



Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

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2023 Legislative Session: A Regretful Recap

by Maggie Ballard
Nebraskans for Peace Board President

The 108th Nebraska Legislature will go down in history as the session to bring about some of the worst changes that our state has ever seen. We can agree to disagree on the politics around what was passed, but the fact remains that the Speaker and Lieutenant Governor (who serves as the president of the Legislature) chose to ignore the rules that ensure our laws are passed fairly. We're getting a little ahead of ourselves though, aren't we? Perhaps I should start back from the beginning.

Every January, the Nebraska Unicameral convenes for either 60 days (a short session, taking place during even-numbered years) or 90 days (a long session during which the state budget must be passed, which takes place during odd-numbered years). This year's 90 day session began with a bit of excitement in the air that can be compared to the first day of

high school or college. There was a mixture of several new or returning freshmen senators, while some were returning for their seventh or eighth years. The Unicameral is officially nonpartisan – meaning that each person works for the agenda of the state, rather than the agenda of their political party. Even so, each senator is known to have an “R” or a “D” next to their name, even if that letter is not displayed anywhere in the Capitol. There was a total of 17 Democrats and 32 Republicans. If you have watched the session in previous years, you know that being outnumbered almost 2:1 does not leave the progressive-minded senators powerless. While a simple majority of 25 votes is needed to advance or pass a bill, there is this wild card known as a **filibuster**, a procedure in a legislative body to prolong debate in order to delay or prevent a decision. Senator Ernie Chambers was the king of filibusters back when he was in office, and once this strategy is implemented, it takes 33 – not 25 – votes needed to advance a bill.

Therefore, the minority voice is protected. But only if there are 17 minority voices. 16 will not cut it, and this year's legislative body was made up of one democrat that sided with conservatives on key issues.

After senators were sworn in to office, Committee Chairs were elected by secret ballot and Senator John Arch was unanimously elected to be the Speaker. There was some contention over committee assignments and rules around Points of Personal Privilege (which is fancy talk for taking a moment to make a personal announcement or acknowledgement), but optimists had reason to believe that things could be ironed out and run in their usual, productive fashion. That optimism was short-lived though, once bills started being introduced. As some senators introduced bills to help Nebraskans with issues like food and water, property taxes, education, and criminal justice reform, others focused on controversial issues, some of which seemed to originate from outside Nebraska. Bills that made progressives across the state cringe began making headlines, like expanding the right to carry a weapon without any training or background checks that NFP organized a rally against (LB 77 – Senator Tom Brewer), restricting access to abortion after 6 weeks (LB 626 – Senator Joni Albrecht), making it a crime for minors to be around drag queens (LB 373 – Senator Dave Murman), prohibiting transgender youth from using bathrooms or locker rooms for the gender they identify as, unless it matches the sex they were assigned

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More than seven years ago, Omaha Public Power District agreed to shut down these plants and create alternate sources to generate and provide electricity. p. 12

Nebraskans for Peace's state office in Lincoln is located on land that formerly belonged to the Otoe Tribe.

Nebraska Report

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

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2023 Legislative Session, continued

at birth (LB 575 – Senator Kathleen Kauth) and demanding that Nebraskans prove their citizenship each time they vote (AM 1940 – Senator Julie Slama – to LB 514, as simple Voter ID Bill).

As these “culture wars” began stirring up, the nonpartisan nature of the Legislature started to fade. And then, to top it all off, Senator Kathleen Kauth introduced LB 574, a piece of anti-trans legislation which she named the “Let Them Grow” Act. LB 574 prohibited the use of hormones, puberty blockers, and gender reassignment surgery for transgender minors in Nebraska. The bill was deemed by supporters as a way to prevent children from putting hormones or puberty blockers into their bodies when the long-term effects have not yet been studied, and to prevent children from mutilating their genitals before they become adults. Critics (including Nebraskans for Peace) saw this bill as a means to legislate hatred; it would prevent transgender youth from becoming more comfortable in their own skin – allowing them to match their outsides with their insides. Opponents to LB 574 also asserted that gender-altering surgeries are already rare amongst minors, and the hormones and puberty blockers LB 574 sought to ban were FDA approved, safe, rarely regretted, and a way to help transgender youth become more at peace with who they truly are. To our dismay, LB 574 had 22 co-signers.

Another dismaying event involved committee bill hearings. This year, they were not run fairly. A core tenant of our unicameral system is the committee process. Because we only have one house – the Senate – the people are considered the second house. Every bill is required to have a hearing and citizens, or the Second House, are free to come sit in front of the committee members and offer up their 3 - 5 minutes of testimony, be it personal story, professional experience, or one's opinion. This system has rules and norms that are followed year after year. But norms were shattered this year in some committees. The hearing on LB 574 in the Health and Human Services Committee was one example: the hearing room, an overflow room and the hallways were filled with people who came to testify on the bill. These were transgender adults, transgender teens, gay people, straight people, parents of transgender kids, social workers, pediatricians, nurses, other healthcare providers, and civil rights advocates. When Senator Hansen, Chair of the HHS committee decided to limit the total number of testifiers to 3 hours per side, lines of people who had been there all day were told to go home, unable to speak to those who represent them in government. The hearing was over by 8:00 p.m. (Hearings are allowed to go to 11:59, as has happened before on controversial bills). But Senator Hansen didn't want to stay that late. So, the people crying, angry, sad, exhausted, people were sent away. The Second House was silenced. Needless to say, LB 574 came out of committee.

Senator Machaela Cavanaugh was not having any of it. Early on in the session, as soon as she heard LB 574 was introduced, she got on her microphone and told her colleagues, everyone watching the Legislature at home, and the entire world that she would “burn the session to the ground” before she would let such a bill pass. She vowed to filibuster every single bill that came up for debate, which would use up so much time that the body would only have enough time left to pass a small handful of bills. And she was true to her word. Even through having strep throat, Senator

VIETNAMESE WOMEN

Traumas and Transformation

by Anh Le

This article is a dedication to all the generations of Vietnamese women who suffered, sacrificed, and survived the horror of the Vietnam wartime traumas and the transgenerational traumas. We are strong, resilient, and powerful beyond words. While the world wants to ignore and forget about our pains and strengths, we are so busy rebuilding our shattered lives that our stories have been put away. Now is the time for sharing our stories of unspeakable sufferings and incredible strengths.

These are the stories of older generations of women fighting in the war; watching our villages being burned and bombed; burying numerous bodies daily; working for peace and rebuilding; taking care of wounded victims; mourning husbands and babies; protecting family; running and hiding from the bombs and gunfire; selling our bodies and dignities to protect and provide for loved ones; sneaking on to boats to cross the oceans; being raped and assaulted by all sides; enduring violence and abuse in refugee camps; tolerating domestic violence; pushing through racist discrimination in a strange land with a strange language... While the world keeps ignoring us, invalidating our pains, pushing away our stories.

These are the stories of younger generations of women born into the war or the aftermath; growing up in physical and emotional destructions; suffering from PTSD rages of our caregivers; living in shame with mental illnesses; being marginalized and invalidated as the model minority; being raised in the toxic soup of unprocessed traumas; trying

our best to transform the vicious cycle of transgenerational traumas; enduring physical and sexual abuse; being ostracized for speaking up against domestic violence; carrying the hidden burden of abuse and traumas while being told to smile... While the world keeps ignoring us, invalidating our pains, pushing away our stories.

Did you know that the PTSD diagnosis came from the work with traumatized Vietnam veterans who suffered from flashbacks of the unspeakable atrocities they witnessed and committed during the war? It was so triggering for me to read about it in the book "The Body Keeps The Scores", but I pushed myself to keep reading because I want to understand and heal from this trauma. It's a great book and I admire all the therapists and researchers who are working diligently to help trauma victims. I pray and work for compassion and healing for all beings involved in this horrendous war. However, I can't help but realize the fact that they are pouring so much energy into treating the perpetrators of the wartime atrocities while completely ignoring the victims. Yes, we are here, right here, for decades!!! We are the ones who were raped, bombed, and killed. We are the ones who were abused by deeply traumatized caregivers. We are the ones who lost parents/family to the war and its aftermath. We are the ones suffering from poverty and discrimination. Why is there a lack of interest and funding for supporting and healing us? Is it because we are "invisible" or "less than human" so we are incapable of being traumatized or undeserving of PTSD treatment? Or is it because we are the part of US history

that needed to be erased and silenced?

The elders in my family and society in general don't ever want to talk about their experiences. On the rare occasions that I pushed for their stories, they would say something like, "I remembered running from the bombs. Sometimes, I saw body parts hanging from the trees, but I just kept running" or "maybe my dad has shot a lot of people but I don't know." Let that sink in! Imagine growing up in this kind of violence and trauma, imagine experiencing 9/11 almost on a daily basis for years!!! Then, you are expected to just get over it, to survive, without any therapeutic help or even an acknowledgement of how traumatizing that was.

Even in the activist circles and academic circles who are committed to social justice for all, we have not been asked to share our stories widely and offered any real validation and support. We are here, we suffer in silence, we scream for help, we cry, we push... but the SILENCE is so LOUD and SUFFOCATING... And we are quiet no more. We are not the invisible, model minority, and submissive minority any more!!! We are here, speaking, sharing, and honoring our herstories even if no one seems to care or listen. Even when we are excluded from social justice concerns. Even when no one wants to invite us to share our traumas. We are doing it for our own healing and for the future generations. From our pains, we will grow incredible powers.

There are many emotional and visceral accounts of the wars and the strengths of Vietnamese war victims. But they are usually ignored by the general

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Is “Modernization” Good for Nebraska?

by Paul A. Olson

Published in the Omaha World Herald's Midlands Voices on March 28, 2023

During the height of the Cold War, Pres. Ronald Reagan and Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachev stated together, “A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” That mantra has been the central portion of our nuclear policy for about 40 years now. However, this commitment from the Russian side and from the US has been fraying, much to the hazard of Nebraskans.

In the Ukrainian war, Mr. Putin has hinted that he will use tactical nuclear weapons. While President Biden and others in the Administration have been cautious and circumspect on this issue, one can't discount Russian use of tactical nuclear weapons could lead to unpredictable escalation up to and including US use of nuclear weapons, including those based in five NATO countries.

Nebraska is not in a good position to face a nuclear exchange though our congressional representatives have been quite enthusiastic about new nuclear weapons. Recently (Dec 15, 2022), Sen. Deborah Fischer announced that she and other Republicans had fought for the 2023 defense spending bill that “modernizes our aging nuclear deterrent, and bolsters our national security.” But Nebraska is still a prime target for any nuclear exchange, deterrent or no deterrent. The US military knows this even if the civilian population does not.

For example, only a few years ago, the military moved into a \$1.3 billion Command and Control Facility at Offutt Air Force Base designed to survive the initial blasts of a nuclear war as well as electronic impulses resulting from nuclear blasts. Such a building would not be built if the Omaha/Offutt area were unchallenged. Western Nebraska

is a primary nuclear target because of the modernization of the silos filled with Minutemen III missiles “capable of flying more than 6,000 miles at up to 15,000 miles per hour,” each carrying “a nuclear warhead 25 times as powerful as the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in World War II.” The Hiroshima bomb killed more than 150,000 people including those that died, and are still dying, from radiation sickness. Minuteman III missiles will be replaced in the late 2020s with even more lethal Sentinel missiles, designed to last until 2075. Western Nebraska between Kimball and Scottsbluff, having 80 missile silos, is a long-term national nuclear sponge area; as General James Mattis opined in 2017, the nuclear “sponge” areas have sparse population where nukes can be buried so deeply underground that many enemy nuclear bombs would be required to take them out. Western Nebraska is such an area.

Senator Fischer believes that the modernization efforts make the United States stronger. They will make Nebraska different economically. Kimball City Administrator Annette Brower, realizing that the strengthening efforts will come soon, is seeking to receive state help to accommodate the dislocation that the trillion-dollar expenditure near her town will create as its population and economy expand.

Undoubtedly the expenditures on nuclear “modernization” to increase the lethality of our arsenal will stimulate the economy in Kimball and Western Nebraska for a time as nukes have made Omaha a thriving city in the last seventy years. But at what cost? Few weapons have ever been built that have not also been used. Is the Nebraska that “feeds the world” also to be the Nebraska “that kills the world”? Windmills generating electricity to help with climate change have already been forbidden because of the silos. What does it profit us to gain the nukes and lose our souls? We need

President Biden, with pressure from Senator Fischer, to exercise new leadership. The G-7 summit in Hiroshima, May 19-21, will be an opportunity to spotlight the need for progress on disarmament. Nebraskans should communicate before then with concerned fellow Americans, with Japanese friends, and with other international colleagues to make this event both remember the past and create a different future.

They should tell President Biden and Senator Fischer both to work harder to institute negotiations with Russia for further nuclear weapons reductions, and stop the rush to destruction embodied in the upgrade of land-based nuclear missiles in Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and North Dakota. Moreover, our elected officials should build support for House Resolution 77, sponsored by U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern, to change important nuclear policies in favor of reducing dangers and supporting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, supported by 122 countries around the world. Annihilation is not inevitable, if we take action to avert Armageddon.

We urge you to contact your US Representatives and the White House and ask them to support House Resolution 77 in order to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and oppose any nuclear modernization to make Nebraskans safer not less!

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LB 343

Stifles Free Speech

by Sharon Conlon and Brittany Cooper

Published in the Lincoln Journal Star's Local View May 10, 2023

“Apartheid was legal. The Holocaust was legal. Slavery was legal. Colonialism was legal. Legality is a matter of Power, not Justice.” -Anonymous knows, Power produces law. Laws can produce Justice on occasion, and weaker parties can sometimes prevail, but moments of Justice are relatively rare and fleeting. Over time Power persistently prevails, and if it doesn't, it changes the terms of the game.

One moment of Justice was the 1982 Supreme Court decision in NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware. That decision held a constitutional right under the First Amendment to engage in peaceful boycotts to bring about political, social, and economic change, “occupying the highest rung of the hierarchy of First Amendment values.”

In other words, it is not for the State to determine which political viewpoints are acceptable or whose beliefs and motivations are politically correct. Government can not coerce into silence those whose politics differ from state officials.

Dismantling the right to boycott started in 2016 with the corporate-funded American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which drafts “model” bills for conservative legislators to introduce in state houses across the US. Thirty-five states have swallowed their pill and passed this template: to get a state contract, you must have a written pledge that you will not boycott Israel during the contract. Nebraska is now on that chopping block with LB 343. If this bill is passed into law, to contract with the State of Nebraska, you must choose between your right to political speech or your livelihood. Even when this method

of protest is irrelevant to the nature and performance of the contract.

Initially the pledge included individuals, who all won in court. So, ALEC upped the ante, and the template now says 10 employees or a \$100,000 contract. “Nothing to see here, move along folks.”

The Arkansas Times newspaper advertises for the State's universities. They refused to sign, not because they had a position on boycotts of Israel or had ever written about the topic. They simply didn't want to take a legislature's required loyalty oath on anything it chose as a condition of doing business with the State. The Times won in the lower courts. Arkansas brought it to the full conservative Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, which ruled the State can compel purely commercial conduct. This contradicts the First Amendment protecting politically motivated economic boycotts.

Judge Donald Kobes of the Eight Circuit Court, who wrote the opinion, was rated unqualified by the American Bar Association when nominated. Kobes apparently thinks the Boston Tea Party was not speech but an economic activity. This court of 7 states, including Nebraska, is the only Appeals Court of 13 courts ruling this way. The Supreme Court has refused to hear the case, not because they have a position on boycotting but because they didn't have a majority who want to take it up.

Now states are passing a raft of anti-boycott-laws barring contracts with any company or institution engaged in boycotts related to fossil fuel-based energy, timber, mining, and agriculture industries, arms manufacturers, greenhouse gas emissions, governance, abortion,

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2023 Legislative Session, continued

Machaela Cavanaugh filibustered every single bill that arrived on the floor. Every. Single. One. After a few weeks, she had company. Senator Megan Hunt disclosed on the floor that her own son was transgender. She and several of her colleagues joined Senator Cavanaugh in filibustering bills.

Even those that agreed with Senator Machaela Cavanaugh could be frustrated that stopping one bad bill came at the expense of not being able to pass a number of good bills. Remember though: Senator Cavanaugh left her colleagues with an alternative from the beginning: she encouraged them to take their name off of “that piece of poop” legislation and agree to not let this bill become the priority of the entire body. Unfortunately, too many of her colleagues refused to budge. Some thought that the puberty blockers and hormones would be okay, but the surgery (which, I remind you, hardly any minors ever receive) should be banned. A compromise could not be reached, and instead of letting the bill fail, the Speaker gave Senator Kauth a time out to strategize how she could keep the legislation alive. She introduced a compromise that would take hormones and puberty blockers out of the bill’s language, but she turned around and asked her colleagues to oppose that amendment.

In the midst of all of this controversy over one bill that was sucking up all the oxygen of the Unicameral, the Speaker and several other senators were tired of not getting anything

done. They decided to overcome Senator Cavanaugh’s strategy by changing the rules and allowing numerous bills to be combined into one, as long as their topics were related. (The ladder is important to note: each bill must be confined to a single subject.) This allowed more than a small handful of bills to pass.

Meanwhile, LB 626, the bill to ban abortions after 6 weeks into a pregnancy, was unable to overcome a filibuster. Senator Merv Riepe had had a change of heart and decided that 6 weeks was too close to being a total abortion ban. He proposed they amend the bill to banning after 12 weeks. No agreement was reached. His amendment failed, as did LB 626.

On May 16th, Senator Ben Hansen introduced an amendment to LB 574, the “Let Them Grow” Act. His amendment had nothing to do with transgender care. Instead, it was an amendment to ensure that fetuses could grow into babies. This was an obvious attempt to get some form of an abortion ban to pass. The only problem is that these two subjects have nothing to do with each other. What they have in common is that they were both WANTED by a majority of the body.

Many of us can empathize with wanting to go to any length to pass a bill into law if we are passionate enough about it. That’s why we have rules, to ensure that no matter how much we want something done, it has to happen the right way.

There were many motions made by a num-



Senator Machaela Cavanaugh and Nebraskans for Peace State Board President Maggie Ballard

ber of senators that attempted to make the legislative body play by those rules. There was a motion to return LB 574’s amendment to committee for a hearing. There was a motion to call into question the germaneness of the amendment. There was another motion to return LB 574 to the Judiciary Committee because it included criminal penalties, and criminal penalties fall under the Judiciary Committee’s scope of expertise. None of these motions passed. Neither

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Free Speech, conclusion

transgender care, immigration policies, and barring business with companies that do boycott these categories.

LB 343 is a ridiculous government overreach; conditioning government benefits only if it aligns with the political ideology of legislators. They are coercing their interests and forcing contractors to take their political side. To uphold freedom of speech is not to endorse the ideas expressed; it is to promote and protect the cacophony of ideas.

Israel is a state, not a person. Everyone has the right to criticize the unjust actions of a state. Even Israel’s own leading human rights organizations B’Tselem and Yesh Din have documented that Israel is practicing apartheid. The world’s leading human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have reported the same. One example: presently, Israel has demolition orders for 58 Palestinian schools, and punitive house demolitions are always ongoing.

Politicians are waving the flag of freedom while passing everything they can to infringe on free speech. We have the right to withhold our purchasing power to effect legal and social change, whether we choose to boycott for the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to equality, not apartheid or boycott because industries are harming minorities, the environment, and other species.

The 1982 Supreme Court decision was a rare moment of Justice when Law produces Power. Please help us preserve it. Oppose LB 343.

VIETNAMESE WOMEN, conclusion

public and the activist circles. If you really believe in the effects of trauma and are committed to social justice for all, you need to examine your biases and silence when it comes to such an atrocity as the Vietnam War and its legacy.

I highly recommend peace activists and social justice organizers engage in long term efforts to advocate and amplify the voices of the Vietnam War victims in Vietnam, in the U.S., and around the world. Four million people are still affected by the effects of Agent Orange today and the US and the giant manufacturers have not taken any responsibility to support Vietnamese people. One of the largest atrocities in world history and no one has ever taken responsibility for it!

Eight million tons of bombs dropped on a country the size of New Mexico and the land still has toxins in it. So many traumas and toxins that need healing. It is on the US collective karma. We can't change the past but we can think about what we can do to transform this negative karma for the present and future generations.

Some immediate and simple actions we can do to bring healing to the land and people of Vietnam:

- Contribute to the fundings for people and environments negatively impacted by agent orange.
- Advocate for free mental health support services for war victims and survivors.
- Support culturally competent and bilingual mental health counselors/social workers to serve the Vietnamese community.
- Prioritize voices of Vietnamese people in events, assigned readings, and learning about the Vietnam war (instead of experts who have not contributed to

healing the people).

*This is a dedication to
Generations of Vietnamese women
To the great grandmothers, grandmothers,
mothers, aunts, sisters
Spreading mud on their faces to deter
attention from the foreign soldiers
Birthing ten children, only to lose half of
them to bombs and guns
And witnessing the rest killing each other,
fighting on the opposite sides
Five millions killed*

*Being the easy targets of rape and torture
Selling their bodies and dignities for food
and safety
Watching their babies being murdered
Protecting their family
Digging tunnels
Burying bodies
Singing lullabies amidst gun fires
Building the road, gunning down helicopters,
growing crops
Leading children into bomb shelters,
Holding on tight, letting go of some*

*Raising children and visiting husbands
in reeducation camps
Hopping on to boats, babies in tow, to
cross the ocean for a better life
Dying, hoping, trying, surviving, jumping
into the ocean
Being robbed, raped, thrown away, in the
ocean, in the refugee camps*

*Or staying, and giving birth to babies
just to bury them right away or watch
them die slowly
Because, Agent Orange, all 20 million
gallons*

Vietnamese women: Lullaby, lotus, love

by Anh Le

*Poured on the forests, seeped into the
water, stayed in the earth for generations
But no, it's not a thing, they said...*

*Or going to a strange land, with a strange
language, and much hostility
Learning to survive again, to suppress
all the traumas
Being labeled exotic, barbaric, submissive
But never traumatized, brave, powerful
Surviving we must, and with a smile
Because we are the lucky ones right?
Don't talk about your transgenerational
traumas
Don't demand to be seen and respected
You are just lucky we let you in*

*Hush, stay grateful and enjoy your invisibility
And when you are abused, you don't have
it that bad
After all, ain't you the model minority?
Intergenerational traumas? PTSD?
Those don't exist...for you*

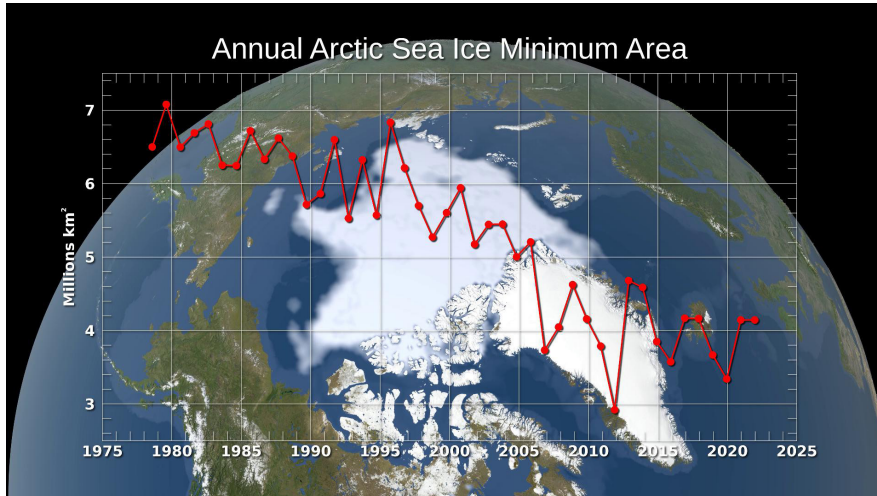
*Bury your traumas, suffer in silence
Your bodies don't keep the score
because
somehow traumas stop at the border
Or you are not that human...
Either way, welcome to America!*

*But remember: "We are here because you
were there!!!"
and we will heal and flourish
like lotus growing from the mud, it's in
our blood.
From victims to victors.
From traumas to transformation.
Our sweet lullabies soaring high to a
peaceful sky.*

What's HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

NATIONALISM VS. NATURE WAR & WARMING



A new book—Nationalism vs. Nature, Warm & Warming—authored by Bruce E. Johansen will be available late fall 2023.

Developing an original approach, this book examines how both nationalism and climate change threaten humankind with future catastrophes, arguing that humanity is on a fast track to a dystopian future unless significant changes are implemented. While the world warms, wars driven by nationalism may lead to worldwide devastation, with humankind being caught between two existential threats of its own creation. The author explains how both nationalism and climate change originate from human

ingenuity and can only be answered by human cooperation.

While, in a perfect world, such problems already would have been solved by the United Nations, this isn't the case in reality. The book discusses how humanity's many peoples can cooperate to a degree necessary to retain mutual respect without war, in the interest of achieving long-term change which will use technology for mutual good, also "dodging the bullet" of climate change. Offering an outlook into a possible better world, the

author also analyzes the massive changes required for everyone to face, discuss, and solve the problems at hand.

The book will appeal to students, scholars, and researchers of political science, international relations, and environmental sciences, as well as practitioners and a general audience interested in the study of nationalism, diplomacy, wars, and climate change.



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PASS THE PEOPLE OVER THE PENTAGON ACT

Action Network put together the following letter urging people to contact their Congressperson and ask them to cut the military budget. Several Nebraskans for Peace members sent this letter to their Congressperson. One of our NFP Board Members got a response from Congressman Don Bacon. Rep. Bacon's response is on page 10.

SIGN ON: PASS THE PEOPLE OVER THE PENTAGON ACT

The U.S. military budget is currently \$858 billion, more than China, Russia, and the next seven countries combined! Yet, we are told there isn't money for healthcare, ending childhood poverty, or protecting the planet. We know the Pentagon has such a staggering amount of money available that it has led to wasteful military spending. In addition, the Pentagon has never passed an audit and has not been held accountable for waste, fraud, and abuse.

Every year Congress and the President add more money to the Pentagon budget for outdated ships, malfunctioning planes, dangerous nuclear weapons, and giveaways to corrupt defense contractors at the expense of communities across the country.

Reducing the Pentagon budget by \$100 billion would still leave plenty to keep America safe at a level well above our country's post-World War II average.

This legislation would free up more funds to feed the hungry, care for the sick, protect our planet, fund education, and cut childhood poverty.

Tell Congress that we need to prioritize the well-being of Americans. Tell them to pass the People Over Pentagon Act (H.R. 1134)!

The United States spends more on national defense than China, Russia, India, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, Germany, France, South Korea, Japan, and Ukraine — combined. While the chart above illustrates last year's defense spending in dollar terms, the United States has also historically devoted a larger share of its economy to defense

than many of its key allies.

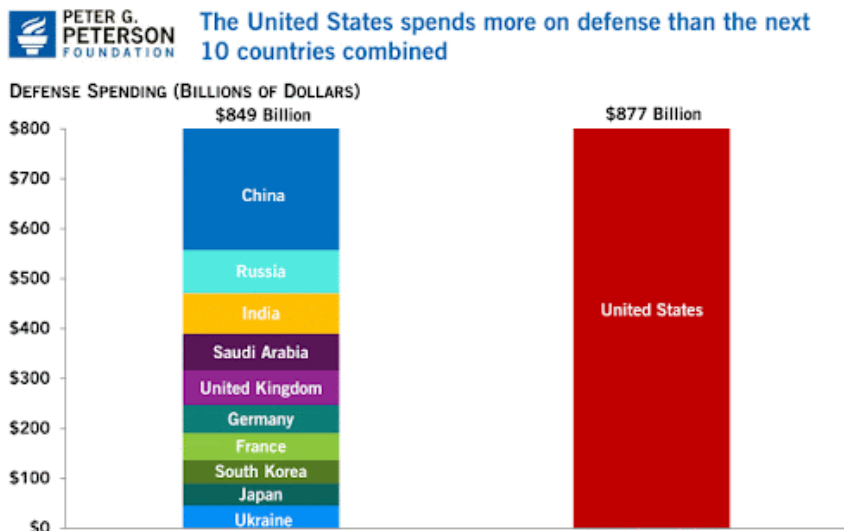
Defense spending accounts for 12 percent of all federal spending and nearly half of discretionary spending. Total discretionary spending — for both defense and nondefense purposes — is typically only about one-third of the annual federal budget. It is currently below its historical average as a share of GDP and is projected to decline further. *This message is from the Peterson Foundation explaining the graphic above. The Peterson Foundation is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to addresses this US's long term fiscal challenges to ensure a better economic future. <https://www.pgpf.org/>

Legislative Session, conclusion

Speaker Arch, who had a reputation for being conservative but fair, nor Lt. Governor Kelly directed the Legislature to play by the rules.

On Friday, May 19th, LB 574 made it to final reading. A vote was taken to end the filibuster and it passed. A vote was taken on the bill itself and it passed. An overflowing rotunda full of opponents, including several members of Nebraskans for Peace, fell silent. Tears flowed and people clung to each other in defeat. The governor proudly signed it into law. And every single Nebraskan that knows and loves a transgender person has had a harder time sleeping at night.

May 19th was a hard day to be a Nebraskan. It was a hard day to stand for peace. The attack on transgender people's rights will not be the last attack Nebraskans for Peace fights. Every one of us that is able to do something to stop these attacks, must do something. We must come together, vote, canvas, protest, and demand better from our Unicameral. May we never have another session that disgraces our state like this one has done.



This graphic shows the updated US military spending compared to the next 10 countries. This is updated from the graphic we published in the Nov/Dec 2021 Nebraska Report.



Congressman Don Bacon
Second Congressional District of Nebraska

Dear Mr. D'Souza,

Thank you for contacting me to share your thoughts about H.R. 1134, the *People Over Pentagon Act*. By hearing your thoughts and concerns on the issues, I am better able to represent you in the U.S. House of Representatives.

As you may know, H.R. 1134 was introduced by Representatives Barbara Lee (D-CA) and Mark Pocan (D-WI) on February 21. This bill would cut the Department of Defense (DoD) budget by \$100 billion and allocate those funds to other spending programs.

As a former Brigadier General who served in the Air Force for nearly 30 years, I know firsthand the importance of maintaining a strong and advanced military for our country to be safe. We must continue to improve our military infrastructure as we face increased threats from our top adversaries like China and Russia. In fact, China has launched a mission to fully modernize its military by 2035 and the Office of the U.S. Director of National Intelligence reports that China's military capabilities will likely expand in a few years. I believe in "peace through strength," and weakness invites others to be aggressive.

As a member of Congress, I have worked in a bipartisan manner to help modernize our nation's nuclear deterrence capabilities, support military families, and bolster our ability to deter aggression. Nearly one-quarter of the DoD's budget is used for military personnel which includes pay and benefits for service members and veterans. Our troops leave their families and put their lives on the line to protect our liberty and defend our nation, and our nation owes it to them to ensure they have adequate pay and resources they may need.

Additionally, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office also reports that due to high inflation, the DoD's budget will need to increase by 1.5 percent in 2024 to ensure important military programs can be funded. Lastly, there has also been consistent bipartisan support in both the House of Representatives and Senate to increase funding for the DoD. In fact, a majority of Democrats have opposed this bill. Our nation's national security is tied to our military, and I will always work to ensure that the DoD has the resources it needs to protect our nation.

Again, thank you for contacting our office, and please feel free to do so at any time. It is an honor to represent you and the Second Congressional District of Nebraska.

Sincerely,

Rep. Don Bacon
Member of Congress

Omaha Public Power District, conclusion

become electrical engineers. We don't want them to understand all the nuances. But we want them to understand that there are specific processes and steps that have to occur to ensure safe and reliable operations, and those steps are delayed," said VP of Systems Transformation Brad Underwood.²

After OPPD's initial gestures of supposedly meaningful interactions, OPPD quickly resorted to a combination of restrained communications, indifference, and mediocrity, which is business-as-usual for anything having a severe impact on North Omaha. Feeling that OPPD's incompetence and negligence were no longer a featured "headline" for local mainstream print and broadcast media and that the roaring fire caused by community activists had been reduced to a simmer; OPPD is back to business-as-usual as a perpetrator of environmental racism and economic injustice which is the habitual customaries with anything that affects North Omaha.

Instead of continued dialogue/conversations/discussions with the North Omaha Ad Hoc Committee, and residents of the North Omaha community regarding the OPPD North Omaha Coal Plant, OPPD is spending millions on their New Near Term Generation proposal. OPPD has launched a major media relations campaign, hosting (paying for) full-page ads in the *Omaha World-Herald*, plus television ads, and social media advertisements to promote their "Near Term Generation" proposal.

The New Near Term Generation proposal is supposed to add a significant amount of more gas and renewable energy to the OPPD system over the next 10 years. However, it is hard to believe this, since OPPD has not fulfilled its last renewable energy commitment, set in 2019. Not fulfilling its promises is an OPPD pattern.

Instead of launching a million-dollar media relations campaign on the "proposed" OPPD New Term Generation proposal, why doesn't OPPD launch a million-dollar health and wellness plan for "actual" victims of its coal plants in North Omaha?

Residents of North Omaha have been forced to breathe pollution from the North Omaha

Station's coal-fired plants for generations;

Residents of North Omaha, which has a large minority community have had to bear extreme economic loss due to health/medical issues related to diseases created by the pollution that has most likely been perpetrated by the continuous production of pollution from the North Omaha Coal Plants;

While people who do not live in North Omaha, residents in-state and out-of-state, reap the benefits of low-cost and reliable power that OPPD has been generating from its coal plants but have not incurred any of the related health risks.

OPPD is planning on spending \$2 billion on the New Term generation. Why doesn't OPPD, spend a portion on investing in energy efficiency in North Omaha? One (1) percent of those billions (\$20 million) could be used to help the people of North Omaha reduce their energy bills and make their homes more comfortable and safer from the coal pollution generated by its coal plants. Where is the investment in target solar projects in North Omaha?

OPPD has a program that is supposed to help low-income customers reduce their energy burden. However, it has failed to reach the goals they set for their own program, which is another example of unkept promises from OPPD.

OPPD residential customers will be facing 10 % or more rate increases as a result of this \$2 billion investment in New Near Generation. How will OPPD address this increased burden placed on low-income customers?

The North Omaha Community is not going to allow the issue of another unkept promise to be swept under the rug. It is not going to be business as usual.

The North Omaha Ad Hoc Committee is continuing its efforts to educate and bring attention to the problems of OPPD's smoking North Omaha Coal Plant. The Committee has acquired five and looking to acquire five more Purple Air Monitors and will strategically place these monitors through-



*Coal is piled on the north side of the OPPD North Omaha coal plant, located at 7475 John J. Pershing Drive, photographed in August 2022.
Chris Machian, the Omaha World-Herald*

out North Omaha to obtain data, compile and publish the data obtained. Thereby, helping North Omaha residents, and clients of OPPD to know when the quality of air is good or bad, and the risks of going out versus staying inside. We need this type of knowledge to protect our children, our elders, and particularly those with respiratory health concerns.

The Committee has gone from the initial start-up membership of 7-8 members to more than 75 members/organizations. The Committee has begun to involve environmental agencies/persons, community leaders/representatives, social justice activists, and educators. In addition, we are extremely excited that we now have young members from OPS and other metro STEM programs participating and being actively involved in the study of the Purple Air Monitors.

The Committee is planning on beginning a North Omaha Ad Hoc Committee newsletter in the very new future.

Cheryl Weston, North Omaha Community Advocate for the betterment of North Omaha

1 Community leader and activist Preston Love Jr. ANNA REED, *THE WORLD-HERALD*, December 8, 2022

2 Molly Hudson, KMTV, February 21, 2023

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More than seven years ago, Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) agreed to shut down these plants and create alternate sources to generate and provide electricity.

Now OPPD states it cannot shut down the coal-burning plant in 2023 as promised, maybe by 2026, and they are careful not to say an exact date. They did not keep their 2014 promise, of nine years ago, and they refuse to guarantee a shutdown three years from now in 2026. How can the North Omaha Community be assured of anything close to 2026?

On, December 8, 2022, Preston Love stated, "I share an important issue affecting all of Omaha but critically affecting North Omaha residents. Coal burning creates toxic air and many other public health issues. According to a report by the Union of Concerned Scientists, coal plants are responsible for 42% of U.S. mercury emissions, a toxic heavy metal that can damage the nervous, digestive, and immune systems, and is a serious threat to a child's development."

The OPPD plants-via its large smokestacks in North Omaha-are in our backyard and are spewing the toxic chemicals directly into our community. The magnitude of costs to North Omaha residents and health disparities is enormous and should be chronicled.¹

Along with many North Omaha residents and leaders, Preston Love helped to form an ad hoc committee of environmental and health experts, advocates, and community representatives to deal directly with OPPD. The purpose of the Committee:

Force real, meaningful community updates and dialogue;

Develop jointly, a plan of action with measurable time milestones;

Develop a meaningful dialogue and accountability as to the new OPPD target date, and;

To assess the health and economic damage laid on North Omaha and its residents in the past and going forward until coal burning is ceased at the North Omaha plant.

In response to the formation of the North Omaha Ad Hoc Committee, OPPD agreed to meet with the committee, and host community discussions. To satisfy the request of the Committee, OPPD immediately held several meetings in continuing conversations with the North Omaha community as to the date for changing two coal-powered units at the North Omaha Station to natural gas shifts to 2026 instead of the end of this year, 2023. For OPPD, it was important to share the challenges they face in bringing the new generators online. These issues include workforce and supply chain.

"We want the community to understand the why. We don't want folks to