



# Nebraska Report

*There is no Peace without Justice*

*Nebraskans for Peace*

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# Husker Power Plan

## Clean Energy for a Brighter Tomorrow

*by Duane Hovorka, former Executive Director of the Nebraska Wildlife Federation*

### Goals

As Nebraska moves away from fossil fuels like coal and natural gas to generate electricity, a much larger share of our electricity can come from cleaner, in-state sources. The goals of our Husker Power Plan include:

- Reducing air pollution from power plants that is sickening and killing Nebraskans.
- Ensuring a sustainable, affordable system for generating our electricity for future generations.

- Reducing Nebraska’s use of out-of-state coal, keeping money and jobs in Nebraska.
- Reducing pollution produced by Nebraska electric utilities that has been linked to climate change.

A clean energy future for Nebraska’s electric utilities could start with investments to reduce energy use and decisions to add renewable wind and solar energy as outlined in this plan. In the future, energy storage, “Smart Grid” technology, co-generation, and district energy systems that make more efficient use of energy could continue the transition. Surplus coal-fired power plants could be closed, starting with the oldest and most polluting.

### Manage Our Demand

To reduce wasteful energy use and save Nebraska businesses and residents money, our plan would put in place community-driven energy efficiency programs designed to ramp up over several years, eventually delivering a 2 percent annual reduction in electricity consumed through energy efficiency measures and better building codes and standards.

As the energy savings grow over the next decade they would more than offset the 0.4 percent annual growth in peak demand for electricity now expected by our utilities, reduce the generating capacity needed to be in place to meet demands at peak times of use, and reduce the total electricity consumed by Nebraskans.

The energy savings would come from weatherizing homes, businesses and other buildings; installing energy efficient lighting, heating, cooling, motors and appliances; consumer education and incentives. These investments would generate jobs throughout the state.

### Add Wind and Solar

To provide clean renewable energy, our plan would add 1,500 to 1,850 megawatts (MW) of new community and large-scale wind farms over the next five years, allowing Nebraska to at least double its

## inside:

	What’s HOT in Global Warming?	p. 8
Straight Talk on Climate Change	p. 4	Protecting Nebraska’s Children p. 9
Diplomacy, Not War, with North Korea	p. 5	The Politics of Color p. 10
From Her Omaha Home, Mother of Three Works to Rid World of Nukes	p. 6	NFP State Board 2018 Priority Issues p. 13
	Speaking Our Peace	p. 16

*continued on page 2*

## Nebraska Report

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# Husker Power, conclusion

current electricity generated by wind. Nebraska would also add at least 129 MW of community and large-scale solar generation over the next five years.

With those additions, renewable wind, solar and hydroelectric energy would meet nearly half of Nebraska's electricity needs by 2023.

Recent Nebraska wind contracts have cost just 1.5 to 2.0 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh), competitive with any of Nebraska's existing coal or gas-fired power plants. New wind farms could be located in areas where there is low wildlife and environmental impact and access to existing transmission lines. Nebraska has an abundance of wind and solar potential, and the cost of both continues to fall.

## Infrastructure Needed

A 2014 study for the Power Review Board concluded that with transmission lines in place or in the works, our state could accommodate new wind and solar at the level we propose. Given changes since 2014, including the closure of the Fort Calhoun nuclear power plant, we support continued studies to identify transmission or other changes needed to implement this plan.

In the future, as old, outdated coal-fired power-plants are closed, more transmission line capacity would be freed up. Nebraska boasts many areas with strong wind and solar potential and low wildlife and other resource concerns, and additional wind and solar farms could be brought on-line as outdated power plants are closed.

## Taking the Next Steps

Over the next five years, the initial steps above would reduce Nebraska's reliance on coal-fired power plants, create in-state jobs, and set up our state for the next steps towards a 100-percent clean energy future. As technologies improve and costs continue to fall, there are many options available for those next steps.

Utility-scale batteries are now available, the technology is improving rapidly, and prices are falling.

Electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles are increasingly popular. With careful planning, utilities could tap vehicle batteries to meet peak power demand when vehicles are not in use. Utilities would also benefit by selling power to recharge vehicle batteries, typically at offpeak times.

Energy can be stored through compressed air or pumped hydro facilities, using electricity to store energy during times of surplus and converting the stored energy back to electricity when most needed.

New "Smart Grid" technology can improve the generation and transmission of electricity, help consumers and utilities use energy more efficiently, and better time our energy use with avail-



able supplies of wind and solar.

Co-generation projects use waste heat from industries to generate electricity, or use waste heat from a power plant for industrial use. Nebraska has many ethanol and industrial plants that generate waste heat that could be used to generate electricity.

Lincoln and Omaha have district energy systems that provide heating and cooling to multiple buildings in one area. Expanding those systems and developing district energy in other communities would save energy.

### **Close Old, Dirty Coal-Fired Power Plants**

As we manage our demand and add affordable wind and solar energy, Nebraska will increasingly be powered by clean, renewable electricity.

In the future, as we better manage peak loads, add energy storage, and take advantage of Smart Grid applications, aging coal-fired power plants will be increasingly unneeded. With the rapid rise in delivered coal prices, air pollution problems and their heavy water use, older coal-fired power plants are already a growing burden on Nebraska utilities and their customer-owners.

Starting with the oldest and dirtiest

power plants first, Nebraska can plan for, phase out and close power plants that are no longer needed. That would allow time for transition planning to help employees and communities deal with the changes.

Most of Nebraska's power-plants were built before modern pollution control technologies were available, so they emit many times the level of harmful pollutants like mercury, sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxides, soot and heavy metals compared to newer power plants.

As those older power plants are closed, Nebraskans could breathe easier because the few coal-fired power plants that would remain have modern pollution control systems which substantially reduce pollutants like mercury, sulfur dioxide, soot and others linked to health problems in people.

### **Nebraska's Clean Energy Future**

Nebraska boasts a variety of affordable, readily available clean energy options that can transform our electric utility system, provide new jobs and investment, and power Nebraska's economy into a clean energy future. Nebraska is a 100-percent public power state, so the benefits of a well-planned transition

to 100-percent clean energy will accrue to all the residents of Nebraska.

As we have outlined in this Husker Power Plan, with the right mix of energy efficiency, wind, solar and other clean energy options, Nebraska can move away from dirty fossil fuels like coal, providing enormous health benefits to our residents.

We can lock in a clean energy future with electricity that is affordable, prices that are predictable, and energy produced largely within our borders. We can save Nebraska businesses and residents hundreds of millions of dollars every year in energy costs. The environmental and health benefits would be even larger than the other economic benefits.

With our Husker Power Plan, we can give ourselves a clean energy future, and leave our children and their children a more efficient and effective economy and a better world.

*The Husker Power Plan has been endorsed by the Nebraska Wildlife Federation, Nebraska Farmers Union, Citizens' Climate Lobby, Nebraska 350.org, Nebraskans for Peace and the League of Women Voters of Nebraska.*

# *Straight Talk* on Climate Change

by Marilyn McNabb

*Citizens Climate Lobby Activist & Former  
Lincoln Electric System Board Member*

Last month we talked about 2017 reports pointing to a dangerous future because of climate change and a variety of responses to these warnings. One study put its conclusion in its title: "Three Years to Safeguard Our Climate." It was supported by a second report a few months later. Both said greenhouse gas emissions must begin to be reduced in the next three years. A survey by journalist David Wallace-Wells in *New York* magazine summarized worst case scenarios for climate change if we pursue business as usual. These writings ignited sharp discussions about whether people wanting to see constructive action should avoid scaring the heck out of people.

That debate continues. Journalist Lucia Graves recently made some interesting contributions to the discussion in an article titled,

"Which works better: climate fear or climate hope? Well, it's complicated." (*Guardian*, January 4, 2018) She raises a very basic question, citing a study by the Yale Program on Climate Communications showing that one in four Americans say they "never hear someone discussing climate change." Her point: "The overwhelming problem in climate communication, after all, isn't how it's talked about so much as whether it's being talked about at all."

It appears from a map produced by the Yale Program that the places where people report discussing climate more often—like Northeastern states from Maine to Delaware and in most of the states to the west of Nebraska, especially on the West Coast—public policies on climate are stronger and better. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/21/climate/how-americans-think-about-climate-change-in-six-maps.html>.

If the issue is whether climate change is being talked about, then, Graves writes,

"David Wallace-Wells' apocalyptic horror story cum viral sensation is the best thing that's happened in climate communication in some time."

She notes that anger, and pairing fear and efficacy can be helpful in motivating action. But mostly, she points out that aiming to make audiences feel hope or fear probably exceeds the abilities of most of us, given the complexity of human emotions. "The best approach, she writes, "is one of humility—that is, to spend more time listening, and also, to know our own limits."

Dr. James Hansen, Director of the Climate Science Awareness and Solutions Program at Columbia University's Earth Institute and former Director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, on November 19, 2017 addressed the topic, "Scientific Reticence, A Threat to Humanity and Nature." The full statement is on the web: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7z61UZoppM> A summary is below...

*Richard Feynman, who I would say was the second-greatest physicist of the 20th century, liked to poke fun at his fellow physicists about the famous Millikan oil drop experiment which was meant to measure the electron charge. Millikan got an answer that we now know was not quite right. But his fellow scientists as they did their experiments and got a different answer from Milliken's just moved the value a little way from Milliken's and then a little farther and a little farther and after enough years they got to the right answer. But there is a reticence to challenge the expert number. I use this as an example.*

*In 2005 and 2007 when I heard from glaciologists, they were beginning to get really worried about the stability of the ice sheets and the threat they posed to sea level. And yet you didn't hear that in public. The IPCC documents had little of any contribution about the ice sheets. The problem is we don't have decades to come to the right answer.*

*We now know that the temperature rise of the past few decades has raised global temperatures far above the last 11,000 years in which civilization developed. In fact, the temperature now is comparable to the maximum temperature 120,000 years ago when sea level was 6 to 9 meters higher.*

*The temperature over the last 50 years has been rising almost linearly. Why? The planet is out of energy balance. There's more energy coming in than going out as heat radiation because*

*the increasing greenhouse gases are like a blanket. They reduce the heat radiation to space.*

*IPCC has added to their scenarios a pathway designed to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius. But what's happening is this has no relation to reality. The reality is that climate forcings are not only increasing, but increasing faster. So there's a gap, already, between the real world and the 1.5 degree scenario.*

*We could do something about that gap. We could suck some CO2 out of the atmosphere with the estimated cost of \$150 or \$350 per ton. At the lower end of that range, you're talking about \$650 billion to remove the excess of just one year's emissions. Or if it's \$350 per ton, it's \$1.4 trillion.*

*We're not going to spend a trillion dollars every year to suck CO2 out of the atmosphere. What we're doing instead is handing young people a situation that is beginning to run out of control.*

*It is well understood that as long as fossil fuels remain cheap, we're not going to phase them out. What you have to do is make the price of fossil fuels include their costs to society. That includes air pollution, water pollution and climate change. If you do that, we can move to alternatives.*

*As long as we don't make fossil fuels pay their costs to society, we're not going to solve the problem. We can't pretend we're doing that. The theory that you can solve this problem without a rising price on carbon has no foundation whatsoever.*

# Diplomacy, Not War, With North Korea

*The following op-ed by Peace Action President Kevin Martin and Communications Associate Gabe Murphy was published on the Common Dreams website January 5, 2018. Nebraskans for Peace is a proud affiliate member of Peace Action, the country's largest peace and disarmament organization with approximately 200,000 supporters nationwide.*

As the U.S., the Korean Peninsula, and the world stare down the barrel of what would be a devastating war between the U.S. and North Korea, President Trump's reluctant, kinda sorta endorsement via Twitter of proposed talks between North and South Korea triggered a collective sigh of cautious relief. Of course, the president's claiming credit for the diplomatic opening was absurd given his frequent statements disparaging the diplomatic path and habitual squandering of opportunities to walk it. But Trump was right to support the proposal. He was also right to agree to a delay in joint military exercises with South Korea at least until after the Winter Olympics, which could help create the space needed for a productive conversation. The initial talks, scheduled for January 9th, will address ways to improve relations between North and South Korea as well as North Korea's participation in the Olympic games.

While slowly warming to the prospect of dialogue with North Korea, the administration has been taking a 'one step forward, two steps back' approach. Last month, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that the U.S. was ready for direct talks with North Korea. He even went so far as to drop the nonsensical precondition that North Korea agree to completely denuclearize prior to negotiations. Shortly thereafter, first the White House and then Tillerson himself walked back that statement, saying that North Korea would have to "earn its way back to the table."

Now that Trump has taken this positive step forward—supporting an initial meeting between North and South Korea—we can hope the administration refrains from taking another two steps back.

Unfortunately, a contingent of news and policy makers seem to be encouraging just that. Following Kim Jong-un's initial overture to South Korea, in which he voiced North Korea's interest in talks and participation in the Olympics, a story emerged that the speech was nothing more than a trap. Analysts for the *New York Times* argued that the overture was all about "driving a wedge into its [South Korea's] seven-decade alliance with the United States." *The Atlantic* ran a story titled, "Kim Jong-un's Trap for South Korea." Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina tweeted: "Allowing Kim Jong Un's North Korea to participate in #WinterOlympics would give legitimacy to the most illegitimate regime on the planet... I'm confident South Korea will reject this absurd overture and fully believe that if North Korea goes to the Winter Olympics, we do not."

If history is any guide, should these initial talks with North Korea bear fruit and lead to broader, multilateral talks, or even direct U.S. participation, diplomacy will come under further attack.

A little over four years ago, the U.S. and other world powers reached an interim agreement with Iran over its nuclear program, a precursor to the Iran Nuclear Agreement. Under this first step towards a broader deal, Iran suspended its uranium enrichment in exchange for partial relief from economic sanctions. Even that interim accord, just a baby step back from the brink of war, was hard won after months of intensive diplomacy. Yet despite its obvious benefits, the agreement came under immediate attack from Republicans in Congress.

On the bright side, political expediency could work to benefit diplomacy this time around. As long as the Trump Administration is actually pursuing diplomacy with North Korea, or not blocking it, we can at least expect Republican criticism of talks to be more muted than it was during the Obama Administration.

Case in point, despite Lindsey Graham's



initial reaction to North Korea's overture, following Trump's backing of talks he softened his stance, tweeting that he supports "talks and dialogue with North Korea about their nuclear program and provocative behavior." But if you read the rest of the thread, he goes on to chastise the Olympic committee for considering North Korea's participation, and to state that "It's a big-time bad idea to send a message to North Korea that there will be no repercussions for behavior which is among the most despicable in the history of the world." Of course much of North Korea's behavior is deeply troubling, but what repercussions is Graham suggesting? Would they serve to support or undermine diplomacy?

As the diplomatic process finally begins, there will be countless opportunities for the Trump Administration to undermine it, and countless voices telling it to. As was the case with the Iran agreement, public support for diplomacy is what kept the negotiations alive, and what allowed it to make its way through a hostile Congress. Thankfully, most of the country supports pursuing diplomacy. According to a mid-December poll, 64 percent of Americans support direct talks between the U.S. and North Korea. We need to turn that support into action. Concerned citizens can call their members of Congress today and ask them to speak out in favor of direct diplomacy with North Korea without preconditions, and also to rein in Trump's authority to wage war, even nuclear war, absent congressional authorization. The Capitol Switchboard number is 202-224-3121.

# From Her Omaha Home, Mom of Three Works to Rid World of Nukes

The following article by Omaha World-Herald columnist Michael Kelly appeared in the newspaper's October 13, 2017 edition, and is reprinted with permission from the Omaha World-Herald.

With kids 5, 3 and 1, she's a busy Omaha mom. And like many, she's made plans for the weekend.

Hers are a little different—organizing an anti-nuclear armaments event at the United Nations in New York.

“Because of tensions in the world right now,” said Allison Boehm-Campos, “it’s even more important that our work stays persistent.”

She is a veteran of such work, having spent 15 years with the international nonprofit organization Peace Boat. The Westside High graduate—a great-granddaughter of Nebraska Furniture Mart founder Rose Blumkin—has lived much of her adult life in Japan and New York.

Two years ago she moved back to Omaha with husband Daniel Campos “to give our kids a better life.”

She continues to work from Omaha for Japan-based Peace Boat, which charters a 1,000-passenger ship that books people of all ages and travels the world. She is in New York preparing for events Sunday and Monday as part of the 95th Global Voyage for Peace.

The “Floating Festival for Sustainability” on Sunday will include music, art and cultural performances as well as presentations on climate change and degradation of oceans.

Allison, who speaks Japanese, is in charge of a Peace Boat event Monday at the United Nations. It will include testimony by a survivor of the 1945 atomic bombing of Nagasaki, who was 10 at the time.

Peace Boat is a prominent mem-



Matt Dixon/The World-Herald

Allison Boehm-Campos, left, at a 2015 event at the United Nations with atomic bomb survivor Suekichi Kido, secretary general of the Japan Confederation of Atomic- and H-Bomb Survivors, and her Peace Boat colleague Sumiko Hatakeyama.

ber of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, founded in Vienna in 2007. ICAN was announced last week as the 2017 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

With recent missile-testing by North Korea and a war of words between the leaders of that nation and the United States, fears of nuclear war are heightened. The Nobel committee said ICAN is being honored “to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons.”

ICAN was a key player in the July adoption of a nuclear weapons ban treaty at the U.N., signed by 122 countries. Though some observers consider the accord largely symbolic because none of the nine known nuclear powers signed, others see the treaty as highly significant.

It means that nuclear weapons “are

now explicitly illegal under international law,” Boehm-Campos said, as are land mines, cluster munitions and biological and chemical weapons.

Allison, 40, with an Omaha backyard full of playground equipment, sees a connection between her longtime anti-nuclear work and her newer role as a wife and a mother of small children.

In wishing for a world rid of nuclear weapons, she hopes the reasons are increasingly apparent: “I hope more and more people understand the actual human consequences.”

As a teenager, Allison helped with file work at her great-grandmother’s carpet outlet. She recalls the big birthday parties for Rose Blumkin, widely referred to as “Mrs. B” but known to younger generations of the family as “Grandma B.” Having earlier built Nebraska Furniture Mart into the nation’s largest home furnishings store, Mrs. B

continued selling carpet past 100 and lived to 104.

Though Allison didn't follow in her great-grandmother's business career, "I've always channeled her drive and work ethic. I remember how smart she was, doing calculations in her head."

Allison's line of strong Omaha women includes grandmother Sylvia Cohn and mother Claudia Boehm. (Allison's father, attorney Joel Boehm, lives in California.)

A graduate of Colgate University in Hamilton, New York, Allison taught English in Japan. Living in a village on the island of Shikoku in 2001, she was influenced by the horror of 9/11 to do more to promote peace.

In 2002, she began volunteering with Peace Boat, which soon led to full-time work, including on disaster relief. On the ship, she took five world voyages and visited more than 50 countries.

In 2006, she opened Peace Boat US, the organization's United Nations liaison office in New York City. In 2011, she earned a master's degree in international affairs at Columbia

University.

In addition to her work with Peace Boat, she has served as a consultant on the Arms Trade Treaty with Oxfam International and has written policy briefs for the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders.

For more than a decade with Peace Boat, she has organized events for Hibakusha—atomic-bomb survivors—to speak at the U.N.

Her husband is a widely known long-distance runner in New York and has run marathons in Boston, New York, Chicago, Toronto and elsewhere. In Omaha, he works for the Furniture Mart.

Allison welcomes contacts from those interested in joining Peace Boat, at [allison@peaceboat-us.org](mailto:allison@peaceboat-us.org). "I'd love for more people from Omaha to have the global experiences I have had."

Across from her high school, where she sang in show choir, the Omaha mom works against nuclear weapons from her office at home—with her young children and their backyard playground equipment as constant reminders of her dream of a future without nuclear weapons.



Matt Dixon/The World-Herald

*Boehm-Campos plays with two of her children, Maddie, 3, and Taylor, 1, at their home.*

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# What's HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

## Fire & Ice: The Climate-Change Connection

How do you get record wildfires in and near Los Angeles the same day (December 8, 2017) that a sloppy snowstorm blanketed Houston, Texas? Melt the Arctic ice-cap. A jet stream that arched over Alaska, then plunged southward over the middle of the United States and north-eastward along the East Coast intensified raging fires in Southern California (with temperatures in the 80s), at the same time that white-out snows stretched from Houston and Atlanta to Buffalo and Boston. For a day or two, there was more snow on the ground in Houston than in Anchorage, Alaska. Scientific evidence has been accumulating that this grotesque jet stream is shaped by rapid melting of Arctic ice.

### Melting Ice Changes Atmospheric Circulation

Ivana Cvijanovic and colleagues (2017) wrote in *Nature Communications* that: "From 2012 to 2016, California experienced one of the worst droughts since the start of observational records. As in previous dry periods,

precipitation-inducing winter storms were steered away from California by a persistent atmospheric ridging system in the North Pacific... Sea-ice changes lead to reorganization of tropical convection that in turn triggers an anticyclonic response over the North Pacific, resulting



in significant drying over California... We conclude that sea-ice loss of the magnitude expected in the next decades could substantially impact California's precipitation, thus highlighting another mechanism by which human-caused climate change could exacerbate future California droughts."

Jennifer Francis, an atmospheric scientist based at Rutgers University and University of Wisconsin-Madison

atmospheric scientist Stephen Varvus, writing in *Geophysical Research Letters*, have proposed a theory that associates rising temperatures in the Arctic with changes in weather conditions (and the persistence of particular patterns) at lower latitudes. Francis and Varvus wrote

waves."

"The Arctic is warming at two to three times the rate of the rest of the globe" Francis said. "As it warms, there's less contrast between the temperature of Arctic air and the atmosphere farther south. As a result, the jet stream weakens. A strong jet stream

*After five years of drought, the winter of 2016-2017 brought soaking rains and near-record snows in the mountains, followed by a return of drought this year.*

(2012) that: "These effects are particularly evident in autumn and winter consistent with sea-ice loss, but are also apparent in summer, possibly related to earlier snow melt on high-latitude land. Slower progression of upper-level waves would cause associated weather patterns in mid-latitudes to be more persistent, which may lead to an increased probability of extreme weather events that result from prolonged conditions, such as drought, flooding, cold spells, and heat

tends to flow fairly directly, west to east. A weakened jet meanders at a slower pace, looping north and south. The consequences: A weakened jet stream is more likely to form atmospheric blocks, which tend to create 'stuck' weather patterns. The meandering allows Arctic air to plunge southward or warm air to surge northward. Combined, these two factors stack the odds in favor of prolonged hot or cold spells and contrib-





# Protecting Nebraska's Children

by Sally Herrin

“As a state, we have work to do.” So say Nebraska State Senators Sara Howard of District 9 and Kate Bolz of District 29. Their *Omaha World-Herald* editorial paints a stark and tragic picture. “The most recent report of the inspector general of child welfare cites nine reports of death or serious injury to a child in the custody of our state foster care system. It further notes a disturbing increase in sexual abuse cases and a need for an investigation into mental health needs and suicide attempts by state wards.”

Last session, the Department of Health and Human Services volunteered to do more with no new funding, to deliver services and add training responsibilities. “After a gubernatorial veto that cut child welfare service provider rates,” Howard and Bolz note, “it is now more difficult than ever to guarantee that Nebraska will have the services, and providers, to ensure the safety of children.”

This session, DHHS is projecting a shortfall of \$61.5 million for fiscal 2018-19. And that’s the good news.

The bad news is the epidemic of child sexual abuse in our country today. As documented by the Office of the Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare in a report published last October, Nebraska is no exception. “Recent estimates show that 1 in 10 [U.S.] children will be subject to sexual abuse involving sexual contact before the age of 18, either by an adult or another youth... Between 2013 and 2016, there were 1,284 substantiated victims of child sexual abuse in Nebraska.” Actual numbers of victims are notoriously difficult to compile, as victims sometimes wait years to speak up, if then. Many children lack the ability, and some never are able

even as adults, to describe what happens to them. According to the OIG report, roughly half nationally, and perhaps nearer to 60 percent, of these crimes are never reported at all.

Nebraska “DHHS does not track how many of those victims were involved with the child welfare system,” the OIG

## *Between 2013 and 2016, there were 1,284 substantiated victims of child sexual abuse in Nebraska.*

notes, but “national research indicates that youth in this system are at higher risk of experiencing sexual abuse and exploitation than their peers in the general population.”

Absent any DHHS system for tracking, the OIG examined cases of child sexual abuse of state wards, of youth in residential facilities, and of youth reaching permanency through the child welfare system, “as a starting point in identifying systemic issues that hinder DHHS and the child welfare system’s ability to appropriately prevent and respond to cases of child sexual abuse.”

The OIG looked at the cases of 50 children who were victims of sexual abuse, as substantiated by DHHS or the courts, or where the case was court pending. Twenty-seven children were in state care at the time of their sexual abuse. Twenty-three others were sexually abused in the adoptive or guardian home into which the state had placed

them. All of the sexual abuse allegations were reported to DHHS between July 2013 and October 2016.

In addition, the OIG also analyzed sexual abuse allegations, listed as unfounded or never investigated, of children in state care. Under Nebraska law, all reports of child abuse or neglect not classified as court substantiated, court pending, or agency substantiated are considered unfounded. Seven of these cases are highlighted in the report, and likewise illuminate worrying aspects of the functioning of Nebraska’s child welfare system. The report stresses that the “victims and cases identified by the OIG should not be considered a comprehensive list of children who were sexually abused while in state care or in adoptive and guardian homes. That number remains unknown.”

In the United States, research estimates that youth living without either parent (including foster care or a residential facility) are ten times more likely to be sexually abused than youth living with both parents. The OIG’s first recommendation, then, is that the DHHS create a system to collect and review cases when allegations of sexual abuse of children and youth served by Child and Family Service child welfare and juvenile justice programs arise. DHHS has rejected this recommendation.

As a state, we have a lot of work to do. Through the investigation, the OIG identified systemic issues that are putting children at risk, and made recommendations to address concerns.

Too many system professionals and caregivers fail to act when children report sexual abuse. System culture

*conclusion on page 12*

# The Politics of Color

by A'Jamal-Rashad Byndon

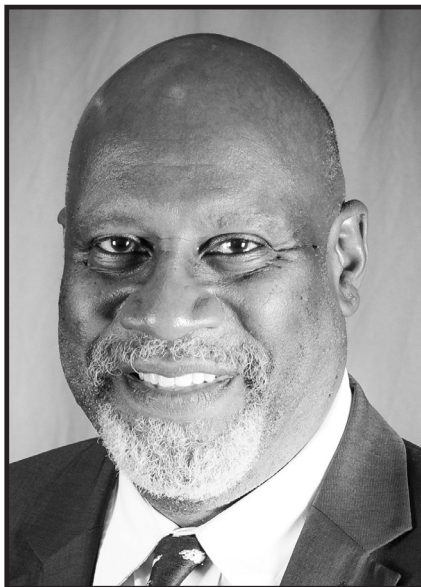
In white majority Nebraska, the whole subject of election campaigns can't help but fill people of color with misgivings. Choosing candidates you would actually want to support with your vote (let alone give money to or volunteer for) can be downright demoralizing. For every Ernie Chambers on the ballot, there are dozens, hundreds of Pete Ricketts lookalikes running for office who don't even pretend to take an interest in the concerns and needs of people of color.

It's not just the Republican Party though that oftentimes leaves people of color feeling cold. While offering lip service to their diverse base, Democratic candidates have too often been guilty of taking the party's African American, Asian, Latino and Indian voters for granted. Once the campaign cycle rolls around, Democratic office-seekers have been known to pop up out of nowhere, soliciting our support and promising access and action. Then, win or lose, largely disappear once the election's over. Alabama U.S. Senator-Elect Doug Jones offers a recent case in point. Elected with a massive turnout by the state's African American population, he promptly appointed an all-white senior leadership staff, even though 38 percent of the population is Black. It was reported that he finally selected an African American as his chief of staff.

Here in Omaha, I am reminded of the tone-deaf mentality of former Democratic Mayor Jim Suttle. After his election, he proceeded to promptly offend the African American community by gutting the Human Rights and Relations Department and putting incompetent folks in that city department. African Americans had no serious contacts with his insular administration throughout his term as mayor. Lack of en-

thusiasm for his performance as Omaha's chief executive induced many people of color to stay home when he ran for reelection—contributing to his crushing loss to Republican Jean Stothert.

If the Democratic Party is going to make meaningful inroads with people of color, it's going to have to field candidates



with more than a so-called high moral character. It's going to have to field candidates with more even than a commitment to justice, racial equity and equal opportunity. It's going to have to field candidates with a policy and practice of inclusion—of personally reaching out and engaging with these populations. Never having been heard from until you're on the campaign trail... Never showing up until you're soliciting someone's vote... That's no way to win a community's hearts and minds—particularly a community of color's hearts and minds. A goal in democracy is to get the citizenry to engage in the electoral process. That starts by parties

helping get residents excited.

Before you can hope to win votes, you have to win trust.

And to win trust, you have to put in the time.

People of color in this country have endured generations of mistreatment. In the case of African Americans and Indians, centuries of mistreatment. We are long

***We're not going to mark our ballots for someone who has no knowledge of our concerns and needs. And we're not going to look kindly upon an elected official who ignores us or runs away from us once they're in office.***

past the days of listening to some white person we've never met or heard of give us a line and granting that person a free pass. We're admittedly skeptical. We expect to be shown proof that you are who you say you are. That you are not just talk. That you have walked the walk.

We're skeptical because we have more at stake. For white Democrats, middle-class and up, political struggle is a pastime, something you choose to do or not. For African Americans however, the struggle is a vocation—one we can never walk away from because it's our life.

Occasionally, I am asked to endorse the candidacy of people running for office.

# What's HOT, conclusion

ute to stalled storm systems.”

## Jet Stream Whiplash

This kind of jet-stream whiplash tends to build high pressure into California in winter that is more typical of summer. It also accentuates high pressure inland, which sends dry Santa Ana winds down valleys from inland deserts, which become warmer and drier as they descend, creating perfect conditions for wildfires. Thus, severe wildfire seasons such as the one that scorched California during the fall of 2017 probably will occur more frequently as the planet warms and Arctic sea ice melts. “This is looking like the type of year that might occur more often in the future,” said A. Park Williams, a climate scientist at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory in Palisades, N.Y. (Fountain, 2017).

Most years, fire season in Southern California ends in October with arrival of a rainy pattern. By December, 2017, that change had not occurred, and jet-stream whiplash was a major cause. By 2015, persistent distortion of the jet stream also was provoking some unusual temperature readings in Alaska, such as 86 degrees F. in Fairbanks and 91 degrees in the hamlet of Eagle, Alaska during the third week of May, warmer, during the afternoons, than much of the U.S. East and South—warmer than Dallas or Houston had been all year to that date (Baked Alaska, 2015).

California and other fire-prone areas also are being torched because increasing drought is being punctuated by intense, shorter periods of deluge. Foliage grows rapidly during the wet periods, then dries to explosive tinder when heat and drought return. After five years of drought, the winter of 2016-2017 brought soaking rains and near-record snows in the mountains, followed by a return of drought this year. “For fires, sequencing is really important,” said Alex Hall, a climate scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles. “The sequence we’ve seen over the past five or six years

is certainly very similar to the changes that we project as climate change continues to unfold.”

Drought often compounds itself. According to the same *New York Times* report, “Climate change may affect fires in the state [California] in other ways. While there is conflicting evidence as to whether Santa Ana and Diablo winds are becoming more frequent, Dr. Hall said that they should become drier as the planet warms, because warmer air over the high desert of Utah and Nevada has lower relative humidity and will become drier still as it descends into California. Drier air leads to more desiccation and greater fire risk.” Damage from fires also has been increasing because urban areas have expanded, placing larger areas at risk.

*Bruce E. Johansen, Frederick W. Kayser Professor at the University of Nebraska—Omaha, is author of Climate Change: An Encyclopedia of Science, Society, and Solutions (2017).*

## FURTHER READING

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## Your Foundation Speaks

*by Loyal Park, Nebraska Peace Foundation President*

Since Nebraska Peace Foundation is tax-exempt, you can benefit by donating items such as appreciated stocks and RMDs from IRA accounts which will allow you to avoid paying income tax on these amounts besides providing support for Nebraskans for Peace.

Also if you have IRA accounts consider naming Nebraska Peace Foundation as the beneficiary or contingent beneficiary. You still will have control of your IRA during your lifetime, but what is left over after your death can go to the Foundation tax-free. This is especially important since all withdrawals from traditional IRAs are usually taxed as income.



Nebraska Peace Foundation is here to help you save on taxes and at the same time support Nebraskans for Peace. Any questions, just give me a call (402) 489-6662.

# Politics of Color, conclusion

As an astute voter, I normally ask a series of questions. Can the candidates point to one or more things that they have done for North Omaha and South Omaha, or for people of color in general? In preparation, I'll have visited the candidates' websites to read where they stand on 'the issues' (and I can tell you that many of these web pages are in serious need of position statements on matters of concern to average families struggling to get by). If you don't have a record you can point to, if you can't produce evidence of things you've done, I will tell you now you're not going to win my personal endorsement and you're going to be facing an uphill battle winning votes from communities of color. We're not going to rally to someone who never visits our neighborhoods. We're not going to mark our ballots for someone who has no knowledge of our concerns and needs. And we're not going to look kindly upon an elected official who ignores us or runs away from us once they're in office. Believe me, we didn't give you our vote to be blown off.

Do that, and we might just sit out the next election. Both Malcolm X and Senator Ernie Chambers caution us that at times, we might have to withhold our ballots.

I realize the Nebraska Democratic Party can no more control who gets to file for office as a Democrat than it can control who registers to vote as a Democrat. In this respect at least, it's still a free country. Yet, it should have a template of "preferential option for the poor" as the U.S. Catholic Bishops so deftly argued in one of their pastoral letters.

But perhaps what the Democratic Party can make more of an effort to do is to school their candidates on how to more effectively reach out to communities of color and the oppressed. Many white candidates (even liberal ones) simply have no experience dealing with the multicultural community. They may have never even set foot in our neighborhoods and may be afraid to travel there. Hence, we have problems with misunderstanding and miscommunication. And that misunderstanding and miscom-

munication will filter through every level of government—from the school board to the Statehouse to the halls of Congress.

Voting straight-ticket Democratic has never been—nor will it ever be—the solution to all our social and economic woes. At one point in this country's history, the Democrats were the party of slavery. Today, however, it is our Republican Commander-in-Chief who is calling for building walls to keep out Latinos, targeting Muslims for discrimination, and referring to Africa and Haiti as "s\*\*\*holes"... And there is a noticeable and disturbing silence from Nebraska Republicans about this revolting behavior.

To counter this insidious political drift will require principled political leadership from white candidates—as well as from a hopefully and ever-growing pool of African American, Latino, Asian and Indian ones.

There is undoubtedly a leadership role for the Nebraska Democratic Party in all this. For all of our sakes, it's critical that they earnestly take up the task.

## Nebraska's Children, conclusion

in residential care can be dismissive, blaming children for making things up or instigating abuse. In fact, false reporting has been found to be extremely rare nationally, between 4 to 8 percent. So, too many children remain in harm's way even after they ask for help.

The DHHS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline likewise may screen out too many reports, which then go uninvestigated. And while it is a crime not to call the hotline in Nebraska if anyone knows of allegations of child sexual abuse, in practice—for any number of reasons—both professionals and other citizens sometimes just do not call.

The OIG found that investigations of child sexual abuse within the system are

often inadequate. "Despite requirements in state law, not all allegations of child sexual abuse were investigated by DHHS or law enforcement."

As a state, we have work to do. You and I need to let the Governor and the Unicameral know that Nebraskans have zero tolerance for child sexual abuse. Nebraska needs a fully funded, high-functioning DHHS. This all costs money. The compassionate conservative side of the Governor, per moments in his 2018 state of the state speech, could not materialize at a better moment.

The OIG points out what we all know. "High caseload, workload, and workforce turnover contributed generally to DHHS being unable to effectively

prevent, identify, and respond to sexual abuse of youth in state care." The simple truth is, DHHS hasn't met caseload ratios since they were set in 2012. Kids fall through the cracks when caseloads become impossible to serve. It's six years later, and accountability is a must, not least because some of the problems stem from DHHS not complying with existing law.

Courtney Phillips, DHHS CEO, dismisses more oversight as "duplicative." Nonsense. This is a matter of the necessary separation of powers, in the interest of protecting Nebraska's most vulnerable children. We must do better. If the DHHS is truly open to change and improvement, then only good can come from letting the sunshine in.

# NFP State Board 2018 Priority Issues

*by Ron Todd-Meyer, Nebraskans for Peace President,  
and Tim Rinne, NFP State Coordinator*

As Nebraskans for Peace approaches the half-century mark (we will celebrate our 50th anniversary just two years from now in 2020), our commitment to creating a more peaceful and just world remains as fervent as ever.

But there's no getting around the fact that the times we're now living in are soul-wrenching and can leave one reeling.

In 1970, when NFP was founded with the high hopes of ending the War in Vietnam, abolishing nuclear weapons and advancing the civil rights of people everywhere, no one ever imagined that in 50 years we'd be facing anything remotely like what we're seeing today. Yet half a century later, we are plagued with a president who cavalierly threatens war, openly feeds racism, brags about harassing women, enriches himself and his fellow billionaires at public expense, and denies science in favor of his own fabricated reality. And what makes things even more intolerable is that he does all this with the rock-solid support of fully one third of the American electorate.

This is hard stuff to both accept and bear. It's not at all what we wanted, not how we hoped the future would unfold.

But then, nobody ever said the work of peacemaking would be easy. Not Buddha. Not Jesus. Not Martin Luther King, Jr.

So, like clockwork, the Nebraskans for Peace State Board annually performs the task of establishing the organization's issue priorities for the coming year. And to a large extent, our policy and program thrusts for 2018 look uncannily similar to those of 1970. We're still opposing war and advocating diplomacy. And we're still promoting civil rights and pursuing economic justice.

In fact, the only new focus added since our founding is our environmental priority—driven by the twin perils of climate change and food insecurity. Climate change threatens to disrupt the conditions for life on this planet every bit as much as a nuclear conflict and, accordingly, goes right to the heart of our mission of peacemaking.

In 2018, Nebraskans for Peace—now the oldest statewide Peace & Justice organization in the entire country—is again buckling down for another year of our indispensable work.

We'll be in the city halls and courthouses. We'll be in the State Capitol. We'll be meeting with our Members of Congress and their staff.

Under our Anti-War & International Law Priority, we'll be urging diplomacy with North Korea and Iran rather than saber-rattling and intimidation. We'll continue our efforts to cut the world's most bloated military budget and restore funding for human needs like health care, education and infrastructure.

And we'll be supporting the cause of nuclear abolition, as the danger posed by a nuclear detonation is greater today than at any time since the dawn of the nuclear age.

As part of our Civil Rights & Economic Justice Priority, we'll continue to be active agents in the unending struggle against discrimination, whether practiced against people of color, women, members of a particular faith community, our LGBTQ citizens or the poor. We take as our watchword, "There is no peace without justice." And so long as any resident of this country is targeted—through racial profiling, immigration status, creed, sex

or gender, in North Omaha, Whiteclay, a packing plant floor or a corporate office—we will always step up and speak out.

And regarding our Environment & Conflict Prevention Priority, we will provide continued leadership on the looming dangers of climate change and the food shortages it will inevitably spawn. Food is the foundation of community. Sufficient food is integral to our dreams of creating a better world. And without it, everything we hold dear collapses into chaos. Cutting carbon emissions, switching to green energy and localizing our food supply are essential to our hopes for the future.

Loved or vilified, Nebraskans for Peace has stood unwaveringly on its principles for nearly half a century. In 2018 and the years to come, you can count on us to embody the Peace & Justice values we want to see in the world.

***As Nebraskans for Peace  
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# Paul Olson, conclusion

and founded agricultural projects that engaged his Oklahoma farming skills. In the search for justice, he created farmers' and weavers' cooperatives, a credit union, school, hospital and radio station. In the 1980s, the Guatemalan army, supported by the U.S., killed numerous journalists, farmers, catechists, and priests—all accused of communism. But Rother was no Communist. He was a serious priest working for love, freedom, nonviolence and rights.

Recently the Lincoln Chapter of Nebraskans for Peace held a panel discussion on what the beatification of Father Rother means for Central America. During the 1980s and '90s, when Contra-Sandinista struggles proceeded in Nicaragua, when death squads dominated El Salvador and murdered Archbishop Romero, when the Guatemalan army and government

armed with American weapons massacred laborers and indigenous people in great numbers, when Manuel Noriega still operated Panama at the behest of the CIA, Nebraskans for Peace and the peace movement generally cared about Central America. Then the U.S. war against workers and people of color was being waged at its most vicious. The killing of Fr. Rother was but one incident among thousands. Fr. Rother's beatification may be an event that signals additional religious concern for justice in Central and South America and for the Vatican's "preferential option for the poor." We need to return to like concern.

The NFP Rother discussion was good and the panelists' presentations may be viewed at:

<https://youtu.be/VxCxxK1Nq90>

<https://youtu.be/lmq8m4mkaII>

<https://youtu.be/03WPhbyHoLY>. Although the main points are summarized below, please watch the entire program.

Terry Werner, a family relation of Father Rother, spoke of his origins in Nebraska and Oklahoma, his very ordinary family, his difficulty in passing languages in seminary, his commitment to social justice in Guatemala, his learning his parish's Mayan dialect, and his conversion of his social justice vision into institutions permitting parishioners to feed themselves, market their products and flourish. Ricardo Izquierdo, Hispanic ministry director for the Diocese of Lincoln, spoke of the difference between Rother's religious motivation—divine love—and a secular activist motivation. Bill Peterson, who heads Episcopal work at the mission of San Lucas Toliman not far from Father

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Rother's parish, speaking by Skype, described in detail the institutions that the Father founded and the degree to which these institutions made life viable for peasants. He also spoke of the parish's veneration for the beatified priest, the preservation of the room in which he was murdered, the extension of the Father's movement for justice and the creation of local indigenous institutions for marketing that got around the repression sponsored by the local elites and military. Finally, Duncan Case, an architecture professor sponsoring students in Guatemala, re-

the Internet, Suzy could not present. However, she sent materials summarized here. Suzy built on the picture of harsh rule supported by the United States described by Duncan Case, but also emphasized intersections between corporate and government greed leading to environmental degradation and human rights violations. For example, in El Salvador, the 2015 San Blas case where eight workers were killed in an extrajudicial police shootout on a coffee farm is one of many cases of government repressive action (<https://www.wola.org/analysis/amid-rising->

tions. More than 100 organizations from across the region have signed a letter condemning U.S. government plans to "discuss U.S. policy towards the region solely using a security and economic lens, without addressing the protection needs and human rights of families, individuals, and children from the region." (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jun/13/central-america-us-foreign-policy-deportations-aid>).

In this context, it is sickening that the Trump Administration recently announced that it is taking away the rights of about 250,000 Salvadorans, Guatemalans and Nicaraguans who fled natural disasters and the chaos that the U.S. created in Central America through private addict-support of the drug gangs and government support of the death squads. We have done this simply to appease the chauvinist instincts fed by our White House.

The Central American discussion should have three takeaways:

- The First: religious and secular movements can converge in peace and justice work using a variety of tools from saintly example to international aid to juristic work;
- The Second: reform and the creation of new, effective and just institutions probably mostly takes place on the micro-level first and then spreads, but U.S. military intervention and bad immigration policy can destroy such efforts quickly;
- The Third: America overseas speaks with many voices, not all of them voices for peace and justice—the heavy-handed and oppressive voice of the CIA and American military assistance contradicts the voices of reformist churches, peace organizations, American NGOs and mediating groups.

Please write supporting Sen. Pat Leahy's call and other calls to end American support for Central American repression. We need more Fr. Rother and fewer guns down there.

### ***Fr. Rother's beatification may be an event that signals additional religious concern for justice in Central and South America and for the Vatican's "preferential option for the poor."***

ported on efforts by the poor in Central America to achieve a just economic life through the Catholic Church's work in creating institutions like those founded by Father Rother, efforts by FINCA International's micro-lending village banks and fairly traded coffee and other similar product vehicles to ameliorate the worst poverty. Case spoke of peasant struggles to achieve liberation from harsh rule in virtually all Central American countries as well as in southern Mexico's Chiapas and parts of northern South America.

(Unfortunately, America continues to support the wealthy and exploitive classes in Central and South America. Recently the United States recognized the Honduran government of President Juan Orlando Hernandez who almost certainly stole the recent election from an opposition candidate representing the underclasses. Gangs, the equivalent of the '80s death squads, still operate all over Central America).

The last speaker of the event was to be Suzy Prenger, Nebraskans for Peace's coordinator of Central and South American work in the 1970s and '80s, speaking by Skype from Ecuador, but because of difficulties with

violence-el-salvador-fails-address-reports-extrajudicial-killings/); Honduras has also targeted environmental activists—for instance in the Berta Cáceres case where, the International Advisory Group of Experts (Grupo Asesor Internacional de Personas Expertas, GAIPE) concluded that Honduran state agents and senior executives of the hydroelectric company Desarrollos Energéticos (DESA) colluded in "the planning, execution, and cover-up" of the 2016 assassination of the activist leader. (No U. S. government follow-up on her case has occurred, although Senator Patrick Leahy continues to call for an end to U.S.-Honduran assistance until her case is resolved.) Further, the Guatemalan military and 12 other deputies are trying to eliminate aspects of the "Law of National Reconciliation" excluding international crimes of genocide, enforced disappearance, torture and other crimes against humanity from a national amnesty.

In short, the problems continue, as does the need for work by the Father Rother of the world, by NGOs, the United Nations, and peace organiza-

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## Speaking Our Peace

*by Paul Olson, NFP President Emeritus*

# Father Stanley Rother and the Anomalies of Central America

Sometimes unusual things happen.

Not often does a Nebraska or Oklahoma family produce an official saint or someone on the way to sainthood. Indeed, this has happened only once—the case of Fr. Stanley Rother whose family lived in Nebraska and Oklahoma. Rother was killed by Guatemalan death squads in 1981 and recently beatified by the Vatican. Though threatened by the Guatemalan

death squads, he went back to his parish for Easter observances, saying, “A shepherd cannot run from his flock.” For not running, he was martyred (Guatemalan death squads were mostly armed with U.S. weapons), shot multiple times and recently made the first officially declared American-born martyr.

Rother’s story is complex. In June of 1968, despite having had trouble

in seminary with languages, he went to a church in the diocese of Sololá in Guatemala, learned both Spanish and Tzotzil, one of the 21 Mayan languages spoken in Guatemala, and eventually conducted Mass in Tzotzil. He produced a translation of the New Testament in the local language, worked as a parish priest doing physical labor

*continued on page 14*