

Nebraska Democratic Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Caucus Meeting Minutes

Date: January 28, 2005

Present: Vitoria Lavin; Cindi Lavin; Barb Baier; Lin Quenzer; Amy Barker; Melissa Rigney; Don Marti; Tim Francis; Tom Dorsch; Kurt Nisley; Jeff Leanna; Michael Gordon; Larry Wikoff; Alene Anderson Swinehart; Carmen Sandell.

Absent: Chris Shepherd.

Officers recognized. Introductions made.

Meeting Minutes from November 23, 2004 were reviewed and approved. Motion made by T. Francis, seconded by T. Dorsch.

Reports:

Lincoln by L. Quenzer. Discussed State Central Committee assignments, progress made by Rules Committee to officially recognize the caucuses. Several groups have requested the LGBT Caucus mentor them so they can organize. Among these are: Disability Rights; Native American; Asian American. Discussed the value of the Democratic Party embracing diversity and grassroots organizing and the importance of a voice on the State Central Committee's Executive Committee.

Omaha by M. Gordon. Gordon is planning a direct mail appeal to raise funds for the LGBT Caucus. He will send letters to 100 promising prospects in Omaha. He mentioned that Troy Haasis will organize a couple of fund raisers after Pride is completed this summer. Everyone was thrilled with this. Gordon will host the next LGBT Caucus meeting at CFEP offices in Omaha in order to get more Omaha people involved.

Beatrice by V. Lavin. Lavin has taken over "Fenceberry," an online news magazine for the LGBT community that has national and international subscribers. The caucus congratulated her on this.

Pending Legislation by M. Gordon. Explained the three pieces of legislation up in the Unicameral: LB 759; LB 50; LB 627. Reported on recent poll in Nebraska regarding public opinion on various LGBT community issues, including employment and housing protection, marriage, foster care, etc. Focused on the importance of LB 50, Anti-Bullying legislation, sponsored by Sen. Gwen Howard. Mentioned several disturbing incidents of high school youth driven out of school and even death due to bullying that often involves sexual orientation and gender expression. One in Seward with mildly developmentally disabled young woman that was perceived as lesbian by her peers and the other resulted in the death of an asthmatic young woman in the Omaha Public Schools. Discussed strategy for having high school youth testify at Unicameral. We will wait till LB 50 moves out of committee and perhaps will emphasize the bill during our Lobbying Day. Gordon will inform the caucus as to when Lobbying Day will occur. LB 50 is not supported by the NE Board of Education, but other entities, including Catholic Charities are considering supporting it.

State Historical Society, Wherry Induction & Pending Bill Regarding State Hall of Fame by L.

Quenzer. The Historical Society has not yet set a date for the next Hall of Fame induction. It appears to have been placed on hold while Sen. Schimek's LB 37 goes through the legislative process. This bill would limit the Hall of Fame to induction every five years and require that inductees be dead at least 50 years. Some concern was raised that this knocks out Malcolm X nomination, but allows Wherry's to move forward. It also creates a situation in which most people will have forgotten the contributions and perhaps the concerns regarding nominees with such a large time span between their lives, deaths and actual induction. Quenzer has spoken with Sen. Schimek and intentions were good. Caucus encouraged Quenzer to further discuss some of the concerns regarding the LB 37 with Sen. Schimek.

Committee Reports:

Web-site by B. Baier. The caucus bylaws, some member bios, meeting minutes and a few articles have been forwarded to Heath Mello to upload on the State Democratic Party's web-site. A link will be established with our web-site, which C. Shepherd has developed a prototype for. Baier will also forward this information to Shepherd. A motion was made by B. Baier and seconded by V. Lavin to have Amy Barker take care of the web-site, starting in about two weeks. Motion approved.

Fund Raising Troy Haasis will organize a couple of fund-raisers in Omaha. The caucus was happy to hear of Troy lending his expertise in this. Gordon will organize some fund raisers after the spring Omaha election cycle.

Discussion ensued on the high priority of having a presence at any and all candidates campaign events (if possible).

Gordon will modify the Voters Guide question from the last election cycle to have this round of candidates respond to. It was felt that it would be better to have face-to-face meetings with candidates in order to get their stand on LGBT issues. Gordon and Leanna will do this in Omaha. Francis, Baier, Quenzer, and Rigney will do this in Lincoln. Meetings will be March. Meet and greet events will be organized in both Lincoln and Omaha in April. Rigney will contact UNL LGBT group to get their sponsorship and then secure a site in the UNL Student Union for the reception.

Membership by T. Francis. Francis laid out his priorities in membership recruitment. He plans to recruit 20 to 30 LGBT community members and allies to help the Democratic Party be more inclusive and responsive to constituent needs and concerns.

Leanna encouraged all members of the caucus to show up at State Central Committee meetings because if delegates and their alternates do not show up and you are in the LD with no representation, you can then become the delegate for that LD. Also, discussed buttons as fund-raisers. This will require the caucus to get a tax i.d. number. Leanna will work on developing a couple of designs for the buttons and basic elements for our logo design and colors. Gordon emphasized that consistency in use of logo, colors, fonts, etc. will enhance the branding for the organization and our visibility. Amy Barker and Cindi will assist Leanna with this project.

Leanna also suggested the caucus get a domain name and other logistics for the web-site. Motion was made by T. Francis and seconded by Carmen Sandell to have B. Baier explore the domain name, etc.

Issues Forums by M. Gordon. We will have 2 to 4 issue forums per year to educate our community and

fellow Democrats on LGBT issues. Gordon will organize the first one. It will be on the Victory Fund with a national speaker coming Feb. 20th and 21st to Omaha and Lincoln to discuss how LGBT and other minority communities can get their candidates on the ballot and actually win. Some training, support and maybe even money could be provided by the Victory Fund. In the near future, Gordon will provide more information such as location, time, cost (if any), etc. to the caucus so we can all attend.

The next Issues Forum will be in Lincoln, likely at Spaghetti Works in a party room. The topic will be bullying/harassment in the schools impacting LGBT youth, often forcing them to drop out of school, causing nearly 2 out of every 3 teen suicides to be related to sexual orientation/gender identity issues. We hope to have representatives from each of Lincoln Public Schools' Gay Straight Alliances, UNL LGBT group and SCC GSA present, as well as some youth from out state, if possible. The panel will be moderated by Baier or Quenzer or someone(s). LGBT community and mainstream Democrats will be invited to learn more about the issue. A voluntary contribution to cover expenses will be collected at the door. T. Dorsch, L. Wikoff, M. Rigney and A. Swinehart will assist B. Baier in organizing this event, which will likely be scheduled for April.

Old Business

Article of Incorporation by B. Baier. Started to review Articles and came to the conclusion that it would be better and easier to just file as a 527 with Nebraska Accountability & Disclosure Commission, using 727 South 18th, Lincoln, NE 68508 as the physical address. Baier will go to the IRS web-site to get an EIN number. Quenzer will secure a letter from the democratic Party stating the caucus is an affiliate organization. The treasurer and Chair will sign documents so we'll need Quenzer, Baier and Wikoff to go together the Accountability & Disclosure Commission. Baier will go to State IRS to get tax i.d. number. Motion made by T. Francis and seconded by V. Lavin to have Baier complete these activities and to open a bank account in the caucus' name.

New Business

Caucus Allies. Chair indicated that Cheri Marti has resigned as her Ally position on the caucus board. Many thanks were expressed for C. Marti's help and support. Nominations were entertained for position. Motion was made by J. Leanna and seconded by T. Dorsch to have both an Ally and Alternate positions on the board. Approved.
Motion was made by B. Baier and seconded by V. Lavin to approve Alene Anderson Swinehart and Don Marti at Ally and Alternate, respectively. Approved.

Tables at Events. Discussion ensued regarding purchasing at least one table at each of the following events: Patriot's Dinner, Feb. 26th (Lincoln - Cornhusker); Salute to senators, March 7th (Lincoln - Hillcrest); Morrison-Exon Dinner, May 21st (Omaha). Prices will be confirmed by Quenzer within the next week. A committee to approach individuals that can pay for and hopefully attend was formed. If the donor cannot attend, caucus members will sit in their place to ensure LGBT Caucus visibility. Committee members are: J. Leanna; B. Baier; L. Quenzer; T. Francis; D. Marti; A. Swinehart. Most committee meetings and communication will likely be conducted via e-mail and phone. Contact will be made within one week as Feb. 26th is coming up fast.

Lancaster Co. Democrats Forum - Time Warner - Channel 13. Baier explained that she and Josh Cramer are now heading up the Forum and will be emphasizing minorities, inclusion and bringing the party back to its roots. The show airs every Tues. At 10:30 p.m., Wed. At 6:00 p.m., Saturday at 12:30 p.m. It can also be seen on the Lancaster County Democrats web-site,

www.lancastercountymocrats.org, click on T.V. Show (which needs to be updated – Baier will remind them of that). Baier and Cramer were interviewed by Dr. Hank Balters for this and next week’s programs. First guests will be: Baier - Michael Gordon to discuss legislation; Beatty Brasch to discuss her lengthy involvement with the Democrats and pertinent poverty issues; Ed Wimes to discuss African American issues. Cramer - will interview a young man who has lived in Europe and the European view of current U.S. foreign policy. Each interview will last 27 minutes.

Banner. The need for a banner was discussed. Leanna will explore this in conjunction with the buttons, branding, etc.

Stonewall Democrats. Leanna explained the role at Stonewall democrats can play and the increased flexibility this would give the group if we partnered with them. Motion was made by L. Quenzer and seconded by T. Dorsch to have J. Leanna explore a partnership or affiliation with the Stonewall Democrats and to provide more information to the caucus. Approved.

Next meeting. Motion was made to have the next LGBT Caucus meeting in Omaha on Friday, Feb. 25th at 7:00 p.m. at CFEP offices at 105 Howard across from Vivace’s Restaurant by J. Leanna and seconded by T. Francis. Approved. Directions: Go to the door by an art studio. Go up the stairs to CFEP offices. Rigney and others offered their vehicles for car pooling. Please make contact with each other so we have a good turn out.

Motion made by V. Lavin and seconded by J. Leanna to adjourn the meeting. Approved.

Meeting adjourned.

**Minutes Respectfully Submitted By
Barbara A. Baier
LGBT Caucus Secretary**