



*Nebraskans for Peace*

# Nebraska Report

*There is no Peace without Justice*

JANUARY 2004

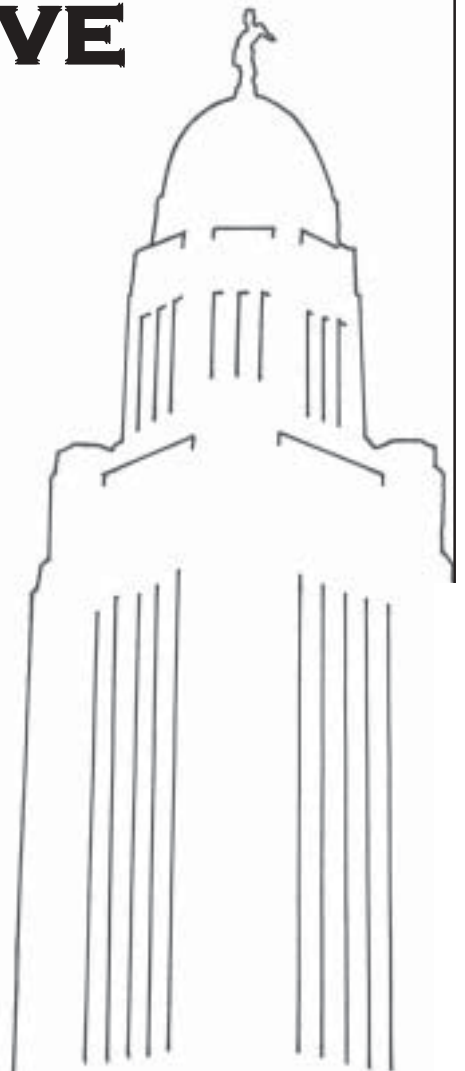
VOLUME 32, NUMBER 1

## 2004 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

A state revenue shortfall is looming over the start of the legislative session for the third year in a row. The Economic Forecasting Board's projection that state tax receipts for the 2004-05 budget cycle will be down by \$211 million means the Unicameral will once again have to overhaul the budget to make the numbers add up.

Unlike the previous two years, however, it appears that this session the entire shortfall will be made up by budget cuts. Both the governor and individual senators have made it abundantly clear that the Legislature doesn't have the "stomach" for any more tax increases. 2004 is an election year, with 26 of the 49 legislative seats on the ballot, and the last thing the senators want to do is go home and face the voters when they've just raised taxes. So the upcoming session, on the surface at least, looks to be yet another budgetary bloodbath. When you're not willing to increase revenue, the only other viable means of balancing the budget is to cut expenses.

In an election year, though, cutting programs and services can be equally unpopular and just as dangerous politically. Further cuts to state aid for education, for instance, could well lead to higher local property taxes for businesses and homeowners, as school districts raise the tax levy to make up the revenue loss. More cutbacks in Medicaid benefits for the poor and closing regional centers in Hastings and Norfolk will put even more strain on communities that have already seen their budgets stretched. The taxpayers aren't blind; they can tell a tax shift when they see one. And passing the burden along from the state to local governments is every bit as likely to get the voters up in arms before an election. *(Article continued on page 9)*



## Annual Peace Conference Saturday Feb. 14 in Grand Island

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Lincoln, NE

## Nebraska Report

The *Nebraska Report* is published nine times annually by Nebraskans for Peace. Opinions stated do not necessarily reflect the views of the directors or staff of Nebraskans for Peace.

*Newspaper Committee: Tim Rinne, Editor*

*Mark Vasina, Sarah Disbrow, Bud Narveson, Charlie Flowerday*

*Typesetting and Layout: Becca Kaiser*

*Printing: Fremont Tribune*

*Circulation: 6,500*

Letters, articles, photographs and graphics are welcomed. Deadline is the first of the month for publication in the following month's issue. Submit to: *Nebraska Report*, c/o Nebraskans for Peace, 941 'O' Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508.

## Nebraskans for Peace

Nebraskans for Peace is a statewide grassroots advocacy organization working nonviolently for peace with justice through community-building, education and political action.

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## 2004 NFP State Board Slate

Listed below is the proposed slate of nominees for the Nebraskans for Peace State Board of Directors. Any current paid member of NFP is eligible to cast a ballot for each of the board slots up for election this year. Write-in votes are naturally welcome, providing the persons whose names are being written in have given permission and are willing to serve a full two-year term. All ballots must be returned to the NFP State Office, 941 'O' Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508, no later than February 11, 2004.

### At-Large Seats (Vote for four)

\_\_\_\_ Leah Hunter—Winnebago Tribe member Leah Hunter was appointed to the NFP State Board last year to fill the vacancy left by the death of Jerry Henderson. A resident of Winnebago on the reservation in northeast Nebraska, Leah has a long history of activism on Indian issues, including Whiteclay alcohol sales.

\_\_\_\_ (Write-in Candidate) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Frances Mendenhall—A founding co-chair of the Nebraska Green Party who is supporting Rep. Dennis Kucinich for the Democratic presidential nomination, Frances is completing her first term on the State Board. In addition to maintaining her dental practice, she ran for director of OPPD to promote wind energy in the state.

\_\_\_\_ (Write-in Candidate) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Paul Olson—Paul is a Foundation Professor of English at the University of Nebraska and one of the most well-known Peace & Justice advocates in the state. An active member of NFP virtually from its inception, he has most recently been devoting his efforts to the Turn Off the Violence project in the state.

\_\_\_\_ (Write-in Candidate) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Jay Schmidt—A retired United Methodist minister, Jay's Peace & Justice roots in Nebraska run deep. One of only a handful of clergy to provide draft counseling to draft-age men during the Vietnam War, he mobilized his ministerial colleagues to speak out publicly against both the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

\_\_\_\_ (Write-in Candidate) \_\_\_\_\_

### Congressional District 1 (Vote for two)

\_\_\_\_ Sayre Andersen—Currently a member of the State Board, Sayre is a former Professor of Philosophy and English at Wayne State College, where he was instrumental in reviving the local NFP Chapter. The state budget crisis and cutbacks in education have made him an enthusiastic supporter of the campaign to repeal LB 775.

\_\_\_\_ (Write-in Candidate) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Carol McShane—President of the NFP State Board since 1999, Carol has been one of the most vocal critics of the Bush Administration's "War on Terrorism" in the state. A Registered Nurse and founder of Nebraska Nursing Consultants, LLC, she has nearly 40 years of experience on issues relating to health care.

\_\_\_\_ (Write-in Candidate) \_\_\_\_\_

### Congressional District 2 (Vote for two)

\_\_\_\_ Patrick Murray—The Chair of the Philosophy Department at Creighton University in Omaha, Patrick has served on the NFP State Board for the past decade. Deeply committed to Nebraskans for Peace, with a long history of activism in the cause of Peace & Justice, he is one the senior members of the board.

\_\_\_\_ (Write-in Candidate) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Virginia Walsh—The official liaison between the NFP State Board and the Omaha NFP Chapter, Virginia has been an active supporter of the organization at both levels for over two decades. Her Peace & Justice interests have ranged widely over this time, from defense issues to Gay and Lesbian rights to repeal of LB 775.

\_\_\_\_ (Write-in Candidate) \_\_\_\_\_

### Congressional District 3 (Vote for two)

\_\_\_\_ Marsha Fangmeyer—An NFP member since the mid-'70s, Marsha is the senior attorney at Knapp, Fangmeyer, Ashwege, Besse and Marsh in Kearney. Besides being active with Nebraskans for Peace, she previously served as president of the Nebraska Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign and ACLU-Nebraska.

\_\_\_\_ (Write-in Candidate) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Byron Peterson—A retired Social Worker from the Nebraska Panhandle, Byron has spent the past five years working on the problem of alcohol sales at Whiteclay. A frequent contributor to the *Nebraska Report*, he has a working relationship with many members of the Oglala Lakota Tribal leadership.

\_\_\_\_ (Write-in Candidate) \_\_\_\_\_

# Former U.S. Ally Captured in Iraq

## A chronology of U.S.-Saddam Hussein relations

*Saddam Hussein is one of the world's great war criminals. Nothing would be more welcome than to have him put on trial, a trial which could offer Iraqis and the world an honest accounting of his many crimes. If the real truth is to come out, however, it is imperative that he be tried before a court that is in no way subject to U.S. control or manipulation. For as the following excerpts, taken from Stephen R. Shalom's "A Saddam Chronology" published on Znet December 15, 2003, clearly document, the U.S. government actively colluded in Hussein's rise to power, and for decades—until his fall from grace in 1990—helped keep him there.*

**1957** – Saddam Hussein joins underground Baath Socialist Party.

**1958** – Arrested for killing his brother-in-law, a Communist, spends six months in prison.

**Oct. 7, 1959** – On Baath assassination team that ambushes Iraqi strongman Gen. Abdel-Karim Kassem in Baghdad, wounding him. Saddam, wounded in leg, flees to Syria then Egypt. This was not the only attempt to assassinate Kassem. In April 1960, the CIA approved using a poisoned handkerchief to kill Kassem. The "handkerchief was duly dispatched to Kassem, but whether or not it ever reached him, it certainly did not kill him." (Thomas Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA*, New York: Knopf, 1979, p.130.)

**Feb. 8, 1963** – Returns from Egypt after Baath takes part in a CIA-backed coup that overthrows and kills Kassem. Baath ousted by military in November. "As its instrument the C.I.A. had chosen the authoritarian and anti-Communist Baath Party, in 1963 still a relatively small political faction influential in the Iraqi Army. According to the former Baathist leader Hani Fkaiki, among party members colluding with the C.I.A. in 1962 and 1963 was Saddam Hussein.... According to Western scholars, as well as Iraqi refugees and a British human rights organization, the 1963 coup was accompanied by a bloodbath. Using lists of suspected Communists and other leftists provided by the C.I.A., the Baathists systematically murdered untold numbers of Iraq's educated elite—killings in which Saddam Hussein himself is said to have participated. No one knows the exact toll, but accounts agree that the victims included hundreds of doctors, teachers, technicians, lawyers and other professionals

as well as military and political figures." (Roger Morris, "A Tyrant 40 Years in the Making," *New York Times*, March 14, 2003, p. A29.)]

**July 17, 1968** – Baathists and army officers overthrow regime. "Again, this coup, amid more factional violence, came with C.I.A. backing. Serving on the staff of the National Security Council under Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon in the late 1960s, I often



*In 1983, Iraqi television caught Reagan Administration envoy Donald Rumsfeld (the current Secretary of Defense) meeting with key U.S. ally Saddam Hussein in Baghdad.*

heard C.I.A. officers—including Archibald Roosevelt, grandson of Theodore Roosevelt and a ranking C.I.A. official for the Near East and Africa at the time—speak openly about their close relations with the Iraqi Baathists." (Morris, "A Tyrant 40 Years in the Making," p. A29.)

**July 30, 1968** – Takes charge of internal security after Baath ousts erstwhile allies and authority passes to Revolutionary Command Council under Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, Saddam's cousin.

**1973-75** – The United States, Iran, and Israel supported a Kurdish insurgency in Iraq. Documents examined by the U.S. House Select Committee on Intelligence "clearly show that the President, Dr. Kissinger and the [Shah] hoped that our clients [the Kurds] would not prevail. They preferred instead that the insurgents simply continue a level of hostilities sufficient to sap [Iraqi] resources. This policy was not imparted to our clients, who were

encouraged to continue fighting. Even in the context of covert action, ours was a cynical enterprise." Then, in 1975, the Shah and Saddam Hussein of Iraq signed an agreement giving Iran territorial concessions in return for Iran's closing its border to Kurdish guerrillas. Teheran and Washington promptly cut off their aid to the Kurds and, while Iraq massacred the rebels, the United States refused them asylum. Kissinger justified this U.S. policy in closed testimony:

*Road to War*, ed. Amatzia Baram and Barry Rubin, New York: St. Martin's 1993, p. 256.)

**Sept. 22, 1980** – Sends forces into Iran; war last eight years. When Iraq invaded Iran, the United Nations Security Council waited four days before holding a meeting. On September 28, it passed Resolution 479 calling for an end to the fighting, but which significantly did not condemn (nor even mention) the Iraqi aggression and did not demand a return to internationally recognized boundaries. As Ralph King, who has studied the UN response in detail, concluded, "The Council more or less deliberately ignored Iraq's actions in September 1980." The U.S. delegate noted that Iran, which had itself violated Security Council resolutions on the U.S. embassy hostages, could hardly complain about the Council's lackluster response. (R.P.H. King, "The United Nations and the Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1986," in *The United Nations and the Iran-Iraq War*, ed. Brian Urquhart and Gary Sick, New York: Ford Foundation, August 1987.) Despite the fact that Iraq had been the aggressor in this war and that Iraq was the first to use chemical weapons, the first to launch air attacks on cities, and the initiator of the tanker war, the United States tilted toward Iraq. The U.S. removed Iraq from its list of terrorist states in 1982, sent Donald Rumsfeld to Baghdad as Reagan's envoy to meet with Saddam Hussein in 1983 and 1984 to discuss economic cooperation, re-established diplomatic relations in November 1984, made available extensive loans and subsidies, provided intelligence information, encouraged its allies to arm Iraq, and engaged in military actions in the Persian Gulf against Iran. The United States also provided dual-use equipment that it knew Iraq was using for military purposes. (See Joyce Battle, ed., "Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein: The U.S. Tilts toward Iraq, 1980-1984," *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 82*, Feb. 25, 2003)

**March 28, 1988** – Uses chemical weapons against Kurdish town of Halabja, killing estimated 5,000 civilians. From Iraq's first use of chemical weapons in 1983, the U.S. took a very restrained view. When the evidence of Iraqi use of these weapons could no longer be denied, the U.S. issued a mild condemnation, but made clear that

*conclusion on page 11*

# Dear Congressman Bereuter,



Greg Mello, Executive Director of the Los Alamos Study Group, will be the keynote speaker at the February 14, 2004, Annual Peace Conference.

Your November 24, 2003 letter to Mr. Paul Olson, which outlined your support for new kinds of nuclear weapons, was forwarded to me by Mr. Tim Rinne of Nebraskans for Peace. I would like to take this opportunity to respond to you and some of your constituents on this very important subject.

Your letter says,

"I ... believe that it is in U.S. short-term and long-term national interests to continue research into potential nuclear weapons. As the current war on terrorism has demonstrated, the development of new weapons capabilities is critical as we seek to address new, uncertain, and asymmetrical threats. Indeed, enhanced earth penetrator weapons could be useful in the rugged terrain of Afghanistan."

Useful in Afghanistan? Really? For what, exactly? Other than these assertions, which are far from self-evident, you offer no further reasons for your vote. But before delving into the hypothetical uses of these weapons more deeply, it's worthwhile to review just what the new weapons are.

The first is the "robust nuclear earth penetrator" (RNEP). It is to be a modification of one of two existing free-fall bombs, either the B61 or the B83. Both of these bombs have multiple yield options, ranging from a potential low of about 300 tons up to about 350 kilotons (the B61) or 1.2 megatons (the B83). The RNEP has been described in congressional testimony as a "high-yield" weapon. It will likely be a multi-yield weapon, and some of these yields may be high.

The second weapon is the so-called "low-yield" weapon, a term defined by the FY1994 Defense Authorization Act as a yield of less than 5 kilotons. A provision of that Act banned research and development

for any new low-yield nuclear weapon until it was repealed earlier this month. By the way, all existing U.S. weapons can be readily modified to be low-yield weapons.

Your letter says this year's legislation "does not lift the ban on the actual engineering development and the production of RNEP and low-yield nuclear weapons." This is wrong, actually. While such work must be specifically authorized, there is (as of December 5, 2003, when the President signed the bill) no ban. Authorization can occur in an ordinary open process or in a secret one, which need not involve more than eight members of Congress, as was done to authorize engineering and production of the B61-11 earth-penetrator.<sup>1</sup> If you didn't know about it, you're not alone. Very few congress members did. There was no debate.

The third new authorization, which you also supported, isn't for a weapon. It's for a program, the so-called "Advanced Concepts Initiative" (ACI). ACI authorizes research into any and all possible nuclear weapons. As a memo from Linton Brooks, head of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and dated the day Mr. Bush signed the Act put it, the nuclear labs are now to "close any gaps" and leave "no novel nuclear weapons concept" unexplored.

ACI's other principle purposes are to develop new leaders among the up-and-coming nuclear weapons scientists, and to provide for "personal contacts with members of the U.S. Strategic Command and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, among others, to gain an understanding of what weapons might be of value to DOD, and to give DOD a sense of what weapons technologies may be available."<sup>2</sup>

Putting all three of these programs together, the labs, production plants, and contractors in the \$6.5 billion nuclear weapons complex are now encouraged to pursue an essentially unlimited variety of modified and new nuclear weapons.

But *why?* *Why* should the U.S. want these weapons?

Since your letter offered essentially no reasons, I have tried to boil down the principle justifications usually given for these weapons to just a few basic ideas, as freed from euphemism and meaningless slogans as possible. I've left aside the pork-barrel issues of employment at Air Force bases and nuclear labs and plants. But since outside STRATCOM there is little interest among the uniformed military in these weapons, it is obvious that institutional "push" and pork-barrel politics are powerfully involved.

The argument for these new weapons boils down to this: new kinds of nuclear weapons are needed because the U.S. now has targets in *different countries* than we have specifically targeted before. Furthermore, advocates want to threaten the use of nuclear weapons in those countries for *different purposes* than before—not just "deterrence," but deterrence and "something more."<sup>3</sup> The Congressional Research Service calls this new purpose "coercion." The Defense Science Board calls it "compellence."<sup>4</sup>

What's really new are simply a) *where* the new targets are (not *what* they are), and b) *how much new freedom of action* is desired with respect to them. The types of targets, contrary to what the Pentagon says in its reports, aren't new—hard and deeply buried bunkers, for example, have been around for a long time. The only "new" type of target cited for these weapons is underground caches of biological and chemical weapons. But no nuclear weapon can destroy these without a high probability of scattering the deadly agents along with the radioactivity of the bomb itself.<sup>5</sup>

Maximizing freedom of action (which is another way of saying maximizing the credibility of the threat, whether for "deterrence" or for "compellence") requires the lowest possible expected "collateral damage"—that is, the fewest civilian deaths—and, *at the same time*, the highest confidence in sure destruction.

This combination of desired effects is contradictory, and—to summarize a great deal of technical material which has no place in this letter—impossible to achieve. This makes it a potentially very lucrative area of research, as you might imagine. To date, our nation has spent about \$7 trillion on nuclear weapons—about \$100 million apiece—and we know a great deal about them. **One thing we know is there will be no low-collateral-damage nuclear weapons with predictable and uniquely-useful military effects on underground targets.**

Congressman, the weapons labs haven't told you this because the senior managers of these labs are not very concerned with such fine points when they come to Congress. And if I were you, I would be seething, because the consequences to the nation's security of such a selfish gloss of the facts are very severe. What the weapons advocates aren't telling you, sir, is that these small weapons have, as it turns out, only a very modest "reach" in their destructive capabilities below ground, while still killing civilians at great distances above ground. Obviously, "mini-nukes" minimize casualties only with respect to larger nuclear

weapons, not with respect to any other option.

Meanwhile the target intelligence problem—how to know what to aim at, especially underground—is essentially unsolvable without complete, long-term access to the region, in which case there is no problem and no target in the first place.

There are other problems you may not be hearing about. A nuclear explosion destroys all intelligence value of the target. It would be difficult or impossible to even know if the right target was hit, let alone what that target was, or even what information *could* have been obtained from it if it hadn't been burned up, excavated, and irradiated. One might incinerate the latest bad guy, but the legend that he might be alive, like Elvis, would be undying.

Worse still, there is no evidence that nuclear weapons *of any type whatsoever* would achieve the proposed "deterrence" or "compellence." What if the adversary, wherever he is, is not afraid of such weapons? Then what? Do we nuke his support base—that is, civilians?

It goes almost without saying that in the event of any nuclear use by the U.S., all cooperative efforts to prevent proliferation and build legal mechanisms to do so would be immediately destroyed. A global scramble for nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons would likely ensue, as many military men and political conservatives have long warned. **Right now, the U.S. pursuit of new nuclear weapons is preventing us from building an international framework to prevent proliferation.**

Administration spokespersons have said that actual military use of the new weapons will not be more likely, in fact *less* likely, because our adversaries will perceive the use of the weapons as "more credible"—*more* likely to be used, in other words—and therefore these adversaries will be more "deterred." Congressman, we can't have it both ways. We are fooling nobody but ourselves.

Thank you for your attention. It would be worthwhile to discuss these issues further in public forums, which I am sure would be welcomed by many constituents.

Sincerely,

Greg Mello, Executive Director

<sup>1</sup> Greg Mello, "Birth of a New Bomb," *Washington Post*, June 1, 1997, at [http://www.lasg.org/archfrm\\_a.html](http://www.lasg.org/archfrm_a.html).

<sup>2</sup> Jon Medalia, "Nuclear Weapon Initiatives: Low-Yield R&D, Advanced Concepts, Earth Penetrators, Test Readiness," October 28, 2003, Congressional Research Service, RL32130, p. 39, at <http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/crs/RL32130.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Medalia, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; Office of the Under Secretary of Defense For Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, "Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Discriminate Use of Force," July 2003, p. 1, at <http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/duf.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Michael May and Zachary Haldeman, "Effectiveness of Nuclear Weapons against Buried Biological Agents Targets," May 2003, at <http://ldml.stanford.edu/cisac/pdf/mayhaldeman.pdf>, or Robert Nelson, "Nuclear Bunker Busters, Mini-Nukes, and the US Nuclear Stockpile," *Physics Today*, November 2003, <http://www.aip.org/pt/vol-56/iss-11/p32.html>.

# WILL WE HAVE THE DREAM?

## Values and/or Religion-Based Training in Alternatives to Violence for Youth and Families

*Prepared by Turn Off the Violence, convener, Paul Olson*

Though most of us are concerned about violence in our society, we may not know where to turn for help to become less violent in our ways. Since Columbine, Nebraskans have felt increasingly concerned about what they could do to counter youth violence. Some Nebraskans have acted. The Nebraska Board of Education has passed an anti-bullying, anti-violence policy for the schools. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Centers in some of our cities and towns are providing before-school and after-school help for children and youth in the avoidance of violence. Almost everyone wants to help in some way.

In this mix, there is a place faith-based and values-based training in alternatives to violence, nonviolence and conflict resolution. We need to know who can help. Nebraska has at least five organizations providing training based on a values and/or faith orientation.

Groups wishing to use these organizations should write or call them concerning the kind of training they need. The groups listed will tell you what they can do: its duration, purpose, cost, and the minimum numbers required. We list the training centers in alphabetical order.

### **Alternatives to Violence Project**

(Lincoln and Omaha, NE)

AVP was originally developed by Quakers and teaches the same non-violent skills and techniques that were used by Mohandas Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The project is dedicated to reducing the level of violence in our society by introducing people to ways of resolving conflict. These ways reduce the need to resort to violence as the solution. The Alternatives to Violence Project is designed to create successful personal interactions and transform violent situations. It does training where violence is found. Its workshops target prisons, communities and schools.

Contact: Marge Schlitt (402) 474-0682 or margeschlitt@midspring.com

### **Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska, Faith Community Responses to Domestic Violence**

(Lincoln, NE)

This is a partnership of Nebraska Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Coalition, Family Violence Council of Lincoln, and Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska. The project produces educational materials for clergy, lay leaders, and youth addressing domestic violence education and prevention. It provides training opportunities to clergy, lay leaders, and other interested parties in religion-based responses to domestic violence, creates a statewide resource library for religious communities regarding domestic violence at Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska, and gains support for nonviolent, religious-based initiatives. In addition, the project awards mini-grants to religious communities to help them implement responses and resources for domestic violence. Part of the mini-grant work is directed toward assisting religious communities to develop anti-bullying efforts.

Contact: Pat Brown, Project Coordinator, Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska, (402) 476-3391 or im50427@alltel.net

### **Nebraska Justice Center**

(Walthill, NE)

This organization's mission is to enhance the quality of life through peaceful processes including mediation, principled decision-making, restorative justice, and education and training. The Center offers training in non-violent solutions to disagreements, often in the context of church and youth life.

It does so by emphasizing peer mediation, conflict resolution, and the search for common grounds. For example, the Center with others created the PALS program, "Problem Solving, Awareness of Conflict, Listening and Communication, and Skits for School," where students attended 5 days of after-school mediation training, participants

performed classroom skits to show classmates their new learning. It has also formed a young Peacemakers Club and a program to replicate PALS for older youth.

The program for older youth addresses the need to resolve conflict/live in harmony. The PALS program materials are being used in additional northeast Nebraska communities. These kinds of programs can be developed in churches, schools, and communities.

Contact: Debora Brownyard, Executive Director, (402) 846-5576 or nejjustice@huntel.net

Other mediation centers may be able to carry out similar work.

### **New Covenant Center, a Nonviolence Center**

(Omaha, NE)

New Covenant Justice and Peace Center was established to promote the values of Catholic Social Teaching. The Center offers programs in peace education for adults and youth adaptable to classroom and church. Out of an awareness that person-on-person violence is rooted in contempt and discrimination against others, New Covenant Center's approach to peace is based on respect and inclusion. Programs offer instruction on the nature and consequences of violence, teach the meaning of terms relating to violence, e.g. the bully, the victim, the rescuer, the bystander; and explore multiple strategies for resisting violence and victimization. The Center uses all varieties of learning resources—especially story, role play, audiovisual, media—to demonstrate that mutual respect and collaboration are more effective and desirable responses to all forms of violence which always diminish and destroy. The Center uses a Pledge of Nonviolence—preschool through adult—suitable for the family, the school, the church, the workplace. The pledge was developed at the Institute for Peace and Justice in St. Louis. It encourages the individual and the group to approach all interactions with respect: truthfulness in communication, attentive listening, creative play, and respect for self and the environment. It challenges the individual and the group to confront violence in all its forms and to stand with those treated unjustly. The Center works in collaboration with Franciscan Nonviolence Service to offer adults a process for discovering and developing their gifts for nonviolence. This program is offered in an academic course of ten sessions, in day and weekend workshops, or in faith-sharing groups.

Contact: Maureen Connolly, sssf, Program Coordinator, New Covenant Justice and Peace Center, 703 So. 28<sup>th</sup> St. Omaha, NE 68105, (402) 345-5111 or mcofff@juno.com

### **Peace with Justice Ministries of the Nebraska Conference of The United Methodist Church**

(Omaha, NE)

The Ministries program offers for children and youth which teach skills for creative nonviolent conflict resolution. These can be presented within the context of the Christian faith or in the secular setting of public schools.

Contact: Rev. Carol Windrum, (402) 455-4281 or cawindrum@yahoo.com

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the Nebraska Peace Foundation*

# The People's Plan for Recommendations by \$top Big B

The time has come for Nebraska voters to close the door on LB 775 (the Employment and Investment Growth Act). This highly touted “centerpiece” of Nebraska’s strategy for interstate tax competitiveness is, in fact, a failed economic development program that has eluded accountability for 16 years and costs more than it delivers, undermining our state and local tax bases, producing tax inequities and inhibiting tax reforms. The undesirable effects of interstate tax competition can only be ameliorated through accurate evaluation of our state’s tax climate in comparison with other states, careful targeting of business incentives, reviewing the impact of incentives to see whether they reach their goals, and, in the long run, moving toward cooperative policymaking with other states. Our Legislature has manifestly refused to do any of these things. For these reasons, hundreds of citizens are circulating initiative petitions throughout Nebraska to place repeal of LB 775 on the November 2004 general election ballot.

Even with success of the initiative next November, however, Nebraska taxpayers may lose more than 1.5 billion additional dollars (through at least 2019) for LB 775 agreements in effect prior to enactment of the initiative. Because LB 775, as currently written, allows tax credits for Big Business to be used 15 or more years into the future, state and local coffers will continue to experience massive revenue losses—currently about \$90 million annually, tapering down each year until all previously—signed agreements expire.

During the 2004 session, the Unicameral will again grapple with a budget shortfall, recently projected at \$211 million. This shortfall is exacerbated by LB 775’s heavy cost in lost tax revenues.

In the public interest, we recommend (in addition to termination of LB 775 through the initiative petition) modifications representing good-government principles be amended into LB 775 during 2004. These changes would significantly improve the implementation of the program for the existing projects and impose crucial brakes on revenue losses from LB 775 subsidies.

The plan narrows LB 775’s scale and focus and stops the unrestricted mortgaging of Nebraska taxpayers’ future for another two decades from LB 775 projects already approved. Some modifications would refocus subsidies to industry sectors and regions of the state that can most benefit from business incentives (Section II). Others

would provide, for the first time, local control over local tax breaks (Section III).

A key reform reshapes the current LB 775 formula to subsidize only quality jobs, not investment capital (Section I). The use of full-time-equivalent jobs (which don’t provide jobs to additional employees) would be eliminated. Instead of giving tax credits for any job, no matter how meager the wages and benefits, jobs would meet floors for wages and benefits to qualify for full credits. Of fundamental importance, a limit would be imposed on how much taxpayers would pay to subsidize each job.

A second pivotal reform would provide the Legislature with control over annual revenue losses by placing LB 775 subsidies on the budget (Section IV, Item 1). This reform would not affect how LB 775 tax credits and refunds are *earned*, but would change how and when they are *used*, limiting them through appropriation each year by the Legislature.

A third critical reform proposes long-needed good-government changes that provide genuine accountability and disclosure of key information (Sections IV and V). These suggestions should be implemented for current LB 775 projects, thereby providing vital data to the Legislature, local governments, and Nebraska taxpayers that allow assessment of projects and program operations. These suggestions would also provide hard numbers on recipients’ tax breaks.

Adoption of even a few of the following reforms would yield substantial savings to taxpayers and benefits to the state economy. Some recommendations may be mutually exclusive.

## I. Subsidize Jobs, Not Capital

Reform goals:

1. Focus business subsidies on job creation.
2. Reduce the taxpayer cost of subsidizing new jobs.
3. Improve incentives for creating jobs with living wages and benefits.

Currently, jobs earning LB 775 tax breaks cost taxpayers \$32,000 per job when all credits and refunds earned are included. Applying the Department of Revenue estimate that only 30 percent of jobs earning LB 775 tax breaks are truly new jobs

increases the taxpayer cost to \$108,000 per job. LB 775 also currently provides tax breaks for investment projects in excess of \$20 million which create no jobs. A recent example is the expansion project at the Dakota City IBP-Tyson meatpacking plant which may receive LB 775 tax breaks to actually *reduce* jobs at the LB 775 project site.

Suggested reforms:

1. Replace all investment credits, new jobs credits, direct sales tax refunds, and property tax abatements with a single new jobs credit (applied only to state income tax) of \$10,000 earned for each new living wage job created, usable in installments over seven years, not to exceed \$2,000 per year.
2. Replace existing application options (\$20 million investment and no new jobs, \$3 million investment and 30 new jobs, or \$10 million investment and 100 jobs) with a single requirement that projects must create at least 30 living wage jobs.
3. Require living wage-and-benefits floor for new jobs qualifying for credits. (Alternatively, provide significantly lower new jobs credits for new jobs failing to meet the floor requirement.)
4. Prohibit use of full-time-equivalent (FTE) jobs and overtime worked by pre-existing employees at the project site to qualify for new jobs credits.
5. Require that LB 775 projects must result in net new jobs statewide for the applicant company.
6. Require full recapture of benefits plus interest if jobs are cut at the state level during term of agreement.
7. Require sworn statements from all LB 775 applicants that projects would not have occurred *but for* program subsidies.

## II. Strengthen Targeting of Industry Sectors and Geographic Regions

Reform goals:

1. Improve the cost-effectiveness of development subsidies by focusing on manufacturing

industry sectors and high-unemployment counties.

2. Eliminate the unnecessary use of subsidies for natural business growth and business as usual, and for industries more appropriately subsidized by other major incentive programs (for example, ethanol).
3. Eliminate subsidies for “bad actor” companies and others that tend to impose high external costs onto their host communities and the state.

Economic development specialists generally agree that business incentives should be designed principally to create jobs in primary (manufacturing) industry sectors. Secondary industry sectors (which include retail services, banking and insurance, transportation, warehousing, and telephone, television, newspaper, and other media services) tend to expand in response to primary sector job growth.

Targeting development subsidies to limited geographic areas with high unemployment and underutilization of local infrastructure is more likely to result in benefits to public welfare and lower external costs to project host communities.

Nebraska’s natural competitive advantages should be promoted, but incentives must not be provided for simply doing business as usual. Meatpacking plants and telephone call centers are drawn to Nebraska by low non-labor input costs (due to the abundance of livestock production and excess capacity of major telecommunications trunk lines, respectively) and do not require large tax incentives to stimulate expansion. The construction and expansion of ethanol plants require targeted incentives stronger than those provided by LB 775. Ethanol production incentives should be established through separate legislation if public policy dictates.

“Bad actor” companies, which violate environmental, health, safety, labor, securities, or criminal law, impose substantial costs (externalities) on their host communities and the state. Meatpacking plants, in the normal course of business, offload heavy external costs onto their host communities, increasing taxpayer burdens for K-12 public education and health care even as the local property tax base is eroded by LB 775 property tax abatements and local sales tax refunds.

# Reforming LB 775

## Business Subsidies—Repeal LB 775

### Suggested reforms:

1. Eliminate subsidies to secondary (non-manufacturing) industries, such as retail services, banking and insurance, transportation, warehousing, and telephone, television, newspaper, and other media services.
2. Target development subsidies to high-unemployment counties or regions, as designated by the Legislature.
3. Eliminate subsidies to the meatpacking industry and telephone call centers.
4. Eliminate LB 775 subsidies for ethanol plant construction and expansion in favor of an appropriately-funded ethanol production incentive program.
5. Prohibit subsidies to “bad actor” companies (businesses with violations of environmental, health, safety, labor, securities, or criminal law) or companies currently or recently operating under bankruptcy.

### III. Provide Local Control over Local Tax Breaks

#### Reform goals:

1. Provide local governments with tools for accountability and control over local tax breaks provided under LB 775.
2. Mitigate the adverse impact of LB 775 property tax abatements.

Currently, local governments have no authority to stop the erosion of their local tax bases by LB 775. In addition to state income tax credits and state sales tax refunds, LB 775 provides local tax breaks in the form of local sales tax refunds and property tax abatements for corporate jets, certain computer equipment, and business equipment used in the processing of agricultural products (mostly, ethanol and meatpacking). The value of property receiving LB 775 tax abatements depreciates to zero by the time exemptions expire so that the value to local tax bases is forever lost. School districts, particularly in rural communities that host meatpacking plants, bear the largest adverse impact of LB 775 property tax abatements as these are coupled with increased demands on K-12 operations and facilities.

### Suggested reforms:

1. Eliminate all property tax abatements for LB 775 projects.
2. Require that local tax breaks provided under LB 775 (local sales tax refunds and property tax abatements) be approved by the local authorities with jurisdiction.
3. Exempt school districts from the impact of property tax abatements, either through elimination of abatements or state reimbursement of the full amount of the abatements.
4. Adopt procedures for refunding local sales taxes that allow municipalities to budget for revenue losses.
5. Require annual disclosure of the impact of LB 775 on the revenues of cities, counties, school districts, and other governmental entities (by entity and type of revenue).

### IV. Improve Legislative Accountability

#### Reform goals:

1. Provide the Legislature with tools for accountability and oversight.
2. Impose legislative fiscal responsibility by putting LB 775 tax expenditures on budget.
3. Assure meaningful periodic review and evaluation of the LB 775 program.
4. Turn off the automatic pilot on the LB 775 program.

LB 775 has been operating without meaningful oversight by the Legislature since program inception in 1987. Linking annual legislative appropriation of tax breaks used with periodic program cost-benefit analysis and sunset provisions would increase assurance that LB 775 is working effectively at a cost to taxpayers that is identifiable and reasonable. Other suggested reforms provide essential information about the program and improve program administration at modest additional cost. Annual comprehensive tax expenditures reports are a good government tool to assure that costs per job are not underestimated (due to tax breaks earned from multiple programs) and that perceived public benefits are not illusory (for example, LB 775 project property excluded from local tax bases due to tax increment financing).

### Suggested reforms:

1. Limit aggregate amounts of LB 775 tax credits and refunds used through annual appropriation by the Legislature.
2. Adopt sunset provisions that require the Legislature to reauthorize the LB 775 program periodically.
3. Require periodic cost-benefit analysis for the entire program (prior to sunset).
4. Require cost-benefit review of each proposed project prior to signing agreements.
5. Require annual *independent* performance audits of program administration.
6. Require the Legislative Fiscal Office to submit *annual* Dynamic TRAIN reports on the impact of LB 775 on future state revenues.
7. Require restricted disclosure of tax return information for formal annual review by the Legislature’s Program Evaluation Committee.
8. Require annual *comprehensive tax expenditures reports* (with aggregates for all state and local tax incentive programs, including LB 775, Invest Nebraska Act, Quality Jobs Act, Enterprise Zone Act, tax increment financing (TIFs), ethanol production credits, et al.).

### V. Improve Annual Disclosure

#### Reform goals:

1. Improve presentation of aggregate program data currently disclosed.
2. Require disclosure of additional significant qualitative data on individual projects.
3. Require disclosure of detailed quantitative data regarding individual projects.

Highly restricted disclosure regarding LB 775 makes public evaluation of the program difficult and, with respect to most key features, impossible. Annual reports on LB 775 suffer from two serious weaknesses: (1) the reports contain little useful information on individual projects, whether qualitative or quantitative in nature, and (2) summary aggregate data are, in general, poorly and inadequately presented.

### Suggested reforms:

1. Require improved tabular presentation of aggregate data (“Summary of LB 775 Benefits Approved”) in the annual report on LB 775 prepared by the Department of Revenue, clearly identifying total benefits earned, used, and carried forward.
2. Require annual estimates of aggregate property tax abatements, and include them in the annual report’s “Summary of LB 775 Benefits Approved.”
3. Require improved disclosure of the terms of project agreements in the annual report, including specific project location, detailed project description, and corporate affiliations of owners of project businesses.
4. Require annual disclosure of all projects earning or using LB 775 tax breaks, including current names and affiliations of project businesses.
5. Require annual disclosure of amounts of credits and refunds recaptured (by type), time periods involved, and reasons for recapture for each LB 775 project and participating business.
6. Require annual disclosure of amounts of tax breaks received (by type) and estimates of amounts expected to be received for each LB 775 project and participating business.
7. Require annual disclosure of the number of jobs earning new jobs credits for each LB 775 project and participating business.
8. Require annual disclosure of the amount of qualifying investment for each LB 775 project and participating business.
9. Require annual disclosure of average, median, and range of wages of employees at the site of each LB 775 project in the year prior to application and for each subsequent year.
10. Require annual disclosure of amounts received from all other state and local tax incentive programs for each LB 775 project and participating business.

# 2004 SESSION, CONCLUSION

So, afraid to raise taxes, but anxious about making cuts, the governor and Legislature have made a deliberate effort to downplay the size and significance of the shortfall. The headline in the December 3, 2003 *Lincoln Journal Star* read, "Johanns' budget outlook upbeat—Governor and legislative leaders say economic recovery is reason for optimism." Sounding chipper, the governor cited high cattle and soybean prices and a smaller deficit than the ones the Legislature has faced the past two years as evidence things are turning around. He also made much of the fact of that the state has \$174 million in its 'rainy day' reserve that can be used to plug the shortfall. Things, the governor would have us believe, are looking up.

Whether this constitutes 'light at the end of the tunnel,' however, remains to be seen. First, despite the political hoopla over the last quarter's economic news, the U.S. is still saddled with a record federal deficit, reeling from a shrunken job market and mired in a costly military occupation in Iraq that will act as a drag

to Big Business under LB 775. So long as this revenue loss is permitted to go on (and right now it's fixed to go on indefinitely) state government is going to find it hard claw its way back into the light.

LB 775, just as we have been saying for the last three years, is still the 800-pound gorilla in the state budget crisis. Ending it outright (or, at the very least, curtailing its lavish benefits) would begin to get the monkey off our fiscal back and give us some financial breathing room. Which is why we will once again be actively supporting legislation to repeal this costly \$3 billion Big Business tax giveaway program.

## NFP's Legislative Agenda

Like last session, NFP will again be promoting a raft of legislation calling for everything from piecemeal reform of LB 775 to complete repeal. Unlike last session, however, we're guaranteed of getting a better hearing from our legislators. The \$top Big Business

topic. Governor Mike Johanns has already labeled NFP "Nebraskans for *Publicity*" for having the presumption to challenge this Big Business subsidy program. And he says it as if it's a bad thing. But the simple fact of the matter is this is how democracy is done. Until an issue has drawn enough publicity to get into the public eye—regardless of how important it may be—change can't occur.

This legislative session, NFP is more than happy to work for change from within. We'll testify at the public hearings, write letters, do whatever is required. But if the Legislature again fails in its duty to the citizens, we're prepared to resolve this ourselves—at the November general election.

Clearly, the budget crisis will dominate the 2004 Unicameral, but amid all the cutting and slashing, we're hoping a number of other issues will get a hearing (a partial list of which is included here). The legislative solution to the problems at Whiteclay, for example, has still not been enacted. Until the Legislature prohibits the Liquor Control Commission from granting new licenses in this 14-person unincorporated village, the tragedy at Whiteclay is destined to continue regardless of whether tribal police are given law enforcement jurisdiction there or not. Deputization of tribal law enforcement may succeed in getting the four existing off-sale dealers cited and shut down, because it's impossible to sell over 11,000 cans of beer a day to an Indian clientele that has no legal place to drink it without some kind of law being broken. But nothing, at this point, statutorily prevents the liquor commissioners from turning right around and issuing new licenses, and perpetuating this endless cycle of exploitation.

This session, the Legislature will get another chance to take matters into its own hands and end the licensing of alcohol sales at Whiteclay. But the clock is ticking. The "Year of Atonement for Whiteclay," called by the American Indian Movement (A.I.M.) a year ago, ends "Statehood Day" March 1. And if a permanent solution hasn't been enacted by then, activists from all over Indian Country are going to want to know why. Particularly, since LB 426 from last year, which would establish a five-mile deep buffer zone around dry Indian reservations, has just been sitting in the General Affairs Committee and could have been advanced to the floor at any time.

Our civil rights agenda will also include the legislative initiatives on behalf of gays and lesbians. Bills addressing fair

employment and housing and domestic partnerships will all have our active support. The same holds true for legislation focusing on the problem of domestic abuse and violence in the home. And, as always, we will be supportive of any and all of Sen. Ernie Chambers' attempts to abolish the death penalty. With all the concern about racial equity in sentencing and the innocent being sentenced to death, abolition should be the focus of any capital punishment debate—not seeking to change the method of execution from electrocution to lethal injection.

On the 'good government' front, we're already part of a coalition to stop the repeal of the Campaign Finance Limitation Act, LB 762. Proponents want to remove the few incentives we've got that limit the amount of money candidates can spend in state-level campaigns. If the act is repealed, the Legislature will have enthroned money as the single most influential element in politics and shamelessly admitted that elective office is for sale to the highest bidder. And it will have done this at the very moment the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the federal McCain-Feingold Act, precisely because of the negative influence money unquestionably has on the political process.

You can also count on us to yet again oppose the repeal of the ban on concealed weapons. LB 265, which would legalize "concealed carry," is already on the floor of the chamber and the governor has stated his intent to sign the bill, if it reaches his desk. As the last thing this world needs right now is more guns, we'll do what we can to stop this madness. But the bill is already on Select File.

And finally, we're happy to support Sen. Chris Beutler's efforts to raise wage levels in the state. Former U.S. Senator Jim Exon used to be fond of saying that the best social program in the world is a job. We agree, but for that 'social program' to be a success, it has to pay a wage that people can actually live on. So far, in Nebraska, our legislators have a hard time understanding that point. Maybe though, it's because they themselves are paid so poorly. Twelve thousand dollars a year, considering the hours required to serve in the Legislature, hardly constitutes a 'living wage.' Consequently, we'll also be supporting a constitutional amendment this session to increase legislative salaries. Our public servants—all of them—deserve better than they're getting. And as the old saw goes, you get what you pay for.

## LB 775 Repeal Campaign Supporters

NAPE/AFSCME, Local 61  
Communications Workers of America, Local 7470  
Common Cause Nebraska  
Nebraska Chapter of the Sierra Club  
United Steel Workers of America, Local 286  
Nebraska Green Party  
Lancaster County Democrats  
American Association of University Professors, State Conference  
Nebraskans for Peace  
UNO Chapter of AAUP  
Nebraska Young Democrats  
National Association of Social Workers--Nebraska Chapter  
Nebraska Farmers Union

on any domestic economic recovery. Second, the drought affecting agriculture in the state is far from over and, as a spate of recent news reports have highlighted, the effects of Global Warming are becoming progressively more evident, which is not good news for the Great Plains. Third, several Nebraska education organizations have already filed suit against the State of Nebraska for failing to fulfill the terms outlined in the state aid to education formula. Should that lawsuit be successful (and it may well be) state government will owe hundreds of million dollars it hasn't budgeted for in state aid to Nebraska school districts.

And finally, the state treasury continues to hemorrhage an average of \$90 million annually in corporate welfare

Subsidies—Repeal LB 775 initiative petition campaign has caught the attention of our state senators on this issue like nothing else in the program's 16-year history. With the prospect of a repeal initiative on the ballot at the same time many of the senators will be standing for reelection in their home districts, the Legislature doesn't dare snub this issue like it did last year. Then, as you'll recall, we couldn't even get the body to pass a pitiful little "disclosure" bill on who's benefiting and how much before amending it down to nothing.

This year, at a minimum, the senators will be forced to at least give 'lip service' to reforming LB 775. And while that's hardly a guarantee of meaningful change, it will focus more public attention on the

The 2003 SOA Protest...

# One Too Many Mournings

by Patrick Murray  
Professor, Creighton University

Our journey to Fort Benning, Georgia, to protest and close the School of the Americas (renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation but little altered) began Thursday, November 20. About 40 Creighton students, including a number of repeaters, were joined by myself; Maria Teresa's son; and Roger Carroll. Fr. John Thiede, a Jesuit teaching Theology at Creighton, would join us in Georgia. The night was charged with anticipation and gestures of well-wishing from friends and family who came to see us off. Joyce Glenn, a pastoral minister at Sacred Heart Parish in Omaha, slipped Roger and me money for meals. Support for the trip came from the Creighton University Jesuit Community and St. John's Parish on the Creighton campus. We huddled in a circle, led in prayer by Fr. Bert Thelen, pastor of St. John's. Then we loaded into the vans by eights and nines, checked our walkie-talkies, and headed southeast across the country.

Our journey had other beginnings: when Jean Donovan's and Sisters Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, and Dorothy Kazel's ride back from San Salvador's airport was cut short by their abduction, rape, and murder by SOA graduates; when Archbishop Oscar Romero's last Mass was halted by bullets, an assassination devised and executed by SOA graduates; when all 800 villagers (save one) of El Mozote in Morazan province were herded together and massacred by Salvadoran armed forces trained at Fort Benning; and when, in the terrible early morning hours of November 16, 1989, six Spanish Jesuits teaching at the University of Central America (UCA), along with their housekeeper and her daughter, were dragged from their beds to have their brains blown out by yet more SOA graduates. And still other beginnings: when SOA Watch founder Fr. Roy Bourgeois, a Vietnam vet and Maryknoll missionary, moved to Fort Benning, climbed a tree on the base and played Archbishop Romero's last, desperate sermon, in which he implored the Salvadoran military: "Stop the repression." And when, at last year's protest, three Creighton students and former Creighton professor Katherine Brown walked onto the base and into Georgia's criminal justice system. Katherine served a three-month sentence and then Creighton freshmen William Slattery, six months. (Both were back this year; Katherine with her elderly parents.)



Creighton University student, William Slattery, shown addressing the 2003 protest, was arrested for civil disobedience last year and spent six months in prison.

I think most of us looked forward to the adventure of driving the vans straight through to Fort Benning with a mixture of excitement, sense of risk, hope for conversation and community, and expectations of good music and lost sleep. Thankfully, we had no mishaps on the road going or coming; otherwise, our anticipations were fulfilled. I caught on to the music of the Flaming Lips and was reminded why Jimi Hendrix's "Are You Experienced?" finished in *Time* magazine's top three albums of the last century. We found that keeping a five-van caravan together and on the move took some doing. Object lesson number one came with our first rest stop: if you are traveling with over 40 people, don't pick a gas station with one toilet.

Once checked into the motel, we went to a dinner sponsored by the Catholic Worker. From there we rushed across town to take our place with hundreds from Jesuit colleges and high schools around the country for the annual Jesuit Teach-in. It was held under a huge tent along the Chattahoochee River Friday night and Saturday morning, followed by a Mass Saturday evening. The energy under the tent was high; we were regularly led in song, and delegations would stand up and yell when called out by the Jesuit priest from the Bay area who bore

some resemblance to Jerry Garcia. But there was no mistaking the seriousness of purpose animating those gathered.

Saturday afternoon our group and others had an invitation to visit SOA (WHISC) headquarters for a panel discussion with the commandant and several instructors. Almost 250 of us were gathered into an auditorium where the professional, respectful treatment we had received gave way to an odder approach.

The commandant, an amiable Colonel with a Ph.D. in international relations, let us in on the secret that his son was in the room among the protesters, no doubt making a tense situation even more difficult for him. He broke the ice by working the crowd like Jay Leno: say, who's here from Ohio? Anyone from my home state, California? A civil question and answer period followed, with no regrets being expressed by the WHISC panelists.

They seemed to grant that the school mostly just changed its name and that the military and police training that they provide is used largely against local insurgents rather than foreign militaries. The commandant turned back the question, "Why do you think that we are here?", by challenging the linkage between the school and notorious deeds by its graduates, pointing out: (1)

many such atrocities occurred in Central and South America before the SOA opened in 1946; (2) only a fraction of the atrocities since have been committed by SOA graduates; (3) in some cases, the course the individual took (on field radios, in former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega's case) seems unrelated to the crimes committed; and (4) in some cases, many years had passed between the perpetrator's graduation from the SOA and the atrocities. More revealing of the SOA's function, I think, is the old saying about the friendly Latin American tyrant, "He may be a son of bitch, but at least he's our son of a bitch."

The session came to a mind-boggling close when the commandant informed us that it was the birthday of his second in command, a major in the Uruguayan army and one of the panelists, and, after thoughtfully canvassing the audience for anyone else with a birthday, led (some of) the group in singing "Happy Birthday"! Hannah Arendt cautioned us about the "banality of evil"—don't count on the bad guys to look like Orcs—but what could have prepared us for buffoonery at the "School of the Assassins"?

While we sat at WHISC headquarters being admonished to listen to both sides—"Don't trust me, but don't trust SOA Watch, either"—Saturday's SOA Watch rally was being drowned out by anthems and martial music blasted from the base. (Eventually, an end to the deliberate disruption of the legal and peaceful demonstration was negotiated.)

Sunday morning's solemn, liturgical demonstration was what we had come for. Some 10,000 strong we lined up, stretching back from the gate, many with signs or white crosses raised over and over when we answered "Presente!" throughout the endless litany of those who died at the hands of SOA graduates. It took us about three hours to reach the gate itself, which was by then decorated with crosses and other remembrances of the dead and disappeared. We passed a young man sobbing inconsolably among protesters splayed out in black and covered with red recalling the bloody deeds of those who had trained behind that gate.

Our return trip gave us time to feel and talk over events of the previous 48 hours. As we arrived home and hurriedly dispersed to get back to our usual business, and for hours more that day, I was gripped by an unnamed sadness.

# ***The Death of Democracy at the FTAA***

## Final nail pounded in the coffin at Miami



by *Laura Krebsbach*  
*Executive Director, Nebraska Sierra Club*

I did not think that in my lifetime I would ever seriously use the term “fascist state” to describe my government. But after my experience at the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit the week of November 18-21, I find those are the only words that describe what I witnessed on the streets of Miami.

Like the other 25,000 people who turned out for the event, I attended the “March in Miami” to exercise my First Amendment rights in protest of the Bush Administration’s proposed Free Trade Areas of the Americas agreements. Instead of being treated as law-abiding citizens of this country who were peaceably assembling to publicly speak out, we were met by a force of storm troopers with the attitude that they were defending Miami from an invasion of a hostile alien army.

Why did the City of Miami and the State of Florida mass thousands of police troops from across the state in full riot gear to harass and intimidate us? Why did the Department of Homeland Security allocate nearly **NINE MILLION** dollars to fund this huge show of force?

Because it is the goal of court-appointed President Bush and his Big Business beneficiaries to shove this agreement down our throats and squash any voice of opposition—even though it comes at the

expense of the health, environment and jobs of everyone else in the country.

But enough about why. Let me tell you about my personal encounters with excessive force and intimidation at the hands of storm troopers that was not reported by the media. The increased police presence was visible immediately on the Tuesday before the March officially began. I was having lunch outside the hotel the Steel Workers’ union was having its meetings at, and directly behind us were armed state wildlife officers, who I’m sure had been drafted for the occasion. They seemed ill at ease with their large side arms and batons.

Early the next day the massive deployment began. It started with a few riot-gear police being stationed at key intersections, and by the end of the evening (after the “People’s Gala” that was anything but), the entire downtown was blocked off with at least five police officers at every intersection.

I went to the Bay Shore Amphitheater at 4:00 o’clock in the afternoon to do volunteer ‘peacekeeping’ duties for the People’s Gala that was featuring speakers and music. I was told at every entrance that I had to go to the next entrance by police stationed at every entryway. When I got to the last one, a female officer asked for my ‘credentials.’ I said I was told to be here at 4:00 p.m. to get them. She said if you don’t have them, you can’t get in. I said I had to get in to get them. She told me that was my tough luck. Eventually, about 30 of us ended up waiting

there before the AFL-CIO organizers caught up with us and distributed the ‘credentials.’ Hassle that this was, this was nothing compared to the next day—before, during and after the march.

The police presence and orders they received were for the explicit purpose of controlling our events and making sure we knew who was calling the shots. All the logistics for where groups would meet, stage their people, enter for the pre-march rally and march itself were negotiated with the Miami police BEFOREHAND by the AFL-CIO.

What I encountered at 8:30 a.m. that Thursday morning was like nothing I had ever experienced before. As soon as I walked out of the motel and headed for the rally, I was directed by police in full riot gear, gas masks and batons to walk away from the area we were scheduled to meet at. All the streets going in that direction were closed, and I had to walk a mile out of the way through the most dangerous areas of Miami with drug addicts, dealers and homeless people everywhere to reach my destination. When I finally arrived at the Sierra Club staging area, there were four men with backpacks standing around. I asked if they were with the Sierra Club, and they said no. But they didn’t move and just stood there. Feeling funny about them, I asked if they were undercover cops. And to my surprise, they said yes. I asked them why on earth they would tell me that. They said it was because I didn’t look dangerous.

As we began assembling our members, signs, flags and banners, though, a line of storm troopers came sweeping across the entire park and, standing shoulder to shoulder, started forcing us toward the sidewalk. Many of us weren’t even given time to collect our signs. I grabbed one side of our banner and a local volunteer grabbed the other, as we were forced to walk backwards towards the sidewalk, our faces just inches from the troopers. As we approached the sidewalk, I just could not make myself take that last eight inches of a step back onto the cement and kept my feet at the edge of the grass.

The trooper in my face ordered me to step back. I told him no. We’d had permission to be there, had a right to be there, and I just couldn’t make myself give up those last few inches. That dab of turf had somehow come to symbolize my rights as a citizen, and I wasn’t going to budge. He ordered me several more times to step back, and finally said he would have to push me. I responded that if he wanted to push a ‘mature’ woman onto the ground, with two reporters with cameras right behind me, he could go ahead. There was a flurry of radio communications back and forth, before the whole line stepped back one step. Then I told the trooper I would step back.

I was lucky. With the reporters right there, just waiting to capture someone (who didn’t even ‘look dangerous’) getting mistreated, the officer was forced to think twice. Others though, weren’t so fortunate. The wife of a Salt Lake City Steel Worker was standing in line at the rally when she lost her footing. Within seconds, ten troopers had jumped over the railings, shoved their batons in her back and put a gun to her head, telling her to “Freeze!” She complied immediately, but sustained quite a few bruises and had to be taken to the hospital. The only explanation I heard for this overreaction was that she had made “sudden moves.” This all transpired just 20 yards away from where I had my little ‘turf war.’ I got to meet this woman later that evening and was glad to hear they’d already retained a personal injury lawyer.

I feel my words don’t do justice in relaying what it was like—10 to 12 riot helicopters circling overhead, downtown completely closed and boarded up and fully armed riot police everywhere, treating citizens like an invading alien army. I hope the picture accompanying my report speak louder than my words.

# Chronology, conclusion

this would have no effect on commercial or diplomatic relations between the United States and Iraq. Iran asked the Security Council to condemn Iraq's chemical weapons use, but the U.S. delegate to the U.N. was instructed to try to prevent a resolution from coming to a vote, or else to abstain. An Iraqi official told the U.S. that Iraq strongly preferred a Security Council presidential statement to a resolution and did not want any specific country identified as responsible for chemical weapons use. On March 30, 1984, the Security Council issued a presidential statement condemning the use of chemical weapons, without naming Iraq as the offending party. (Battle, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/>.) At the same time that the U.S. government had knowledge of that the Iraqi military was using chemical weapons, it was providing intelligence and planning assistance to the Iraqi armed forces. (Patrick Tyler, "Officers Say U.S. Aided Iraq In War Despite Use Of Gas," *New York Times*, Aug. 18, 2002, p. 1.) When Iraq used chemical weapons in March 1988 against Halabja, there was no condemnation from Washington. (Dilip Hiro, "When U.S. turned a blind eye to poison gas," *The Observer*, September 1, 2002, p. 17.) "In September 1988, the House of Representatives voted 388 to 16 in favor of economic sanctions against Iraq, but the White House succeeded in having the Senate water down the proposal. In exchange for Export-Import Bank credits, Iraq merely had to promise not to use chemical weapons again, with agricultural credits exempted even from this limited requirement." (Rubin, "The United States and Iraq" p. 261.)]

**1987-89** – Wages Anfal campaign against the Kurds. One of Hussein's most egregious atrocities, at least 50,000 and possibly 100,000 Kurds were systematically slaughtered in Anfal between 1987-89 (Middle East Watch, *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds*, New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993.) The response of the new Bush Administration was to increase Iraq's commodity credits from half a billion to a billion dollars, making it the second largest user of the credit program in the world. As late as April 1990, the administration was opposing sanctions against Iraq ("They would hurt U.S. exporters and worsen our trade deficit," said the State Department). (Guy Gugliotta, Charles R. Babcock, and Benjamin Weiser, "At War, Iraq Courted U.S. Into Economic Embrace," *Washington Post*, Sept. 16, 1990, p. A1.) The administration also blocked efforts to cut back high-tech exports to Iraq with obvious military applications. (Douglas Frantz and Murray Waas, "Bush insisted on aiding Iraq until war's onset," *Chicago Sun-Times*, Feb. 23, 1992, p. 17.) And the United States was providing intelligence data to Iraq until three months before the invasion. (Murray Waas, Douglas Frantz, "U.S. shared intelligence with Iraq until 3 months before invasion of Kuwait," *Houston Chronicle*, March 10, 1992, p. A6.)

**Aug. 2, 1990** – Invades Kuwait.

**Jan. 17, 1991** – Attacked by U.S.-led coalition; Kuwait liberated in a month.

# From the Bottom conclusion

Some tractor manufacturers would like to see our state lab, one of only a few independent tractor labs in the world, out of business. The Lab is one of the historic legacies, like the Unicameral, public power and the NRDs, from the folks who built this state and were a lot smarter than most of us. It is the equivalent to *Consumer Reports* for tractors on value and safety. Some tractors don't look too good under close scrutiny by actual scientists, and those who make them don't want the world to know.

The Lab doesn't cost you a dime. The world would be a poorer place without it. Save it, because it won't be made again.

4. Find local food producers however you can, and buy your family's food from them. No excuses. Lincoln's Open Harvest and the new Centerville Market downtown feature locally produced food. Many Nebraska towns have farmers' markets or at least roadside stands, as well as small lockers that market through independent grocers.

The Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society ([www.nebsusag.org](http://www.nebsusag.org)) can get you

started finding farmers and ranchers who market directly in your area. Many deliver. You want to help save the world, or at least your part of it? Buy local.

5. Tell Governor Mike Johanns to leave I-300 alone.

Since I-300, Nebraska's anti-corporate farming law, was voted into our State Constitution by the people of Nebraska in 1982, no Nebraska governor has made more attempts to erode its protections than Mike Johanns, and you have to wonder why.

As the strongest such law in the country, I-300 is an embarrassment to corporate agriculture, just as public power is an embarrassment to corporate energy. Mike Johanns has his eye on the main chance, and if he can endear himself to agribusiness giants, his war chest for his upcoming Senate campaign will swell with their gratitude.

I-300 is not broke, and Nebraskans don't need the governor to fool with it. Let Mike Johanns know that he cannot make political hay at the expense of family farmers and ranchers.

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**Benefit Showing of the locally-produced documentary  
“Coalition for Peace”  
about the March Against War On Iraq  
held in Lincoln on January 18, 2003**

**When: January 18, 7:00 pm (the anniversary of the March)  
Where: Nebraska Union Auditorium (14<sup>th</sup> & R Streets, Lincoln)**

**The showing will be followed by a panel discussion.**

**Admission: \$5 suggested donation  
Proceeds go to anti-war efforts of Nebraskans for Peace**

## BULLETIN BOARD

*Office Hours for the Nebraskans for Peace State Office in Lincoln, at 941 ‘O’ Street, Suite 1026, are 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on weekdays.*

January 7 2004 Unicameral Begins

January 9 Monthly vigil at Kirby Gate at Offutt (StratCom) on the 9th from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. These vigils protest the continued threats of nuclear war and the development of a new generation of nuclear weapons. Sponsored by the Catholic Worker house of Des Moines.

January 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

*To list an event, submit in writing by the tenth of the month preceding the event. Send to: Nebraskans for Peace, 941 “O” Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508 nfpweb@redjellyfish.net  
Announcements published on a space available basis.*

# A New Year for Agriculture

A great New Year’s resolution for Nebraskans in 2004 is to resolve to protect and prosper the state’s #1 industry, agriculture. In so doing, we can defend our family farmers and ranchers and rural communities, as well as the land, water and air which are the foundation for the good life for us all, now and tomorrow.

Of course, talk is cheap. How can we do this exactly? What steps can ordinary Nebraskans take to make good on our excellent intentions? I’m glad you asked. Here are five simple steps Nebraskans can take this year.

1. Just say no to “Livestock Friendly County” designation for your county. Nebraska is the largest meat-producing state in the nation. It has been for years. Yet according to the governor, the Nebraska Farm Bureau and the Nebraska Cattlemen, our state’s livestock industry is in peril, and only deregulation can save it.

The obvious parallel is the attempt by the energy industry to breach the 100% public power system unique to Nebraska. Despite the

fact that Nebraskans enjoy the cheap-est, most reliable energy in the nation, fast-talking energy developers keep turning up with promises that deregulation will let them create competition and better service—do for Nebraska, that is, what they did for California.

I recently attended a presentation outlining the new Livestock Friendly County (LFC) designation, now law, by a self-styled agribusiness consultant on behalf of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Like Governor Johanns, this consultant makes a point of invoking his farm background, hoping for the kind of traction with his audience known as “\*\*\*\* on his boots.” Like Governor Johanns, he quickly got as far from the stink of the feedlots and holding tanks as law school could carry him.

LFC (doesn’t it sound like LLC?) is available to counties willing to use the lowest common denominator in terms of environmental and zoning standards. In fact, if your county has NO zoning, you’re there. Key is the willingness to let existing operations expand. Since we need more farm and ranch families, not fewer larger operations, whatever else LFC is, it is not family farmer friendly.

The good news is, all but eight Nebraska counties have or are in the process of zoning. No county is compelled to seek LFC, and as there is no earthly advantage to doing

so, this one is a no-brainer. Think Nancy Reagan and just say no.

2. Tell your representatives in Congress to demand the USDA implement Country of Origin Labeling.

The problem for small and medium livestock producers is not that Nebraska counties are unfriendly.

The problem is historic low-prices over many years due to corporate concentration in the meat-packing industry. Despite the tremendous power of the Packers and Stockyards Act to control and dismantle monopolies in the interest of creating authentic free commerce—many buyers and sellers working in a context of transparent markets—today the level of concentration in meat processing is worse than it was 80 years ago when the Act became law. Lack of enforcement leaves many livestock producers with only one buyer; producers who must sell to the largest meat-packers cannot control price and run on impossibly slim margins.

Prices are temporarily higher for beef cattle, since an embargo on Canadian beef due to the presence in that country’s herd of bovine spongiform encephalitis (BSE) or mad cow disease. Sadly, that fatal condition is itself largely a product of agricultural concentration and profit-at-any-cost strategies like the feeding of ground carcasses to critters born to graze.

Country of origin labeling (COOL) is good enough for your clothes and appliances and electronics and automobiles, and there’s no reason on earth why you can’t know where your food comes from. A broad range of consumers, progressive ag producers, environmentalists and churches helped Congress pass COOL for fresh and fresh frozen fruits and vegetables, red meats, seafood, and peanuts last year. COOL takes effect in September 2004, but the Bush Administration’s USDA has dragged its feet on COOL, predictably.

Want to help secure a market for Nebraska producers, who raise some of the safest, most environmentally friendly livestock in the world? Say yes to COOL.

Please, don’t just call the Democrat, because you think “that will do more good.” Be a citizen. Make your calls or write your letters. Let both your Senators and your Congressman hear from you. Do it now.

3. Tell your state senator that you want the Nebraska Tractor Testing Laboratory to continue its decades of service to farmers around the world through unbiased scientific safety and power testing at no cost to Nebraska taxpayers.

*conclusion on page 11*

**From the Bottom by Sally Herrin**  
**The real political spectrum isn’t right to left... it’s top to bottom.**

