Notes From the Chair

Jane Egan

2017 is gone and what a year it was! As I reflect on the past year, I am also looking forward to 2018 with hope and excitement for our country and our Democratic party in spite of an incompetent and very flawed President that Tweets rants and propaganda daily. There is much to be worried about when it comes to our national politics. However, we the people have the power to organize and to vote our values so that all Americans and citizens worldwide can once again look upon the United States for the leadership and innovations needed for peace and prosperity.

Here at home, we have a new head football coach in Nebraska’s favorite son Scott Frost, who is bringing his entire assistant coaching team to the University of Nebraska. I wish him well in his quest to revive our football program. Our university women’s volleyball team won its 5th national championship. Volleyball Coach John Cook once again coalesced a winning strategy to bring his talented team to success. It was a joy to watch them work together to overcome every opponent. They have two inspiring mottos: “With each other, for each other” and “Why not us?” You got it right ladies! Congratulations!

Many great Democratic candidates have or will step up to run for office this year in Lancaster County and Nebraska statewide. We haven’t been able to recruit viable candidates for Governor, Attorney General or Secretary of State—yet. We may have to wait another couple of years to capture these state offices. The Nebraska Democratic Party is hard at work rebuilding their revenue stream, reorganizing the party structure, articulating their mission to stakeholders, engaging county party and affiliated organizations that support our Democratic values. This will all pay off in future election cycles for Democrats in Nebraska. It will take time, money, training and focused effort by committed passionate people to make Democrats competitive in ruby red Nebraska. I know we can do it if our progressive message is heard by voters in every county of the state.

To that end, the Nebraska Democratic Party has created a detailed plan that will provide guidance to candidates and county party officials to be successful in electing Democrats up and down the ticket. Democrats have the momentum and energy it will take to be successful in 2018. We just need to engage voters and focus on what we stand for to start winning. I will quote President John Adams, Founding Father, to remind us that "Government is instituted for the common good: for the protection, safety, prosperity and happiness of the people; and not for the profit, honor, or private interest of any one man, family, or class of men.” Those words ring as true today as they did in the 18th Century. Democrats can live by those words and be proud to do so.

We are still basking in the joy of winning a majority on the Lincoln City Council with the election of Democrat Bennie Shobe. Bennie is working hard to fulfill his campaign promise to help our working class citizens and neighborhoods, and to support the Mayor’s agenda to make our capitol city a great place to raise families and to start businesses. Congratulations Bennie! Thank you for stepping up to do the people’s work.

Congratulations to all Democrats who won their elections last year and congratulations to our candidates who have decided to run for elected office in 2018. We appreciate how hard it is to get out of your comfort zone to make speeches, raise money, organize people into a viable campaign and perform the myriad of other tasks required to run for office. You are a special breed of citizen who is willing to put your family, career, and personal time on the line to help govern and lead. You all have the heartfelt admiration of your county party and we promise to help your campaign in every way possible!
We also have our work cut out for us as a county party and as citizens. We have 2000 homeless people in Lancaster County, we have DACA recipients in limbo, we have a new federal tax law that will negatively impact our state and local budgets, we have a state budget shortfall, and we have working poor who still can’t afford health coverage for themselves or their families let alone college tuition or retirement savings. We will always have those who need our government and private institutions to help with basic needs. That is why we must elect Democrats who will introduce legislation and create programs that give a helping hand to those in need.

The county party is busy planning our biggest annual fundraising event, The Patriots’ Awards Dinner, Sunday, March 4th, at the Marriott Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln, Nebraska. We are hoping to secure an exciting keynote speaker for the event. The funds we raise will be used to support our candidates in a variety of ways. Save the date and plan to attend.

Your county party is also planning our next convention to be held on June 10th. We will announce the location soon. The convention is held every two years in even numbered years. We will elect a new slate of county party officers, central committee members and delegates to the state party convention. This is the time to make a personal commitment to get involved in the governance of your county party. This is truly a grassroots all volunteer organization that needs new people to bring innovative ideas to the county party organization. If you have been wondering how to channel your desire and energy to elect people that share your rage and dismay at what happened in the November, 2016 Presidential election, this is the place to start your activism. You can be an agent for change and develop the leadership skills needed to grow the Democratic Party and even to run for office yourself! There is nothing to hold you back if you really want to be part of the solution. Put the date on your calendar and watch for updates from the county party. We need volunteers to plan the convention too. Call us at 402-476-2268 find out how you can help.

I don’t make New Year’s resolutions or predictions anymore. I prefer to have a solid plan to accomplish the work that needs to be done in the year ahead instead. Our new Technology Committee has made some strides in updating our computer equipment, but more needs to be done. Our social media outlets also need help from volunteers that can develop our website and Facebook presence. All of our standing committees need more volunteers. These committees do the important work of the party by planning and executing events, and by disseminating information to voters. There are many opportunities to use your skills in the county party. Our central committee has doubled in size to 60 voting members. We hold a free flowing forum at 6:30 p.m. prior to our monthly central committee meetings (held the third Tuesday of the month). We wanted to give voters the opportunity to have lively discussions and to share ideas about current events. It has been well attended. We are working on creating our Democratic message language. All are welcome to participate.

Spring primary elections are just around the corner and then we go on to the November general election. Candidates need your help and financial support. Stay in the know by reading our weekly UPDATE email that announces campaign events and county party meetings. If you don’t get it now, call our office and we will put your email on our distribution list.

Political pundits predict a "blue wave" across the country electing Democrats to local school boards all the way to taking a majority in the House and Senate. Will you be a part of the blue wave? Will you support voting rights, women’s rights, unions and workers’ rights, rational immigration laws, LGBTQ+ rights, Medicare for all, fair taxation, a strong public education system, prison reform, legalization of cannabis for medical purposes or personal use, the protection of our public lands, strengthen our public institutions, curtailing dangerous climate change and population migrations caused by burning fossil fuels? What are you concerned about and how will you participate in finding solutions for those concerns?

I urge everyone to think about individual and collective responsibility to move our government and society toward a more perfect union. Put away the holiday decorations, recycle the tree, turn down the thermostat, put on an extra sweater, pour yourself a cup of tea, and make a commitment to give your time and talent to the county party or to a candidate’s campaign. You won’t regret it and it’s easier than following through on a resolution to exercise more or lose weight in the New Year! Let’s do it!

Remember that democracy is not a spectator sport! It takes all of us. Get out. Get Active. Tag you are it! Happy New Year!
In My Humble Opinion
By John Atkeison, Associate Chair,
Lancaster County Democratic Party
jatkeison@gmail.com

I once said cynically of a politician, “He’ll double-cross that bridge when he comes to it.” -- Oscar Levant

Double-cross that bridge, huh? Such is the common expectation of political culture in these United States in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The *painfully low* expectations of political culture.

Is it any wonder that citizens of this amazing democracy avoid politics like the plague?

Can it be true that turnout for elections is so low because of widespread disgust?

Why is participation in local elections even lower than for the higher, more remote offices like Governor or President?

What are we to make of it when a young Democratic volunteer says that he is afraid to openly help his preferred candidate because of fear? Afraid of what? Of making a vindictive old-timer mad and jeopardizing the youngster’s political future, that’s what!

I wish I were making this up!

What is the alternative? I’ve tried to point out some suggestions in previous columns, but I’m sure that together we can do better than I or anyone can alone.

Let’s recognize another flaw that holds us back. I’ll just state it bluntly: many experienced political activists or practitioners are pretty darn sure that they are smarter and have better instincts than everyone else, especially ordinary citizens. In My Humble Opinion, this is one reason that some of us are manipulative rather than genuinely persuasive a lot of the time. Also IMHO, people have no reason to extend their trust to anyone who is a manipulator. Is that one reason that Clinton got three million more votes than Trump did in 2016?

For all his shortcomings, President Obama was trusted. Likewise Senator Sanders. (In the *October 2017 Harvard Harris poll*, Sanders had far more favorable ratings than the dozen other active politicians who were tested.)

Is the question, “How do we build trust?” Or is it, “How do we *earn* trust?”

Perhaps the real question is, “How do we build a political culture that new people are comfortable in as they learn the ropes both cultural and technical?” And this one: “How can we build a culture that values us gray-heads for the mentoring we do instead of the control we attempt to impose?”

IMHO, the distinctions are important.

*Oscar Levant* (1906–1972) was an American pianist, composer, author, comedian, and actor. He was more famous for his mordant character and witticisms than for his music. Perhaps that’s because as he said, ”The first thing I do in the morning is brush my teeth and sharpen my tongue.”

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*It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.*

Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882) English Naturalist
My fellow Nebraskans,

As we begin this new year, 2018, we have much to be thankful for and optimistic about. The work before us can seem daunting but it brings the opportunity to create a better world. We must stay inspired!

Last month, my campaign launched our “Kitchen Table Tour,” traveling to Central and Western Nebraska. The kitchen table is where families come together to celebrate good times, to find solutions to their problems and often balance their checkbook. Our tour reached out to Nebraskans across the state, of all stripes, to hear their concerns and hopes for the future.

What we heard in Chadron, in Valentine and everywhere we went is that people are not buying what Mitch McConnell is trying to sell with his tax bill, they know the so-called tax “reform” will not benefit them, their families or their businesses. Many expressed outrage that my opponent would saddle our children and grandchildren with another trillion dollars in debt.

And aging Nebraskans are rightfully frightened that Social Security and Medicare cuts will be next on the chopping block. I spoke to an 86-year-old man in Scottsbluff who had to return to work because he and his wife can’t make ends meet. This is the heartbreaking reality for too many.

The truly good news is that the level of engagement, excitement, enthusiasm and involvement in making change happen is the highest I have ever witnessed. Folks are calling and writing their representatives, watching what is happening in Washington and getting fired up to help—ready to fight to fix the broken system.

In Kearney, I met a woman who was sparked to action after the last election and has built a network of 120 (and growing) who want change, who will join with us to elect leaders who represent their values.

Remember, change starts with us. We can succeed by stepping up and getting involved—by giving up our time, by giving a few dollars, by giving voice to our beliefs even when it may feel hard. No one should be comfortable on the sidelines right now, there is too much at-stake.

There is a groundswell of support for an independent-minded leader who is willing to challenge the powerful few in Washington protecting the status quo. Together, we can harness that energy into meaningful action.

Thank you for all you do to support our campaign and the campaigns of so many capable candidates.

Jane Raybould

Save the Date

2018 Patriots’ Dinner
Sponsored by the Lancaster County Democratic Party

Sunday, March 4th
Marriott Cornhusker Hotel
13th & L Streets, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Watch for more details in next month’s newsletter.

Message from Doug Emery
Former member, Lincoln City Council

Let me wish everyone a very special 2018. It will be a big year as we find candidates for the 2019 City Council district elections. Now is the time for candidates to come forward to ensure that Lincoln continues to grow and prosper and that the "NO" section of the council is defeated. If you ever have thought about running, now is the time. I know we have many potential candidates out there and I urge you all to run. Making a difference is a great feeling and a great legacy for your children and grandchildren. Take a risk and make a difference.

Doug Emery
Tax Reform Done Right

By Dennis Crawford

I have devoted time in my columns to describe what is wrong with the Trump/Fortenberry/GOP tax bill. I believe that most people are familiar with the many bad features of this legislation. However, it’s not enough to point out the flaws in GOP legislation and proposals. As Democrats, we need to tell the voters what we stand for – what we will do when we are returned to power. (It will be sooner rather than later.)

The first way to get tax reform right is to fix the process. In my opinion, a better process is much more likely to produce a better bill. We must start with multiple hearings, expert witness testimony and a full Congressional Budget Office score. In addition, we need to include responsible Republicans when we draft legislation. I’m willing to work with anybody who in good faith shares our goals. We should try to establish a bi-partisan process.

One of the many false talking points from the GOP and the right is that Democrats don’t have any ideas and only stand for opposition to Trump. That simply isn’t true. Since the 2016 elections, Democrats at both the state and federal levels have begun to come up with innovative policy ideas in many areas – including taxes.

As a Democrat and a candidate for Congress, I stand for middle class tax cuts that don’t increase the deficit. As Harry Truman said about a GOP tax bill that he vetoed: “And when tax relief can be given, it ought to go to those who need it most, and not those who need it least, as this Republican rich man’s tax bill did.”

One creative idea percolating in Congress is the expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to reach more childless workers. The proposal has been termed: “EITC for All.” The current version of the EITC was expanded under President Clinton in 1997 and it has lifted 10 million people out of poverty every year. It is one of our most successful anti-poverty programs.

EITC for All would encourage young men to seek employment, make increased child support payments, contribute to higher marriage rates and reduce the rate of incarceration. An expansion of the EITC for childless workers would benefit a wide swath of Americans – beyond just young men.

Another important tax reform being proposed by Senators Michael Bennett (D-CO) and Sherrod Brown (D-OH) would significantly increase the child tax credit and potentially cut the child poverty rate in half. The cost of this proposal is only half of the cost of the Trump/Fortenberry tax cuts. It would have virtue of reducing the United States’ scandalously high child poverty rate.

The guiding philosophy of my tax cut proposals is that the middle class is the key to a better economy. If the middle class has more money to spend, we can build a stronger economy for all Americans. The middle class – not the wealthy – the genuine job creators. I think history has clearly demonstrated that trickle down economics simply doesn’t work. It is a failed strategy.

If we are to enact these kinds of progressive policies that will benefit all Americans, we need to win the elections in 2018 and 2020. We can never take a day off. The American people are on our side. They are thirsting for the kind of change we offer. Now let’s go out and get it done! Thank you!
Greetings, fabulous fellow Democrats! I am so incredibly grateful to continue be able to represent the 28th Legislative District here in the heart of Lincoln. The start of the New Year brings with it the continuation of the 105th Legislative Session. This year I will continue to serve as the Vice-Chair of the Judiciary Committee, serve on the Education Committee, the Committee on Committees, and the Justice Reinvestment Oversight Committee.

I hit the ground running to start the 2018 Session by introducing 7 bills in the first two days. I plan on introducing 17 bills in total this year. Some highlights of my proposed legislation include:

- A bill banning the use of bump fire stocks – the kind used by the Las Vegas gunman in last fall’s mass shooting.
- A bill eliminating mandatory minimum sentences for juveniles.
- A bill to combat cyberbullying.
- A bill to protect those who provide their wage disclosure to coworkers, allowing women to compare wages and determine where pay inequities exist without fear of repercussion.
- A bill laying out guidelines for specific dyslexia interventions statewide.
- A bill banning the use of solitary confinement for juveniles.
- A number of bills addressing the current overcrowding crisis in our Department of Corrections.

In addition, I will be carrying over 9 bills from last year, including:

- **LB 69** - Seeks to increase the earned income tax credit (a refundable tax credit for low to moderate income working individuals and couples, particularly with children) from 10% to 20% by 2021.
- **LB 158** - Ensures that any juveniles who find themselves in juvenile court, regardless of where they live in Nebraska, will be appointed an attorney to represent them.
- **LB 646** - Creates a Task Force to develop a strategic plan to combat and mitigate climate change here in Nebraska.

I remain confident that by working with my colleagues, and striving to find common ground, we can truly work to better the lives of Nebraskans all across our state. With that said, I am even more determined as of late to continue my own advocacy fighting against discrimination in all of its manifestations, and promoting respect for all. Thank you, and Happy New Year!

**COMMITTEES**

All Lancaster County Democratic Party committees meet at the County Party office, 830 L St., Lincoln. Central Committee membership is not required for participation. Volunteers are welcome.

**Candidate Services** – 4th Wed. each month, 7:00 p.m.  
Jen Seaman, Chair, [jen.seaman@doane.edu](mailto:jen.seaman@doane.edu)

**Fundraising** – 2nd Wed. each month, 7:30 p.m.  
Bennie Shobe, Chair, [bennie.shobe@gmail.com](mailto:bennie.shobe@gmail.com)  
Barbara Tracy, Co-Chair, [btracy7@gmail.com](mailto:btracy7@gmail.com)

**History** – last Tues. Feb., May, Aug., Nov., 7:00 p.m.  
Jean Sanders, [jsanders@neb.rr.com](mailto:jsanders@neb.rr.com)

**Issues** – 4th Tues. each month, 7:00 p.m.  
Ken Snyder, Chair, [neilsen01@windstream.net](mailto:neilsen01@windstream.net)

**Membership** – 2nd Mon., each month, 7:00 p.m.  
Maryjo Shibata, Chair, [mjes627@gmail.com](mailto:mjes627@gmail.com)

**Public Relations** – 1st Tues. each month, 5:30 p.m.  
Jim Johnson, Chair, [jimjohnson@neb.rr.com](mailto:jimjohnson@neb.rr.com)

**Technology** – 2nd Sat. each month, 11:00 a.m.  
James Baldus, Chair, [jhbaldus@gmail.com](mailto:jhbaldus@gmail.com)
Early on, my parents taught me the values of hard work and personal responsibility, and that giving back to the community is a promise that we all owe. Last year, I decided to run for legislature in District 30 to make good on that promise.

I grew up in District 30 and have lived here my entire life. I continue to farm the very same land I was raised on. Throughout my life I’ve had to work multiple jobs in order to provide for my family. For over 30 years I worked full-time for the Natural Resource Conservation Service, helping farmers solve their erosion and conservation issues, all while maintaining the family farm. Outside of work, I have always been active in my community, serving in leadership positions in groups such as the Gage County Tax Organization, the Wymore Rural Fire Board, the Blue Springs COOP Board, and the Sons of the American Legion.

Because of my experience working multiple jobs to make ends meet, I know firsthand the struggles that working families face. Right now, 1 in 8 Nebraskans work more than one job, just like me. We do this not because we want to, but because we have to in order to provide for our families. Our state has made great steps forward in economic development, but there is still much work to be done. I want to make sure that we are doing even more to grow our economy, and most importantly, ensure that all of us are experiencing the benefits. If elected, I will fight to attract good-paying jobs so that all Nebraskans can thrive and our communities can grow.

I also understand that the opportunity to succeed begins with a quality education. As a product of our public schools myself, I am very proud of what our education system here in Nebraska has accomplished, continuing not only to maintain what we have, but always looking forward to improve. We must continue to support and protect our public education system, as it is absolutely vital to the success of our state.

One of the most pressing concerns I hear from my neighbors is property taxes. Particularly for farmers and small business owners, the property tax burden has been crushing as commodity prices have fallen. But it’s not just farmers who are suffering—it affects our middle-class and our most vulnerable families. These hard working Nebraskans consistently pay a higher percentage of their income to property taxes than our wealthiest individuals and corporations. That’s just not right. We need to find reasonable solutions that lift this weight off our backs, while still protecting our schools, local governments, and the vital services that we rely on every day of our lives.

As you all know, life is never easy. That is fine, as long as we all have the opportunity to get ahead in life and build a better future for our children. Most people don’t want a handout, but we should be striving to make life just a little bit easier for those who are struggling. That’s why I’m running for legislature—because I believe that we need to fight to make life just a little bit easier for those who need it.

And I promise you, nobody will work harder for those families in the legislature than I will. But I need your help. We can only make this vision a reality if we work together. I need your help knocking doors, I need your financial support, and I need you to tell your family and friends. I hope you will join me, and help make Nebraska an even better place to work, live, and raise a family.

If you have any questions, or would like to find out how you can help, please reach out to me at donschuller2018@gmail.com. I would love to hear from you!
John Atkeison, Candidate for Public Service Commission

What I’m best known for in Lincoln is being an activist who is all about climate change and how to prevent the worst of the changes that have begun. I’ve focused on how to reduce and eliminate the cause of the problem, which is primarily the greenhouse gas pollution that results from the burning of fossil fuels like coal and natural gas.

So what’s that got to do with the Public Service Commission? The fact is that there are many ways that climate change and the PSC intersect. From stronger summer storms to the Arctic cold in the winter we see that climate has already changed and we have more dangerous situations than we have before. We need to have a 911 system that is more reliable than it is—there are parts of eastern Nebraska where it is simply not as reliable as it should be.

That’s one example, and we’ll talk about more in the next few weeks.

Peterson Files For Lower Platte South Natural Resource District 7

Luke Peterson, 33, of Lincoln is running for the Lower Platte South Natural Resource District, Sub-District 7. The position is up on the 2018 ballot and he is the first candidate to publicly declare his intent to run for this office.

“As a 5th Generation Nebraskan and a son of a retired farmer, I have always been concerned and interested about land and water use growing up,” Peterson claims. Peterson, who has been living in Lincoln for a decade, works for the Pinnacle Bank Arena as a Supervisor for the Food and Beverage Department. His primary objectives center on water sustainability and quality.

“As I have been researching the office, I have become aware of how vulnerable the city of Lincoln is in terms of maintaining a reliable supply of clean drinking water,” citing that Lincoln’s sole water source is along the Platte River. “If the Platte River becomes too polluted or dries up due to climate change, we’re going to be in a world of hurt,” Peterson says.

For contacting purposes, please reach Luke Peterson at:
2520 R St Apt 1
Lincoln, NE 68503
(308) 991-5751
luke.in.lincoln@gmail.com
When Colder Is Caused By Warmer, And Things Like That

By John Atkeison
Chair, Nebraska Democratic Climate Caucus
402-915-3210 ◊ jatkeison@gmail.com

In the Lincoln Journal Star of January 4 the AP's long-time science and climate writer Seth Borenstein wrote, “Anchorage, Alaska, was warmer Tuesday than Jacksonville, Florida. The weather in the U.S. is that crazy right now. That’s because the Arctic’s deeply frigid weather escaped its regular atmospheric jail that traps the worst cold. It then meandered south to the central and eastern United States. And this has been happening more often in recent times scientists say.” And Borenstein is a cautious guy if a conversation I had with him a few years ago is any guide.

All this is not a big surprise to those of us lucky enough to know about and to attend the symposium provided by UNL’s School of Natural Resources and an impressive list of University and other sponsors. It was called Implications of a Changing Arctic on Changing Water Resources and Agriculture in the Central U.S. and held on November 12 and 13, 2015. The leading figure among these scientists, Dr. Jennifer Francis, provided a public lecture which I recommend — we even got in a couple Nebraska questions! Here is the link to the YouTube video and the link to the slides from her talk. It had an appropriate title: Crazy Weather and the Arctic Meltdown: Are they connected?

The bottom line is this. The Arctic has been heating up much more rapidly than the rest of the globe, sometimes by several degrees, compared to the almost 2° here. The ice is melting, so every summer we have seen a pretty steady trend of less and less ice and more open water. (All the Arctic ice is floating—it’s not on land like the Antarctic ice sheets.) So the ice doesn’t reflect most of the sunlight like it used to and that sunlight can warm the water a bit. Keep that up for a few decades and it becomes one of the feedback loops scientists talk about. It speeds up warming more than greenhouse gas pollution does on its own. And all that warming messes with the stability of the polar vortex, the rind of winds that encircle the arctic. When the wind patterns that ring the Arctic are destabilized they can lose their shape and we experience it as the Jet Stream drooping southward, enclosing a dose of Arctic air that parks itself on our region and beyond. Despite the fact that this frigid air may be several degrees warmer than it was years ago, it is still extremely cold! And as Lincoln hit minus 17° one night last week we all got a taste of it. That is a clear example of how global warming affects us now, today, not just in the future.

By the way, Borenstein’s Associated Press article makes a very good point in closing. “Don’t confuse weather – which is a few days or weeks in one region – with climate, which is over years and decades and global.”

Weather is like a person’s mood, which changes frequently, while climate is like someone’s personality, which is more long-term, Furtado says. “A few cold days doesn’t disprove climate change,” he said. “That’s just silly. Just like a couple down days on the stock market doesn’t mean the economy is going into the trash.”
Opinion

An A Citizen
By Suzanne Jouvenat

We probably all feel we are “good” citizens, some of us better than others. Most of us vote religiously. We care about what is happening in our city, state and usually care about the issues confounding the people of the USA. We often experience anxiety about the current administration. There may occur bouts of anger. We find comfort grouping together with like-minded people. Certain folks may also self-soothe with over-indulging in food, drink or other attempts to divert the frustration and consternation. All understandable. All basic and natural human behavior.

While “natural” and “normal,” it is not exactly mindful. This state leads to what many of us do: support the persons who seem to align with the needs of our family and group. Being informed can require too much time and takes us away mesmerism of daily life. Are there thoughts about the future of this our home, this American family, this fragile, growing experiment with a heritage first begun through sacrifice, pain, suffering and noble motives? Are we complacent and skeptical to seek ways to engage hope for a future better than the past? Imagine an awakening in the citizenry—a consciousness that lifts the bondage of programmed self-serving needs and opens it to a deeper etiology of the complexities of the larger needs of the American populace.

In recent interviews and articles, Anand Giridharadas, an American columnist for the New York Times and author of a new book coming out in 2018, Winners Take All, talks about Americans thinking they are “woke” because of their supposed awareness of various wrongs and injustices. So often the present “inequalities and resentments” are continuous due to “failed attempts to alleviate the issues.” Anand convicts us saying the problem lies in the noncommittal to our fellow citizens’ difficulties even though their dilemma may not be our fault.

Contemplating the truth that we may not be truly “awake” is to understand how we have been shallow and transfixed by the surface (superficial) view of the issues. An open humility or vulnerability to opposing views is a risk worth taking. In that birth of confident curiosity, we could awaken to the similarities of fear and pain in the multitudes with their own perceptions of the America they know and love.

To be AWAKE prompts us to see the duality in situations. For example, Money: a necessary and helpful commodity / a separation of classes. Free enterprise: independence and more material choices / the division of “the haves and have nots.”

The myopia of limited viewpoints is often similar to those referred to as the “privileged world-changers” who align themselves to “other privileged world-changers.” The realization that opening to the sentiments of their fellow citizens (Grassroots) is vital.

As we connect and engage with others of all groups, our resistance diminishes. A particular American dialogue of respect of the individual and acceptance of the differences is born.

Awake! To attain the change we wish requires the paradox of humility and power. Awake! Security is a desire for the best and the good for all. This “Awokeness” coined by Giridharadas looks like you and me graciously caring enough to be part of “the least of these.” Awake! To understand the deeper needs of those whose money is their god. Awake! To be powerful enough to admit wrong about our misplaced sincerity in stubborn views for this America. An awake citizen lives in the NOW eagerly assimilating, discussing, processing, researching and reaching out to learn and awaken the lives of their fellow citizens.

Watchful Citizen

In case you haven’t discovered the County Party TV show on community access TV, check us out! The show airs on LCC-TV, at 10:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, 6:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, and 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays. Current guest on our show is City Council member Bennie Shobe.

And check our video archive on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/LancasterCountyDems
GETTING RID OF TRUMP
By George E. Wolf

Easier said than done. Each possibility, considered from the start of 2018, is enclosed in the uncertainties of unforeseeable events, the vagaries of time, the fluctuations of will among political leaders, and the unpredictable temper of voters as we approach November’s midterm elections. Yet, as we live with the threats and mounting damage to democracy a single year of the Trump regime has already wrought, we have to prepare ourselves, as best we can, to resist further damage and to hasten the likelihood of his regime’s demise. So, what are the possibilities? For brevity’s sake, I’m collapsing them to two: Resigning and Impeachment.

Resigning

What could conceivably prompt the man who, “with the exception of the late, great Abraham Lincoln,” sees himself as “more presidential than any president that’s ever held this office,” to vacate the presidency?

Health. Given what we know of Trump’s dietary romance with unsaturated fat, sugar, salt, and calories, augmented by his age, there’s no telling what physical emergencies may lie in wait for him. What would a stroke, with such debilities as partial paralysis, impaired thinking, or memory loss, do to his will to continue in office? How would a serious heart attack affect his massive ambitions? What would clear signs of Alzheimer’s or some other serious mental ailment mean to Trump? In the face of such acute bodily or mental woes, he just might choose to resign and put himself out to pasture at Mar-a-Lago, in accord with Section 3 of the 25th Amendment. But as headstrong a man as Trump is far more likely to resist resigning, even in an incapacitated state, thereby forcing Vice President Spence and the Trump cabinet or the Congress to decide whether to invoke Section 4 of the 25th Amendment and “transmit to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office.”

Shame. When the evidence and inevitability for his impeachment became irresistible even to him, President Nixon chose to save what face he imagined he could by resigning. There’s no telling what Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s probe into ties between Trump’s presidential campaign and Russia’s intrusions in the 2016 election may yet reveal in the way of “high crimes and misdemeanors,” but indictments and confessions of high-level campaign officials already suggest that Trump’s broken record repeats of “no collusion, no collusion” are as believable as any autocrat’s Big Lie. Nevertheless, however scandalous, criminal, or seditious Mueller’s findings turn out to be, Trump is a shameless man (recall the Hollywood Access tape, his river of lies, his use of the presidency as a personal money making machine), incapable of allowing disgrace to drive him voluntarily from office.

Which, consequently, brings us to

Impeachment

Timing, here, is everything. As long as Republicans, having brazenly and continuously placed party over country, remain in control of congress, impeachment will be next to impossible, unless, well before November, Trump’s “high crimes and misdemeanors” are revealed to be so severe and incontestable that Republicans may view the very electoral survival of their party to be at stake. All the more reason to put every effort, here in Nebraska and throughout the country, into electing a Democratic House and Senate this November. A Democratically controlled House, by a simple majority, could approve articles of impeachment; the Senate, however, after holding a trial, would still require a two-thirds vote for conviction and removal from office, an essentially insurmountable bar, especially, even if all goes well, with only a slim Democratic majority in that body after January of 2019. Unless, again, the results of Special Counselor Mueller’s investigation are so damning that even a majority of Republican senators, unlikely as that may be to imagine, can no longer stomach Trump.

Less predictable still is whether Counselor Mueller can survive a Trump attempt to fire him, should that occur, in the months ahead. Firing Mueller would lead instantly to an outbreak of mass demonstrations across the country, but to what political effect is unknowable. Yet even if Mueller remains in office long enough to make his findings public, there’s no way of knowing if that would happen before or after this November’s midterm elections or what the impact of those findings on impeachment efforts would be.

Add to these imponderables, given the disgraceful inaction of Trump’s administration and
the Republican congress, there is every probability that Russian hackers will again succeed in meddling in this year's congressional elections, casting profound and dangerous doubt on their results.

To put it bluntly, then, with all the terrifying perils this entails, not the least of which is the risk of nuclear war, getting rid of Trump may well have to wait till the presidential election of 2020.

Our Engagement

Is there nothing you and I can do to rid ourselves of this authoritarian demagogue in spite of the enormous political and institutional difficulties standing in our way? In fact, there are many things we can do to prepare the way for Trump's removal.

Sign and circulate Tom Steyer's petition to impeach Donald Trump ([www.needtoimpeach.com/](http://www.needtoimpeach.com/)). Over four million of our fellow citizens have already done so. The number grows daily, and as it grows even Republican politicians are apt to take notice.

Join demonstrations organized by MoveOn, Bold Nebraska, Nebraska DREAM Act, Action Committee Nebraska, and other local grassroots campaigns to publicize opposition to Trump administration policies that mutilate democracy. Be sure to join the anniversary of the Lincoln Women's March on Saturday, January 20th, at 3:00 p.m., starting at the UNL Union (1400 R Street).

Email or write Representative Fortenberry letting him know you support congressional bills like HR 438 and HR 646 (there will be more) that call for Trump's impeachment.

Visit or phone the Lincoln offices of Senators Fischer and Sasse to register your support for Trump's impeachment.

Some national Democratic leaders caution that it is not yet time to demand that Trump be removed from office. That well may be a prudent political calculation at the moment, but it must not forestall our laying the local groundwork for the salvation of our democracy by doing what we can to prepare the way for getting rid of Trump.

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**Nebraskans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty Update**

**Matt Maly - Operations Coordinator**

Happy new year from NADP! I have a few updates for you on several unrelated items:

- There are a number of lawsuits currently pending with regard to the secrecy in the new lethal injection experiment that the department of corrections has proposed. Decisions will likely be made in the coming months.

- Sister Helen Prejean will be speaking at the College of Saint Mary’s in Omaha on Tuesday, February 6th at 7:00 p.m. in the Lied Fitness Center. Sister Helen has accompanied several men to their executions as a spiritual advisor and is a tireless advocate for ending capital punishment. Her lecture is sure to be inspiring. If you make the trip up to Omaha, be sure to stop by NADP's information table before/after the event.

- The new Legislative session has begun. This is a short 60-day session and much of it is likely to be spent discussing budget concerns but, LB661—which would exempt lethal injection drug suppliers from public records requests—is a carryover bill and could be brought up again for debate if it has gained support. So, make sure your representative knows that you will not accept any secrecy or experimentation in the execution process. No one wants a botched execution in Nebraska, especially for the sake of our correctional officers.

We look forward to the progress that will be made towards abolition in 2018!

Towards Justice,

Matt Maly

On Behalf of all of NADP
Seeds

104th Nebraska Farmers Union convention
By Kerry Hoffschneider

I recently attended the 104th Annual Convention of the Nebraska Farmers Union (NeFU), “Harnessing the Power of Cooperation since 1931.” Property taxes were at the forefront of the meeting held in Grand Island, Neb. with a panel representing the coalition, Nebraskans United for Property Tax Reform and Education, that is a conglomerate of numerous state organizations and thousands of the state’s residents who are working to bring attention to what they believe is severe disparity in the state’s tax structure.

Tiffany Seibert Joekel, Policy Director for Open Sky, explained some of the current tax revenue conditions. She said Nebraska ranks second among states when it comes to its reliance on property taxes to fund education and Nebraska is 49th among states when it comes to state funding for education. On average, property taxes make up 60 percent of the funding for education in Nebraska (the national average is 45 percent). Nebraska farmers and ranchers pay an average of $22,000 in property taxes, the highest in the nation (California is second with an average of $13,000 per farmer and rancher).

Seibert Joekel said the state revenue was $34 million below forecast for fiscal year 2017 and they are looking at a $173 million shortfall total when the legislature convenes in January 2018. This is on top of the already $895 million shortfall they faced when they convened in January of 2017.

Why the struggle? The overall ag economy spurred by weak commodity prices and other issues, tax planning, past tax cuts, tax incentives (spiked $160 million throughout the prior year) and base issues, she explained.

The Legislative Panel at the convention also pointed to property tax as a massive issue and also a state house that is “afraid to go against the state governor” due to what Hansen said are unprecedented actions by Ricketts,

“What we saw never before is the Governor of the State of Nebraska using the power of his pocketbook to recruit candidates who were going to do things his way, period. . . . The Ricketts (family) spent $733,000 in the last election and that is the money that we actually know about.” . . .

At the conclusion of the convention, National Farmers Union (NFU) President Roger Johnson posed the question, “What does it mean to be a member of Farmer’s Union? . . . The 80s hit a lot of folks really hard . . . What was important at that time is that Farmers Union really stood with the farmers that were struggling. I think a lot of farmers were saved because of that . . . As important as the farm is, the family is more important and we should never forget that . . . We stand for families, communities and folks working together. We stand for things that are more important than money . . . But we live in a very, very different political environment than what we grew up in. Trying to figure out how to tell our stories and how we can make the case for what’s important to us as family farmers for the industry we love is becoming increasingly more challenging . . . We live in a time where chaos is more the order of the day than regular order . . . We need to figure out how we influence this system. The old rules are not the same any longer.”

After digesting all the material I took home from this convention, I came to this conclusion – as we grapple with current realities and systems designed to suppress creativity and true entrepreneurship, we also need to recognize there are farmers, ranchers and rural community leaders who are circumventing and reinventing the current systemic issues in rural and farm policy. They are hearkening past wisdom and also embracing some of the new but only, (and I stress only), embracing what connects us positively and grows a better nutritional source of food and lifestyle for all of us.

We can complain about taxes, people and policy. Or, we can recognize it’s high time for a better way and break out of such a heavy reliance on these suppressive systems. Many of us are the descendants of people who clearly recognized when they were living under stifling regimes and structures. We can learn from them and from the current pioneers who are regenerating their land, remembering the mistakes of history and fearlessly moving forward. That’s leadership. That’s what we need. Johnson is right; the old rules are not the same. Stand up and make them, break them for the betterment of society or simply reinvent them. Stand up.
Supply and Demand-Side Economics
By John Kretzschmar

Congress recently passed a sweeping change in federal tax collection. The lengthy bit of legislation has far-reaching implications that the public will find out as it is implemented. Why? Because there was no time to read and study this piece of legislation before conservatives united to pass it.

I want to examine briefly the economic theory behind why conservatives believe this tax legislation will be a boon to the creation of good-paying American jobs.

Generally speaking, there are two opposing and over simplified ways of thinking about the American economy: supply-side and demand-side economics.

Of the two, the supply-side version is best known. It focuses on driving down all the costs associated with providing goods and services to the public. Jack Welch, a former head of General Electric put it this way in giving supply-side advice to other U.S. manufacturers, "Ideally employers should put every plant they own on a barge so that it could move around the world to take advantage of lower wages."

The basic tenet behind supply-side posits that when government enacts legislation to help those with significant wealth attain additional wealth, the wealthy will use those additional resources to create good-paying American jobs. Moreover, supply-siders believe that any legislation which raises the cost of doing business hurts job creation.

The other way of thinking about the economy is demand-side economics. This theory believes that employers only add to their workforce when the demand for goods and services exceeds the current workforce’s ability to meet that demand. In demand-side economics, the best friends of Main Street merchants are well-paid workers.

These two economic points of view are at odds with one another.

How do these opposing views affect the modern employment relationship? One way of understanding these economic theories is to examine legislation that humanizes the modern employment relationship. The enactment of laws during the Great Depression recognized the basic power imbalance at the core of the employment relationship. The aim of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) was to permit unions and collective bargaining. Supply-siders wanted to put money in the hands of consumers, so as to begin creating a demand for goods and services. That increasing demand would, in turn, create more jobs.

The National Labor Relations Board’s website explains the NLRA was meant to “protect the rights of employees and employers, to encourage collective bargaining, and to curtail certain private sector labor and management practices, which can harm the general welfare of workers, businesses and the U.S. economy.”

Advocates of supply-side economics actively opposed the enactment of workplace rights and safeguards. Why? Because each law creating these safeguards directly and indirectly raises the cost of doing business. As a result, this legislation is viewed by supply-siders as bad for the economy.

Not surprisingly, organized labor is firmly in the demand-side camp. Thus, every piece of legislation that creates a workplace right or safeguard was supported by a coalition of forces with organized labor playing an important role. I saw a bumper sticker on a truck that read “The Labor Movement: The Folks Who Brought You the Weekend.” That bumper sticker touts organized labor’s role in the “humanization” of the modern employment relationship for all wage earners.

From the regulation of child labor and the creation of overtime and the minimum wage laws to the 1963 Equal Pay, 1964 Civil Rights, and 1970 Occupational Safety and Health Acts organized labor was active in the coalitions that supported creating workplace rights and safeguards.

The question before Nebraska and the nation, as we near the 2018 elections, is which theory of how the economy works will dominate the electorate’s understanding of how best to create good-paying American jobs. I’m hoping it is demand-side economics.
Big Government Part 1
By John Markey

Perhaps you’ve seen the phony quote being spread around by your conservative friends on Facebook, wrongly attributed to Thomas Jefferson that goes something like, “A government big enough to give you everything is big enough to take everything you have.”

Republicans like to claim to be the party of limited government, but are they? They never tire of telling us that they are the Constitutional party; again, are they?

It is my belief that Democrats tend to use government in the spirit of, ironically, former Republican President Teddy Roosevelt. In a 1912 speech, while running for president in the progressive Bull Moose Party he said:

“So long as governmental power existed exclusively for the king and not at all for the people, then the history of liberty was a history of the limitation of governmental power. But now the governmental power rests in the people, and the kings who enjoy privilege are the kings of the financial and industrial world; and what they clamor for is the limitation of governmental power, and what the people sorely need is an extension of governmental power.”

Democrats want our government of the people to be engaged and effective, not overbearing and intrusive. Through our government, we the people want to provide safe roads and bridges, police and fire protection and public education. This is simply a promotion of the general welfare, as provided for in the Constitution.

We understand the need to regulate corporations and what they can dump into the water and into the air, how they treat consumers and employees. We want to know that our food is safe and water is clean. We also favor public assistance for those truly in need and to ensure a certain quality in life.

Because of these things, we have been labeled the party of big government, of statists, socialists, communists and much more.

But again, I must ask, is the Republican Party the party of limited government?

Death Penalty

For a group of people who, it seems, like to complain that government can’t do anything right, many Republicans sure have faith in its ability to perfectly administer the death penalty. The 2016 Republican platform boasts of the constitutionality of the death penalty and condemns erosion by the Supreme Court of the right of the people to enact the death penalty in their states.

Notice that when Republicans support action by government it is “of the people,” anything else is just big government. Never mind that the Supreme Court has not prevented any state from enacting capital punishment but has merely tried to address the arbitrariness and capriciousness often found in its application.

The Democratic Party calls for the abolition of the death penalty and for good reason. It is almost always arbitrarily applied; it does not deter crime, it is much more likely to be used against minorities and people unable to afford a quality defense. A quick search on the internet will find many people who have been exonerated from death row. One can even find people who were executed who were likely innocent, some almost certainly. One thing is sure, the evidence against them was far short of the certainty a reasonable person would require in the application of the death penalty.

The death penalty represents some of the worst of big government, since it’s flawed in so many ways and irreversible. It can be abused in truly terrifying ways.

One could argue the death penalty was necessary in earlier societies, when long term incarceration wasn’t feasible, to protect themselves from dangerous people. That is not the case now and hasn’t been for a long time. Today it serves no purpose other than to satisfy a desire for revenge. We are better served by replacing the death penalty with life imprisonment. At least if we err and wrongly convict someone, we can release a live person and offer some sort of compensation.

Using Government to Enforce Religious Beliefs

Democrats tend to support religious liberty and the freedom to practice religion so long as those practices do not violate the rights of others. We respect and value the beliefs of all people and believe government has no business promoting any religion.

On the other hand, the 2016 Republican Platform supports the public display of the Ten Commandments based on their belief that the U.S. is a Judeo-Christian nation. It condemns the Obergefell v. Hodges decision of the Supreme Court because it “robbed 320 million Americans of their legitimate constitutional authority to define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.” Let’s be honest, it only robbed conservatives of their ability to use big government to marginalize other people.
The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees all people in the U.S. equal protection of the law. If a state is to issue licenses for marriage, it must do so for all marriages unless there is a compelling reason for refusal. No state has a compelling reason to ban gay marriage, it is simply an attempt to codify religious belief into law, or even worse, a simple expression of hate. An example of a compelling reason would be a ban on marriage between minors or between an adult and a minor.

The recent revival of the term “Judeo-Christian” is merely the latest attempt to hijack our government and instill the religious beliefs into our legal system and prayer into our public schools.

War on Drugs

Remember AG Doug Peterson’s embarrassing lawsuit against Colorado over its decision to legalize recreational marijuana? How about Governor Pete Ricketts’ claim that marijuana is a dangerous drug? Has anyone bothered telling him how many deaths are caused each year by alcohol and tobacco and why has he not labeled these as dangerous drugs?

I understand that Republicans fall all over the spectrum of the failed war on drugs, but it sure seems a significant number are trying to escalate it. Notable among them are the above listed Nebraska elected officials and federal AG Jeff Sessions, who has expressed a desire to clamp down on states that have decided to legalize marijuana, maximize prosecutions and increase use of civil forfeiture.

The war on drugs has failed just as the war on alcohol during the 1920s. There is very little difference between the drug lords of today and prohibition era drug lords like Al Capone, Dutch Schultz and Dean O’Banion.

Not only has the war failed to prevent drug use, it has caused violence and mayhem across the nation, particularly in our inner cities and our neighbor to the south. It is the cause of mass incarceration. The U.S. is less than 5% of the world’s population but incarcerates more than 20% of the world’s prisoners.

We all understand the dangerous and addictive nature that many drugs have, but there are better ways to deal with the problem than prisons, militarized police, rights violations and violence. The Democratic Platform calls for better methods than mass incarceration in our dealings with the drug problem. It is time we end this dangerous extension of big government.

Corporations

Even the way we organize capital, the corporation, isn’t possible without the help of government. Each state provides legislation that legally separates the owners of a corporation, the stockholders, from the corporation. Stockholders of corporations also enjoy limited liability, meaning they are not liable for debts, obligations or damages beyond that which they have invested in the corporation, their personal assets are not at risk.

This protection is not available to owners of businesses that are not incorporated, sole proprietorships or general partnerships. Owners of these unincorporated businesses are fully liable, putting their homes and other assets at risk.

The government provided privileges of corporate personhood and limited liability alter the risk/reward ratio in favor of the stockholder. Don’t get me wrong, I fully support providing these to corporate stockholders; they are the reason we have a strong industrial economy and the reason that people are able to invest their life savings and retirement in the stock market without being involved in the operations of the company.

But with these powerful financial tools comes a trade-off, and that is reasonable and necessary regulation. Unregulated corporations, as Republicans would have them, use the power of big government to protect their stockholders while at the same time maximizing profits at the expense of the public. The 2008 economic crisis is a prime example.

Military

It is not unusual for a Republican politician to claim to stand for limited government and a strong national defense. These two things are not compatible; does anything say big government louder than the military/industrial complex? And are we really limiting our military action to national defense?

The 2016 Republican Platform calls for restoring “our nation’s military might” and complains that Democrats “hold the military’s budget hostage for their domestic agenda.” This line of thinking places the military/industrial complex above the welfare of the American people.

From the time of the Founding until the First World War, the United States did not keep a standing army. That doesn’t mean we didn’t keep a small number of federal troops to guard armories and embassies and to protect outposts on the frontier. The founding generation almost universally opposed the idea of keeping professional standing armies in times of peace. James Madison, Thomas Jefferson,
Sam Adams, George Mason and the list goes on, saw standing armies as dangerous to liberty. References to this effect are common in their writings.

The American colonists lived with British troops stationed in their towns and sometimes quartered in their homes. They understood that in the past, the armies charged with defending a nation were often turned on the very people they were charged with protecting. When they won the Revolutionary War, they wanted nothing to do with professional standing armies.

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 13 of our Constitution empowers Congress to “provide and maintain a Navy.” It uses those words exactly making clear their intention. It makes perfect sense as a Navy is out at sea protecting our ports and shipping and keeping the enemy from our shores. A Navy is neither trained nor equipped to conquer or occupy territory and poses no threat to the citizens of our nation.

To this end we have the most powerful Navy in the world. We have 19 carriers, more than the rest of the world combined. Ten of these are Nimitz class which dwarf anything operated by any other nation.

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 12 uses very different language concerning armies. It empowers Congress “To raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years.” This language clearly indicates that keeping standing armies is not our normal condition. The intent was that the Militia, citizen soldiers rather than professional soldiers, would be the primary means of land based defense.

The Second Amendment was written for this purpose, not for self-defense nor for overthrowing the federal government. The opening clause, “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state” makes its purpose clear.

Not only does a standing professional army pose a potential threat of being turned upon the people of the United States, there is also a much greater likelihood that it will be misused for unnecessary foreign invasions and occupations.

Had we followed the path set for the U.S. at its founding concerning military power, would the Bush 41 Administration have called forth the Militia or raised an Army to defend one dictatorship, Kuwait, from another, Iraq? Saddam Hussein of Iraq had been our ally through the Reagan Administration and up to the point of his invasion of Kuwait. Kuwait had hired marketing firms to lull us into the war, the stories of Iraqi soldiers pulling babies out of incubators and throwing them on the floor to die was fabricated to give us an emotional buy-in.

Would the Bush 43 Administration have taken the political risk of calling forth the militia, or raising an Army to invade Iraq? Would we have actually put some effort into the negotiations with the Taliban over turning over Bin Laden before sending in the invasion force? The Taliban may have been brutal thugs bent on enforcing their strict version of Islam, but they were not our enemy until we invaded Afghanistan.

How different would the world be today had it approached these military actions in a different way, had we tried to meet our needs and goals through the least violent ways? Would we be dealing with terrorism to the extent that we are? Would ISIS had ever come into being?

I am not undercutting the brave men and women who answered the nation’s call. We must honor the service of all who serve our nation, whether we agree with certain military actions or not. We must make our wounded veterans whole to the best of our ability, they should want for nothing that is needed to make their lives as normal as possible. But the best way to honor our best and bravest is to avoid sending them to war unless our nation is truly threatened.

The claim that liberals, progressives, Democrats are big government is just plain wrong. No one loves liberty more than us. We tend to support that responsible government liberates us, that it educates our children, provides fire, police, consumer and employee protection, but that does not meddle in our personal lives. We tend to reject big government that threatens, endangers and discriminates. It’s time we let our nation know.
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