

Nebraska Democrats LGBT Caucus

Meeting Minutes

Date: October 21, 2005

Present: Barbara Baier; Lin Quenzer; John Taylor; Victoria Lavin; George Wolf; Melissa Rigney; Jill Korte; Larry Wikoff

Excused: Tom Dorsch; Michael Gordon

Officers recognized. Introductions made.

August 2005 meeting minutes reviewed and approved.

Chair's Report by Lin Quenzer

Reported on the State Party's central committee meeting in Scottsbluff. Representatives from the Democratic National Committee were present to give a party building workshop. DNC reps looked for Lin and Barb to connect and to say that the DNC is supportive of the caucus's efforts. It was felt that the trip to Scottsbluff was useful. Several people came forward and explained that either they were parents of LGBT children, or their union, or other group was interested in being supportive of community. Most requested ways to connect with the LGBT community. Quenzer asked for suggestions for more third district representation on the caucus and for the caucus to consider reaching out to the third district more.

First District Report by Victoria Lavin

Interest is increasing to create a Gay Straight Alliance in Beatrice. Lavin will contact Ruth Kupfer, Lincoln Public Schools GSA Sponsor, for more information. There is some concern that the Beatrice School Board will object. Some discussion whether to have the Caucus or other Dems write a letter supporting a GSA. Also suggested was to write to only the Democrats on the school board. Work continues on including the LGBT community in a diversity event to occur on or near Martin Luther King Day.

Second District Report by Michael Gordon

Michael was unable to attend the meeting due to a scheduling conflict.

Third District Report by Chris Shepherd

Chris Shepherd did not attend the meeting. Concern was expressed that no one has heard from her for some time.

Committee Reports

Web-site - The need to get the web-site updated is apparent. Suggestions were fielded to have Goldenrod Printing assume this responsibility as fee-for-service, after we get our bill paid. Another suggestion was to ask Kelly Erismann to volunteer her expertise.

Fund Raising Events - Melissa Rigney and Larry Wikoff agreed to organize a fund raising event in Omaha at the Reading Grounds sometime in December.

John Taylor agreed to contact Jack Saltzmann to see if one of his Chocolate Parties could be a fund raiser for the caucus next year.

John Taylor agreed to contact Rick Swaink to see if a drag show could be done for the caucus after the first of the year.

Melissa Rigney is willing to organize a film festival to occur in March 2006, if we are able to come up with some seed money.

Forum/Issues Committee

It was agreed that a letter should be written to the Beatrice School Board about a potential GSA in the schools. Motion made to write letter by e-mail by Taylor and seconded by Rigney.

The caucus should send a letter to Gov. Heineman about the lack of Hispanics or other minorities on the State Board of Education. Motion made to write letter by e-mail by Baier and seconded by Taylor.

“Lavender Scare” Event

The October 25th, 7:30 event was promoted by Wolf. The caucus would continue promoting the event. Event could be impacted by hurricane since David Johnson, author, lives in Florida.

Everyone commended Lin Quenzer on her article about the 1950s, Sen. Wherry and the hunt for homosexuals that also promoted the “Lavender Scare” event. Article appeared as Op-Ed in Lincoln Journal Star.

Public Relations

Baier reported that the Quenzer- Baier family has been selected by the Lincoln Arts Council’s Stories of Home public art project, which will hopefully bring a greater awareness of LGBT family issues. Reported on National Coming Out Day events at UNO campus, speech on coming out lesbian in 1980s which was presented at the annual Central Labor Union event.

Old Business

John Taylor volunteered to walk the articles of incorporation papers through so the caucus can open a bank account.

New Business

Quenzer reported that Mayor Seng is supportive and a LGBT Taskforce has been formed. Members are: M. Rigney; T. Francis; Kara Kluger; Kelly Erismann; Lori Rennings; Pat Tetreault; Ruth Kupfer. Michael Gordon came to provide some background regarding Omaha’s efforts regarding Hate Crimes education.

Mayor Seng wants to increase public awareness and reporting of hate crimes regarding all minority groups, and particularly those against the LGBT community because those crimes are

more violent and are more likely to result in death. Plans include: 1) Hate crimes P.R. campaign; 2) On-line reporting through City web-site; 3) Fund raising for P.R. campaign; 4) Ads in local media; 5) PSAs on radio and t.v.; 6) Include all minorities by involving the Mayor's Multicultural Advisory Council; 7) Sponsor a No Place for Hate Walk & Rally; 8) Explore ability for LPS to include training and curriculum regarding hate crimes and bullying in general; 9) Continue to encourage Lincoln Journal Star to run a series on hate crimes.

It was suggested to coordinate with Paul Olsen on these issues, particularly the curriculum in the schools.

Endorsing Candidates

It was discussed that the caucus needs to develop a way to endorse candidates. Suggestions included utilizing a questionnaire to find out a candidate's level of support of the LGBT community. It was agreed that we need some guidance from Gordon on this. Also, we need to know the closing dates for candidates to file so we can have the questionnaire go out soon after that. It was discussed that we need to be able to offer candidates something for gaining our endorsement such as dedicated volunteers to walk precincts, caucus would host a fund raising party for the candidate, etc.

Starting a Lincoln Citizens for Equal Protection Affiliate

This idea was presented. It was encouraged that Gordon come to the next caucus meeting, explain what a Lincoln affiliate would accomplish, what kind of representation it would have, etc.

Other Items

Kudos to Human Rights Commission for including a workshop on LGBT business/employment issues at their annual symposium.

Next Meeting

Friday, November 18th, 7 to 9 p.m. at the CWA Hall, 25th & N, Lincoln.

Meeting adjourned.

Meeting Minutes
Respectfully Submitted By
Barbara Baier
Caucus Secretary