirk will work on bylaws for the Caucus. Pettigrew, who is a history teacher and an active, dedicated party worker, pledged the following::

1. By June 2010 I will have traveled to and talked with party leaders in every Nebraska county.
2. I will help every county get its own website in order to improve communication and networking among them, and to tell the story of their county.
3. I will organize regional meetings throughout the state to gain growth and stability.
4. I will do my very best to help eliminate factions in our party.
5. I will work tirelessly to find candidates and money for those candidates.
6. I will not be a Chair who does nothing and then asks to be reelected. I will work!
7. We need to fight against the nonsense of Fox news and right-wing blowhards like Rush Limbaugh with a communications network of our own.
8. I welcome debate. Please contact me.

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## Lisa Olivares, NDP Deputy Director

According to Don Walton of the *Lincoln JournalStar*, Lisa Olivares was the toast of the Nebraska delegation after her on-stage performance at the Democratic National Convention. She was asked to participate in a "town hall" panel, fielding questions on health care needs and services. "Lisa did a fantastic job," said Matt Connealy, and Nancy Pelosi joined in the praise. Lisa knew the questions she would be asked, but came up with her own answers: "People with health care problems are the people I work with every day, and they

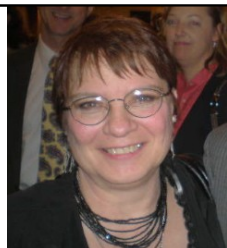
need the kind of health care reforms advocated by Barack Obama." Lisa was hired as executive administrator of the People's Health Center when it opened five years ago. In 2007 the Center counted 22,086 medical contacts and 4,209 dental patient contacts, with 53% of them uninsured.

Ms. Olivares was the only Hispanic American member of the Nebraska delegation to the convention. She was born and raised in Scottsbluff, but now lives in Lincoln. She was an Obama supporter from the first.

As quoted in the *Lincoln Journal-Star*, Lisa said, about the Democratic National Convention, "This is a very moving experience for me. People you have idolized, admired and appreciated are walking down the hall. This is my heaven. I love politics."

Lisa Olivares, appointed Deputy Director of NDP in January, said she had been nervous about her appearance on the national stage. Her performance as Deputy Director has been cool, efficient, and appreciated.

# Democrats Supporting Persons with Disabilities



**Mary Angus**  
Chair

On March 7, 2009 this newly renamed caucus presented the following Resolution to the State Central Committee which quickly endorsed it.

**Whereas:** People with disabilities must be free from abuse, neglect, sexual and financial exploitation, and violations of legal and human rights. The nature and provision of services to people with disabilities must not subject individuals with disabilities to greater risk of harm than others in the general population.

**Whereas:** The treatment, services, and habitation supports for people with disabilities must be designed to maximize the potential and independence of the individual.

**Whereas:** The treatment, services, and habitation supports for people with disabilities must be developed and provided in a setting that is least restrictive of the individual's personal liberty and most integrated into the communities of their choosing.

**Whereas:** People with disabilities have the right to participate to the maximum extent possible in treatment and service-delivery decisions.

**Whereas:** People with disabilities must be treated with respect and be free from discrimination and coercion.

**Whereas:** Beatrice State Developmental Center has failed to pass certification requirements for 2 ½ years.

**Whereas:** BSDC has been operating with inadequate numbers of staff for more than ten years.

**Whereas:** The Division of Developmental Disabilities Services considers BSDC to be a short-term facility; and

**Whereas** The Intensive Treatment Services and the Outreach Treatment Services Programs of the Center have been shown to be effective as short-term resources for community-based providers.

**Therefore be it resolved:** BSDC should maintain its Intensive Treatment Services (ITS) and its Outreach Treatment Services (OTS) Programs and systematically transition residents into communities of their choosing. Money currently used to pay for institutional care should follow individuals into the supports and services needed to enable integration.

This story, by Don Davis, was published in Custer and Howard County newspapers on 3/18.

## Third District Democrats Meet in Broken Bow

"Nebraska's Third Congressional District is the sixth most staunchly Republican district in the nation." That statement from district chairperson, Lisa Hannah, did not come as a surprise to any of the fifty-seven Democrats attending a district meeting in Broken Bow on Saturday. Featured speakers included freshman Senator Kate Sullivan of Nebraska's 41st Legislative District who spoke about the shortage of health care professionals, especially in rural Nebraska. Senator Sullivan's priority bill (LB849) focuses on the recruitment and training of health care providers. Senator Sullivan also answered questions on topics coming up this legislative session from aid to education to the death penalty.

Also addressing the group was Rebekah Davis from Alliance, who has declared her candidacy for the U.S. House of Representative from Nebraska's Third District. Adrian Smith currently holds that seat but will be up for re-election in November of 2010.



Rebekah Davis

"I consider 2009 my listening year," Davis told the supportive crowd, "and I plan to travel to all 68 counties to get a better feel for their concerns." She indicated that she would begin her campaign in earnest in 2010. "I'm giving you fair warning, though," she admonished the crowd. "When elected, I will vote for what's best for Nebraska and that will not always be consistent with what the Democrats want."

Mrs. Davis has a degree from Yale Divinity School after undergraduate work at Indiana University.

The meeting, organized by Butch McGinn, Chair of Custer Co. Democrats, concluded with the election of officers.

To invite Rebekah to your meetings:  
rebekah@rebekahdavis.com

Members of the State Central Committee are reminded that they should contact their Congressional District Chair for re-appointment after two unexcused absences.

## Carrie Howard –1975-2009

Our friend, Carrie Howard, died on March 24, long before her time. She was a loyal Democratic activist and daughter of Nebraska State Senator Gwen Howard. She said that she began her political career at age four. She was well known at the state Capitol, where she worked as a volunteer in her mother's legislative office.

She worked on congressional and state legislative campaigns. In 2004 she was a staffer for John Kerry's presidential campaign.

"Carrie was absolutely energetic and had an ability to rally folks," said Jim Rogers. Most recently she was the campaign manager for City Council candidate Jim Farho.

"Carrie was a bright, energetic young woman. She really captured your heart," Farho said.

Carrie was Vice-Chair of the Nebraska Democratic Women's Caucus at the time of her death.

We all will miss her very much.

**Nebraska  
Democratic  
Party**

## Suggestions for Letters to the Editor from Nancy Meyer, LD 23

Below is the LTE I just sent to three NE newspapers, customized to each congressional district, about HR 676. In this case I do not urge you to use the same wording, because it will obviously be suspicious. But I do urge you to:

1. Open with a personal story, yours or someone else's. It gets attention and fosters empathy. I know you have one.
2. Keep it short, to the point, and confined to just one topic. Most papers have a 100 to 150 word limit.
3. Ask for specific action. And be sure to point the reader to where to start.
4. Include your phone number. Papers often call to confirm that you wrote the letter before they will publish it.

I have gotten best results from the Fremont Tribune, Omaha World-Herald and the Grand Island Independent. But feel free to contact your local paper, or one in a neighboring town. We need to reach small towns as much if not more than big ones.

This is a timely appeal because there has been an ad on TV a lot lately calling for health care reform to reduce the expense burden on US business, large and small. Good luck and thank you!

### To the Editor:

**I have a friend named Lauri with a special needs child who pays \$12,000 per year for family health insurance. On top of that, she is still paying off needed surgery that was not covered by her insurance.**

**Many people like Lauri can't stimulate the economy by buying things because they are weighed down by health care costs. Free health care would mean Americans would no longer have to worry about the cost of getting sick. This would free up dollars for families to use toward purchases that could stimulate our economy, and reduce costs on businesses so that they could retain and hire more workers.**

**Please urge your friends, family and especially your US congressional representation [list them] to support H.R. 676. You can find their contact information at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov), or just check the phone book.**

Sincerely yours,

## Tracking the Stimulus Money

White House official site: <http://www.recovery.gov/>

Gov. Heineman's official site: <http://recovery.nebraska.gov/>

NE wastewater projects to be funded with stimulus funds:

[http://www.governor.nebraska.gov/news/2009/2009\\_3/3/4/09/Stimulus\\_WasteWater.html](http://www.governor.nebraska.gov/news/2009/2009_3/3/4/09/Stimulus_WasteWater.html)

NE safe drinking water projects to be funded with stimulus funds:

[http://www.governor.nebraska.gov/news/2009/2009\\_3/3\\_4\\_09\\_Stimulus\\_Safe\\_Drinking.html](http://www.governor.nebraska.gov/news/2009/2009_3/3_4_09_Stimulus_Safe_Drinking.html)

NE Dept of Roads list of shovel ready projects: <http://www.dor.state.ne.us/3-3-09-ready-to-go.pdf>

ND Dept of Roads projects let on March 12: <http://www.dor.state.ne.us/letting/c-let-090312/NTC.html>

Link to National Conference of State Legislatures website that shows how other states are establishing oversight for stimulus funds coming to the states: <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/fiscal/stimulusoversight.html>

Link to Council of State Governments website: <http://www.staterecovery.org/>

### **Reminders**

### **Salute to Senators**

April 14, Embassy Suites, 1040 P Street. Lincoln. 5:30-7:30 p.m.

### **Morrison-Exon Dinner**

To be announced

### **CD3 Organization Meeting June 6**

McCook

### **State Central Committee meeting June 27**

Grand Island

More information: [www.nebraskademocrats.org](http://www.nebraskademocrats.org)

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