The Greenest Legislative Agenda Ever

The 2013 Unicameral Session will go down as the ‘Year of Clean Energy.’ A dozen substantive bills dealing with renewable energy, energy efficiency and climate change have been introduced—making this year’s legislative agenda easily the ‘greenest’ on record. For those of us seeking action on climate change, this is the opportunity we’ve been hoping for. For the first time ever at the Statehouse, we’ll get to publicly make the case for reducing our carbon footprint by building a green economy. Instead of sending our utility dollars out of state to buy dirty Wyoming coal, we can be investing in our own clean wind and solar resources, creating local wealth and jobs, and protecting the health of both ourselves and the ecosystem.

Much of the credit for this uptick of legislative interest in green energy, though, can be traced back to the reelection last November of the Legislature’s leading environmentalist: State Senator Ken Haar. During his first term, Sen. Haar led the effort to reroute the Keystone XL pipeline away from the Sandhills, championed the legislation promoting large wind farm development in the state, and engineered the passage of a ‘net-metering’ bill to encourage residential-scale renewable energy generation. Step by deliberate step, he was laying the groundwork for a comprehensive green energy agenda.

His bid for reelection though (against a well-financed right-wing opponent) was to become the fight of his political life. Over the course of a costly and physically grueling year-long campaign, Sen. Haar raised and spent more than $232,000—smashing the previous spending record for a legislative race as he tried to match his opponent’s deep pockets. (Counting the expenditures of independent political committees, upwards to $1 million may have been spent on this race for an office that pays $12,000 a year.) Despite these hitherto-unheard-of spending figures, his victory margin Election Night was so slim he had to wait a week for the provisional ballots to be counted before he knew for certain he’d won. By 85 votes. Out of a total 13,653 cast.

That gut-wrenching experience, however, only served to deepen his resolve. He has unabashedly designated clean energy and education as his legislative priorities for the next four years. Between now and 2016, the people of Nebraska will have the best environmental advocate imaginable at very moment the entire world needs to be charting a path to a carbon-free future.

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

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A Moment of Truth at the Fiscal Cliff

The budgetary implications of the Fiscal Cliff agreement hammered out between the White House and Congress was the topic of a ‘community conversation’ hosted by the Nebraskans for Peace Lincoln Chapter, the Bread for the World local group and the National Association of Social Workers, Nebraska Chapter at the Unitarian Church of Lincoln. In light of the spending choices facing our nation, nurse practitioner Carol McShane who moderated the January 15 panel discussion posed a question to the three participating panelists that went right to the heart of the matter. “How,” she asked, “do we as a nation define ourselves? What do our spending priorities say about who we are?”

Dan Schlitt, the local contact for the Friends Committee on National Legislation addressed the fear felt by many at the proposed cut of $1 trillion from the military budget over the next decade—that such action would make us weak militarily and susceptible to attack. Yet the truth, he said, is that the $1 trillion would be cut from the proposed increase in the military budget—not the budget itself. Such a cut, Schlitt assured the audience, would not at all imperil our national security, given that we already outspend every other nation on earth several times over.

It’s extremely difficult, he said, to even get a handle on the Pentagon’s actual spending, as part of its budget is secret and other parts suffer from such shabby accounting that nobody can even track where the money goes. The one thing we do know is that bloated military spending is contributing to the federal deficit.

Panel member Bill Wehrbein, a Nebraska Wesleyan University professor active with Bread for the World, voiced concern that the public is not understanding the truth about food and poverty in our country, where more than one in five children live in poverty. Worldwide, he said, the UN is making strides towards its ‘Millenium Goal’ of reducing extreme poverty by 2015. Most Americans think, however, that the U.S. is providing massive foreign aid for such anti-poverty initiatives, when in fact such spending comprises only .6 of one percent of the federal budget. The public is repeatedly told that domestic programs such as Social Security are costly extravagances—and financially unsustainable—when in fact they can be fairly easily fixed.

Bread for the World’s domestic and international mission focuses on food aid and programs to fight poverty (which involve getting people sufficient food) in part because they deal with the fundamentals of human existence. There is no more basic need than food. The priority we place on food assistance, accordingly, is telling. It defines who we are and aspire to be.

Bill Hoppner, a former Democratic Party standard-bearer, exhorted the audience to figure out the truth and then act on it. Acting in line with the truth, he said, is how we need to define ourselves. Citing the example of Republican Governor Chris Christie in the wake of Superstorm Sandy, Hoppner said, the New Jersey governor allowed himself to be guided by the truth. He avoided the doctrinaire rhetoric about getting the federal government out of our lives and ‘individual responsibility’ and simply responded to people in need. Another truth that urgently needs telling, Hoppner said, is that between 1980-2010, the productivity of U.S. workers grew 150 percent, but real wages only increased 20 percent. The middle class has seen its standard of living dramatically contract—forced to take second jobs and put both parents in the workforce just to make ends meet. Yet middle-income workers have been relentlessly demonized by the wealthy as a culprit, selfishly driving our nation to bankruptcy with their demand for unsustainable social spending. The media, the 1998 gubernatorial candidate said, is understaffed and failing to communicate the truth. We ourselves must speak up and stop these lies. For our democratic system of government to operate as envisioned, both economic security and truth-telling are essential.

How do we define ourselves as a nation? That’s a difficult question to answer—made even tougher when we don’t know the full truth due to inferior information and propaganda. If ever though there was a time to ‘speak truth to power,’ that time is now, when our social safety net is in danger of being torn to shreds.

— Don Tilley
The Debt Ceiling, a Trillion Dollar Coin, and Our Children’s Future

by Hendrik Van den Berg
UNL Professor of Economics

Even with Congress’ three-month lifting of the debt ceiling, sometime this spring we will again bump into this arbitrarily set limit on how much total debt the U.S. Treasury is allowed to incur. Congress has routinely voted to raise the ceiling, but each vote to raise the ceiling meant politicians could again argue about raising the debt limit a few months or years later. To many people, the debt ceiling debate may seem like just another contrived case of partisan posturing. Unfortunately, the argument over the debt ceiling has grave implications. This brief explanation of the debt ceiling will take you into politics, modern money theory and our children’s future. So, yes, the stakes in the debt ceiling debate are high.

First, Some Background on the Debt Ceiling

Here in the United States, we have separated the government ‘budgeting process’ from the closely related ‘borrowing process.’ Congress first passes spending and taxation legislation, which effectively determines how much the Treasury must borrow to cover the obvious difference between the two. And then it conducts a separate vote to give permission to the Treasury to actually borrow the money Congress effectively already decided would have to be borrowed when it authorized spending and taxes. Most sane countries recognize that the two steps cover exactly the same ground, so they only require one legislative act. But, our politicians love how the duplicate votes on the debt allow them to double their political posturing.

Oh, yes, I should point out that aside from borrowing, there is one other way for the government to cover the difference between government spending and tax revenue: print money. But we do not permit the government to operate in that fashion—allegedly out of fear that the government would print too much and cause inflation. On the other hand, like nearly all other countries, we have a central bank that can in fact print money in any amount it desires. In general, printing money is a normal activity for any government to undertake. Virtually every government in the world does it (with the notable exception of the European Union, which has designated the “European Central Bank” to issue a regional currency called the ‘euro’, with predictably adverse consequences). In the U.S. since 1913, we have given the government’s Federal Reserve Bank a monopoly on creating money. The alternative to a central bank is to let the private financial industry create money, but this invariably generates unstable financial conditions, and—as one might expect—redistributes income towards the already wealthy.

And, Some Financial History

Before Congress authorized the Federal Reserve Bank a century ago, the money supply consisted of (1) Treasury notes printed in exchange for gold or silver sold to it by miners, exporters, hoarders, etc. and (2) privately issued pieces of paper (bank notes) and checking deposits issued by banks and other private financial firms. For brief periods in the mid-1800s, the government also issued paper ‘greenbacks’ to directly fund the war, the transcontinental railroad, and other government expenditures, but later in the nineteenth century, financial interests got Congress to ban such government-created money. All of these forms of paper money were thought to have some specific value because they could be used by ‘borrowers’ of such paper to pay taxes to the government or to repay their obligations to banks or financial firms. Since others who came into possession of such paper could also use it to pay taxes and loans (or exchange it for some other asset deemed to have a value equal to the stated value on the paper—such as gold, silver, or perhaps government Treasury bonds), these pieces of paper were accepted in payment for goods and services throughout the economy. In short, they were indeed money.

The most unstable and dangerous scheme of the three above is the money created by the private banking system. Privately issued money constitutes something of a house of cards. First of all, there is really no clear limit to how much private paper the whole financial system can create. It depends on how much of this paper people are willing to hold and use as money. That is, every dollar lent out eventually comes back to the banking system, ready to be lent out again. For instance, if someone wants to borrow a dollar, the bank creates it by crediting an account or issuing a banknote. The money supply increases accordingly. Then, if that dollar is used to repay a loan, the supply of money in circulation declines by one dollar.

The private money system is inherently unstable because if, say, one of the banks that issued paper goes bankrupt so that its notes are no longer redeemable for cash or gold in its vaults, then the paper in circulation loses its value and the money supply effectively declines. Because banks issue many more notes than they hold valued assets in their vaults (largely because people take their borrowed dollar notes and spend them), the mere suspicion that some banks may not be able to provide gold coins or Treasury bonds to cover the paper obligations will trigger ‘a run on the banks.’ In such a common case, many banks then default, thus creating a bunch of worthless paper and a sharp decline in the money in circulation. In the nineteenth century, such financial ‘panics’ occurred frequently. In each case, bank lending stopped, the money supply contracted sharply, no one had money to spend, and the economy fell into a depression. William Jennings Bryan’s 1896 presidential bid—coming at the end of a long and deep depression—was largely a protest to this precarious monetary system.

The Federal Reserve Bank

In 1913, the Federal Reserve Bank was created to effectively monopolize the process of creating money and to create some stability in the U.S. monetary system. To be effective, the Fed would have to manage money in such a way that interest rates (the cost of borrowing money) and the total supply of money remained relatively stable relative to the overall economy. The Fed’s money was deemed valuable because it was required for paying taxes to the U.S. Treasury, and by law deemed as legal tender to settle any and all debts and obligations. Nearly all countries of the world now let their central bank monopolize the issuance of money.

There are admittedly some potential problems with having the Fed issue money. Because it could print or electronically create and spend too many dollars, it could easily create inflation. But if the Fed can be instructed to only add dollars when there is excess productive capacity

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Social Security
Why Dismantle What Works?

by Hendrik Van den Berg

One all-too-common characteristic of the current political climate is that the Congress and the White House do not seriously act on anything until the very last moment. Isn’t it interesting, therefore, to observe the great concern for the Social Security program—a program that will remain financially viable for at least another 20 years without doing anything? And even then, sometime in the 2030s, the Social Security Administration estimates that currently mandated Social Security tax rates would still generate income that covers three-fourths of current mandated outlays.

Our Social Security system dates from 1935. It is essentially a ‘pay-as-you-go’ transfer system, in which current retirees receive benefit payments from taxes paid by current working people. The system promises to pay us retirement benefits when we reach retirement age, paid for by future working-age taxpayers. The system is also set up, in part, as an insurance system: those who earn below-average income over their working years collect a relatively higher proportionate return in retirement than those who earn above-average incomes. In effect, Social Security does on a national scale what families and communities have always done: those who can work provide for those who cannot work. Working adults support children who need nurturing and elders who have grown too old to work. On a practical level, the Social Security program has done a marvelous job of eliminating most poverty among old people—a condition that was quite prevalent in America’s individualistic society up through the 1930s.

The pay-as-you-go system runs into technical problems, however, when slowing population growth leads to increasing numbers of retirees relative to tax-paying workers and improved health conditions result in retirees living longer. For the system to remain financially sound, there are only three possible options: raise the tax rate to boost revenue, increase the retirement eligibility age, or reduce the benefits to retirees. In 1983, when demographic shifts first threatened the long-run viability of the system, the government did all three. This is why the system is now self-supporting until at least the mid-2030s—despite a continuation of those demographic shifts. Economic growth and higher rates of labor market participation have mitigated the effects of these shifting demographics as more and wealthier workers have provided the necessary tax support to keep the Social Security program sound.

Unfortunately, economic growth has now slowed, and the male labor force participation rate has been falling rapidly. More damaging has been the stagnation of wages for most of the people who pay Social Security taxes. Remember, nearly all of the gains from economic growth over the past 30 years have been captured by the very highest income earners, and Social Security taxes are not paid on wage income over $110,000. Finally, the long recession has worked to further reduce tax revenues. For Social Security to stay solvent beyond 2035, accordingly, changes to the system will have to be made.

Fortunately, it is not very difficult to do this. Janemarie Mulvey (“Social Security: Raising or Eliminating the Taxable Earnings Base,” Congressional Research Service report RL32896, Sept. 24, 2010) estimates that taxing all wage income at the 12.4 percent combined employee/employer rate would eliminate the future deficits through 2075. It should be noted that in her calculations she also extends benefits for the higher-income groups: she still assumes someone with average earnings of $1 million would get annual Social Security benefits of $172,000. Were benefits for higher-income earners to be frozen beyond the current taxable-earnings ceiling of $113,000, then taxing all wages generates a large surplus—which could conceivably be used to reduce the Social Security tax rates for all workers. But Mulvey argues that capping benefits would break the link between payments and benefits, and increase political opposition to the whole Social Security system. Personally, I like the idea of keeping the rich in the loop and enjoying some clear, well-defined benefits from participating in human society.

In short, it is not difficult to ‘fix’ the Social Security system. Nor is there any need to bring Social Security into the current politicized debt ceiling talks; we have 20 years to decide how to change the system. Why, then, is everyone in Washington and the financial press, including the President and his “Bowles-Simpson” budget reduction commission, so anxious to discuss raising the retirement age and privatizing parts of Social Security? One can only conclude that we are dealing with more of the same short-term greed that underlies every economic debate in Washington: the financial industry wants to get its hands on the retirement savings that people now channel through our efficient Social Security system.

The financial industry lobbyists are openly pushing for the privatization of the system. However, privatization of Social Security is a false solution to the simple problem outlined above. Note that privatization does not solve the inherent demographic and economic problems underlying the current system. Just like the current government-run system, privatization still only gives working people promises of future payments from earnings from financial assets that will effectively be paid for by future income earners. When the growing number of retirees unload their stocks and bonds on the relatively smaller number of wage earners, asset prices will likely fall sharply, thus reducing the value of workers’ private pension fund assets. And, of course, a private system will charge much more than the less than one percent of benefit payments that the Social Security system now costs us. Hence, there is no reason—other than ideological hype—to expect a private system to provide any greater benefits to future retirees. To the contrary, a private pension system will provide substantially lower benefits to workers who earned less...
The Greenest Legislative Agenda Ever

Below is a brief overview of the 2013 legislation, which together forms a comprehensive green agenda. How successful this legislative agenda ends up being depends, of course, on us. Senator Haar and his colleagues can propose, but it is up to us as constituents to ensure that these bills become law. The task of contacting our respective senators and gaining their support is ours. Never before have Nebraska citizens had the opportunity to push such a green agenda in state government. It falls to us to make the most of it—starting with the public hearings on the bills.

The Green Energy Bills

Senator Haar's Legislative Bill 583 will provide the first authentic legislative discussion of climate change in memory. In 1991, the unicameral authorized a little-known “Climate Assessment and Response Committee” to serve mainly as a clearinghouse on drought data and emergency procedures. LB 583 would expand the committee's make-up to include more members with expertise in climate science and extend its statutory charge to consider both the long-term implications of climate change and policy strategies for addressing this mounting threat. With actual testimony from climate scientists, the public hearing in the Agriculture Committee should clear up many of the lingering misconceptions about the science and the urgency for government action.

LB 567, also introduced by Senator Haar, would establish additional criteria for public power—beyond 'low cost' and 'reliability'—when investing in new electrical generation. Dubbed the “True Cost of Energy Bill” because it would also require consideration of the impact of the generation source on human health, the environment and the climate; the impact on local economic development and job creation; water-usage demands; the long-term financial risk of the fuel and its generation costs; and any potential losses in tax revenue and local investment from utilizing out-of-state fuels over home-grown energy resources. Adoption of the True Cost of Energy Bill would ease the way for the “Nebraska Power Review Board” to approve renewable energy development and energy efficiency measures, as they do not have the negative health and environmental effect of coal and can offer far more economic benefits to Nebraskans.

Two other bills—LB 104 (sponsored by Omaha Senator Steve Lathrop) and LB 411 (sponsored by fellow Omaha Jeremy Nordquist)—would provide tax incentives for renewable energy development in the state. Currently, all of our neighboring states offer tax incentives for wind and solar projects, placing Nebraska at a competitive disadvantage. While the precise form of these incentives is still under discussion, it's imperative that state government 'level the playing field' for renewable energy development—not just with our next-door neighbors, but against the fossil fuel industry, which continues to receive an array of tax breaks. Nebraska will continue to lag in renewable energy development (and the jobs and rural development that come with it) until green power has an equal chance to compete.

LB 622, another bill introduced by Senator Haar, would require public power districts to report areas where renewable energy generation (of 20 megawatts or less) could be built and connected to the existing transmission grid. It's one thing to put up a wind turbine and generate electricity. It's another to have the available transmission capacity to get that generated energy to market. Having an up-to-date catalog of available capacity is critical to encouraging locally owned, small-scale wind generation development. Yet another Haar wind-related bill (LB 184) would appropriate $50,000 a year for two years to the University of Nebraska for the “Nebraska Wind Applications Center” to help schools install wind energy systems.

Omaha Senator Heath Mello’s LB 402 would encourage the development of rural ‘community-based energy development’ projects by easing the legal conditions for their formation. C-BED projects for renewable energy hold enormous promise for rural communities and local investors, but to date have not developed as hoped. The statutory revisions in LB 402 are designed to help this community-based economic development tool become more economically usable.

The Natural Resources Committee has introduced LB 340, which would allow the Power Review Board to approve an application for a special renewable energy project without holding a public hearing, and LB 388, which would give the local public power district first rights to build transmission lines approved by a regional transmission authority.

Lincoln Senator Amanda McGill is sponsoring legislation that would permit the development of ‘community solar gardens’ (LB 557). The bill would allow people to join together to build a community solar project that would enable all of the participants in the project to benefit from the energy generated. Even if you live in an apartment, have poor solar access or insufficient capital to put solar panels on your own residence, under this bill you would still be able to generate your own solar-powered electricity. When done on a large-enough scale, this type of ‘distributed generation’ (energy generated from many small sources) can effectively reduce an electrical utility’s base-load demand for fossil fuel-based energy.

LB 598, introduced by Senator Tyson Larson of O’Neill, would increase the cap on net-metering from 25 kilowatts to 100 kilowatts. Under Nebraska’s existing net-metering law, homeowners with solar panels or other renewable energy generators are able to transfer surplus power onto the utility power grid, offsetting the power they draw—effectively ‘running the meter backwards.’ The current 25-kw cap limits the kinds of renewable energy projects that would be most cost-effective for farmers, ranchers and small rural communities. Increasing the cap will make net-metering available to a new class of renewable energy producers.

Two bills dealing specifically with ‘eminent domain’ grew out TransCanada’s bullying behavior towards Sandhills landowners over the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline. Fullerton Senator Annette Dubas’s LB 152 would require entities that intend to use eminent domain to have all necessary permits before they can negotiate with landowners or engage in eminent domain proceedings. Lincoln Senator Bill Avery’s LB 553 would require entities seeking to exercise eminent domain to provide advance notice to property owners. Both of these bills, if passed, will help restrain TransCanada from beginning work on the pipeline prior to the permitting process being entirely completed.

Senator Norman Wallman of Beatrice has introduced a bill that would establish some state standards for hydraulic fracturing in natural gas exploration. LB 635 would empower the “Nebraska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission” to oversee ‘fracking’ operations in the state—including the adoption of rules and regulations—to protect the public safety.

Finally, Sen. Dubas’ bill, LB 486, takes a first step toward developing a viable system of mass transportation in the region. Her bill would appropriate funds to the Legislative Council to pay dues under the “Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact.” Rail passenger service is a transportation mode whose time has come, and in a geographically sprawling state like Nebraska, it’s idiotic that we don’t have an economical and energy efficient passenger train system to serve our citizens.
Once Upon an Ice Cap

Will I live long enough (I am 62) to wake up one morning to a headline that reads: ARCTIC ICE CAP GONE? Given what happened this year, the odds are improving. This news story probably will include a disclaimer saying that a single event does not ‘prove’ global warming, and an emphatic denial from someone on an oil-company payroll asserting that the disappearance of the arctic ice cap is a matter of natural variability having absolutely nothing to do with human combustion of fossil fuels.

With our record-warm year in 2012, episodes of drought and deluge, and increasing acidification of the oceans, is this what the ‘tipping point’ looks like? Are we passing the point of climatic no return even as public boredom and resignation coupled with deniers’ obfuscation erases the issue from the public agenda?

By late August last summer, with two to three weeks remaining on the seasonal melting clock and a slushy area half the size of Indiana (a quarter of Nebraska) liquefying each day, the ice cap set an all-time low, with only 30 percent of the Arctic Ocean covered. By September 15, when the season’s low was recorded, coverage was down to 24 percent—half that of 1979. Five years ago, various models forecast an open Arctic Ocean in 2050. Now, scientists are projecting complete ice melt about 2020. I will turn 70 that year.

Giving Scientists Chills

“It’s hard even for people like me to believe, to see that climate change is actually doing what our worst fears dictated,” Jennifer A. Francis, a Rutgers University scientist who studies the effect of sea ice on weather patterns, told the New York Times in late August. “It’s starting to give me chills, to tell you the truth.”

A scientist at the “National Snow and Ice Data Center,” Julienne C. Strove, visited the Arctic last summer on a Greenpeace ship, expecting to measure ice floes. She told the New York Times September 20 that she looked in vain for ice that could support her weight. “When we got further into the ice pack,” she said, “there were just large expanses of open water.”

The Greenland ice sheet also has been melting at an accelerating rate. In the meantime, the Northern Hemisphere as a whole experienced its warmest summer (and year) on the instrumental record. Our region, with its record-setting heat and drought conditions, was hardly alone. In the Arctic (in addition to melting sea ice), warmer seasons and a longer summer provokes melting permafrost, which adds carbon dioxide and methane (the two principal greenhouse gases) to the atmosphere. Larger areas of open ocean in the Arctic also absorb more solar radiation than ice cover, contributing to further warming. Scientists call these mechanisms ‘positive feedbacks.’ The average temperature of the Arctic has been rising twice as quickly as that of the planet as a whole. Scientists have a phrase for this: “Arctic amplification.”

This is how the world looks at tipping point.

Add to this the provocations of the fossil-fuel industry, which is joyously rushing into the Arctic to explore for oil under water that used to be ice-covered. At the same time, some of the same companies are exploiting the Alberta tar sands and ‘fracking’ for natural gas from Montana to New York State.

Antarctic Methane

There’s more: while winter reigns in the Northern Hemisphere, sunshine bathes Antarctica, where relatively warm ocean water nibbles at the continent that stores 90 percent of the planet’s ice. Scientists are looking at the stores of methane that will be released as the Antarctic ice cap gradually melts. Sea levels will rise, of course, as the ocean acidifies, threatening the survival of any living thing with a shell—most notably the phytoplankton at the base of the ocean food chain.

Jemma L. Wadham and colleagues wrote in the British scientific journal Nature last summer: “We calculate that the sub-Antarctic hydrate [methane] inventory could be of the same order of magnitude as that of recent estimates made for Arctic permafrost. Our findings suggest that the Antarctic Ice Sheet may be a neglected but important component of the global methane budget, with the potential to act as a positive feedback on climate warming during ice-sheet wastage.” In addition to all of this, billions of tons of methane lie frozen under what’s left of the Arctic ice cap. Thaw what’s left, warm the ocean enough, and some of that may make its way into the atmosphere. Scientists have an inelegant phrase for this nightmare scenario: “The Methane Burp.”

I know that looking this monster in the eye will be a colossal bore to Republicans who would rather not be bothered by what they have come to regard as a geophysical fairy tale. Denial is an awesome force. Few people enjoy assuming guilt for their role in a major problem, or adjusting their basic behaviors to change it. Thus, with accelerating natural feedbacks, human contributions to the world’s greenhouse-gas overload acts like the pin on a hand grenade. All the while, our political life continues with only the barest mention of this ticking bomb. In years to come, our descendants may ask what most of us were doing back when life on Earth was tolerable.

Bruce E. Johansen is Jacob J. Isaacsen Professor at the UNO and author of The Encyclopedia of Global Warming Science and Technology (2009).
A Crash Course in Climate Change

The following op-ed by NFP State Coordinator Tim Rinne appeared in the January 16, 2013 Lincoln Journal Star.

“"We have less than 10 years to halt the global rise in greenhouse gas emissions if we are to avoid catastrophic consequences for people and the planet.

It is, simply, the greatest collective challenge we face as a human family.”

—U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

August 9, 2009

My ‘baby girl’ turns 30 this month. And though my tongue keeps tripping over the words, I’m ‘pushing 60.’

My thoughts, in the New Year chill, have accordingly taken a contemplative turn. I’m thinking about the passage of the generations, the kind of legacy we’re leaving our children and what the future holds in store.

As a Baby Boomer, it’s been terrific growing up in the greatest country on earth—the greatest nation in the history of the world.

I grew up with the absolute conviction that my life was going to be better than my parents’, that both nature and the heavens (courtesy of NASA’s lunar space program) were at our command and that this was all going to go on forever.

I didn’t think twice about getting up in the middle of night to use the bathroom, flicking on the lights and flushing the toilet. I took it for granted as an innate right. Yet just 20 years earlier, my parents had been living on farms in southeastern Nebraska in homes without electricity or indoor plumbing.

Now, though, as I pull the space heater a little closer, I’m a lot less confident about this inexorable march of economic progress. In fact, I’m convinced it’s coming to an end.

In 1867, when Nebraska became a state, there were 1 billion people on Earth. In 1955, the year I was born, there were fewer than 3 billion. Today, there are more than 7 billion people on the planet. And none of us want to live like my parents lived on the farm in Johnson County, fetching wood and carrying water. We want to live like Donald Trump and Lady Gaga. Go wherever we want to go, buy whatever we want to buy and consume as much as we want to consume.

We Husker fans, for instance, think nothing of dashing down to Florida to watch the Big Red play Georgia in the Capital One Bowl. Assuming we can afford it, we view it as our prerogative. The environmental cost of making such a trip—our ‘carbon footprint’ for the energy and resource consumption—never enters the equation.

The high-consumption lifestyle that we’ve become accustomed to is permanently winding down.

But the Earth’s strained ecosystem can’t accommodate this growing demand much longer. We’re already approaching ‘peak oil’ where global consumption of this finite resource will outstrip production. And the oil, coal and natural gas burned to fuel our high-consumption lifestyles are daily altering the climate around us.

The evidence is everywhere. Record heat waves and drought (worse even than the legendary Dust Bowl). Rampant wildfires. Superstorm Sandy. The Department of Defense is so alarmed by what’s happening that officials have officially identified climate change as a “national security threat.” And the insurance industry, which is being forced to foot the bill for all the damage from these more frequent and extreme weather events, has acknowledged the reality of climate change since Hurricane Katrina.

Ready or not, we’re about to get a crash course in climate change.

And it would be far better for everyone if—starting now—we tried to get ready, because things aren’t going to be the way they were. The high-consumption lifestyle we’ve become accustomed to is permanently winding down.

Getting ready for climate change will mean reducing our dependence on carbon fuels and the greenhouse emissions they produce. It will mean growing more of our food locally and eating seasonally to lower production and transportation costs. It will mean driving less in more fuel-efficient vehicles. It will mean making our homes and businesses more energy efficient to lower our energy demand. It will mean development of our renewable wind and solar resources to keep our utility dollars at home and at work in our communities. And it will mean getting our publicly owned power districts off of coal as soon as technologically feasible, and implementing a carbon fee on the fossil fuel industry—with the money rebated to the public.

This is a brave new world we’re on the cusp of, and it will not be as lavish or profligate. The days of Donald Trump and Lady Gaga setting the bar for our quality of life are numbered.

We have just emerged from the holiday season. Despite the riot of consumption associated with Christmas shopping, the holidays have traditionally been a time for friends and loved ones to gather together. And that is the community ethic we will need to be extolling in the years ahead, as our consumption levels inevitably drop.

Things will never again be as they’ve been. The age of infinite appetite is over. But with the company of friends and family and fine food, it will still be possible to have a good Christmas.
edinable OMAHA’s
10 Easy Steps to Becoming (More of) a Locavore*

* One who eats foods grown locally whenever possible, usually within 100 miles of home. Locavores connect more closely with their food sources by supporting local farmers and businesses—relishing in the pleasure of eating fresher, more nutritious foods while reducing the carbon footprint of food production and transportation.

1. Start Small
   a. Choose 5 foods that you can buy locally
   b. Plan one meal a week to feature a local food item
   c. Next ‘food day’ at work or next family gathering, prepare a dish that showcases local food.

2. Become a Regular at Farmers’ Markets
   a. Find a market near you—see www.edibleomaha.com
   b. Make it a family affair and/or social outing
   c. Get to know a different producer every week & ask about a farm visit
   d. Patronize ‘Tomato Tomato’ in Omaha, a year-round farmers’ market

3. Grow Your Own
   a. Herbs are an easy way to start
   b. Do ‘container’ gardening on your porch or patio
   c. Turn your lawn into an edible landscape with fruit trees and vegetable plots
   d. Connect with neighbors and start your own co-op

4. Join a CSA
   Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) originated in the 1960s in Switzerland and Japan, where consumers interested in safe food and farmers seeking stable markets joined together in partnership. Purchasing a share in the CSA provides you with the risks and benefits of food production. Some CSAs require time as well as financial commitments. Benefits include:
   a. Weekly basket of what was just harvested
   b. Exposure to foods you may not realize can be grown
   c. Get to know a different producer every week & ask about a farm visit
   d. Patronize ‘Tomato Tomato’ in Omaha, a year-round farmers’ market

5. Pick-Your-Own
   a. Makes a great outing for the whole family
   b. Buy in bulk for cost-effectiveness
   c. Preserve for enjoyment long after the harvest.

6. Join a Community Garden
   a. Visit www.douglascounty-ne.gov or www.gardenbig.org to see if there is a garden space near you
   b. Start a garden as part of a wellness program at work
   c. Or start a neighborhood garden—training is available

7. Start a School Garden
   a. Create an outdoor classroom
   b. Provide healthy food for the cafeteria
   c. Engage kids in summer learning
   d. Access the Farm to School Toolkit: http://toolkit.centerfornutrition.org/

8. When dining out, ask your server to point out locally sourced foods
   a. Visit restaurant websites to find out if they support local—look for a list of producers
   b. Look for the ‘Buy Fresh Buy Local Nebraska’ logo

9. Support your local growers
   a. Lobby your supermarket to carry local products
   b. Buy your plant starts from a local farmer
   c. Buy locally prepared items: jams, jellies, honey, bread, granola, sauces, confections and locally roasted coffee, to name just a few
   d. Join the Nebraska Food Cooperative www.nebraskafood.org
   e. Visit www.localdirt.com or www.lonetreefoodsnetwork.com

10. Be Informed and Stay Connected
    a. Attend classes & events—many are free or at a minimal cost. Check out classes offered at: Metro Community College www.mcneb.edu, Iowa Western Community College www.iwcc.edu and Southeast Community College www.southeast.edu
    b. Learn about food preservation as a way to enjoy fresh, local items (fruit, vegetables and meat) year round. Metropolitan Community College and the Iowa extension office offer classes: www.mcneb.edu.com and www.extension.iastate.edu/families/preserve-taste-summer
    c. Help eliminate the myth that local food is not available year round—there are groups working hard to offer more and more options

d. Join an organization that is supporting local, sustainable food like Slow Food Omaha; Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society; No More Empty Pots; Women’s Food & Agricultural Network or Women in Agriculture-UNL

e. Check out local blogs written by farmers and local food advocates (e.g. agirlonafarm.blogspot.com)
f. Support Edible OMAHA advertisers by purchasing their products and thank them for making an investment in your local foodshed by advertising in Edible OMAHA

g. Read Edible OMAHA – Eat Locally… Eat Seasonally… Grow a Stronger Healthier Community

EAT • DRINK • READ • THINK and CELEBRATE, all in good health!

Edible Omaha believes that the source of your food should be something you understand and feel good about. We are a quarterly print and on-line magazine focused on celebrating the farms, foods and community in the greater Omaha metropolitan area. Our mission is to transform the way consumers shop for, cook, eat and relate to local food.

Edible Omaha is a member of edible Communities, a national network of over 70 regional publications that celebrate local foods, season by season, in distinct culinary regions extending throughout and beyond the U.S. We cater toward our local communities, our local foodshed, and to the locals themselves. We strive to connect consumers with local growers, retailers, chefs and food artisans, enabling those relationships to grow and thrive in a mutually beneficial, healthful and economically viable way.

Edible Omaha is distributed in eight counties in Nebraska and three in Iowa. We are locally owned and operated and are currently working on the Spring 2013 issue, which will be distributed on April 15, 2013. Please visit our website for distribution locations and if you are on Facebook, please ‘like’ us. Friend us on Facebook and follow our tweets at: www.edibleomaha.com.
The Debt Ceiling, continued

and unemployment, then inflation will not be a problem. A more serious problem is that the Fed, although a federally chartered organization with its officials appointed and confirmed by the president and congress, was largely designed and is still operated to serve the financial industry. That is why, for example, it injects money into the economy by using the dollars it creates (with a few computer clicks) to buy Treasury bonds in the privately operated bond market. The cash then ends up in the accounts of whoever sold the bond to the Fed, and thus the amount of money in the private financial system is larger. The hope is that this money then leads banks to lend, people to buy things, and businesses to employ people in new investments. On the positive side, the money the Fed creates for the financial sector to use and expand upon is tightly controlled to keep the money supply stable—far more than if the industry were trying to manage the supply itself. The financial sector, after all, didn’t particularly enjoy the repeated financial crises in the nineteenth century either, and it recognized the need for a central bank to maintain financial stability and to provide free money when things got rough. In short, while the Fed is a government institution, it was largely designed by private financial interests.

I should point out that when the Fed buys Treasury bonds in the open market, it ends up earning the interest on those bonds, and it returns all that interest to the Treasury every year since it is not a for-profit bank. And if a bond matures while held by the Fed, that money paid to the Fed by the Treasury is also returned to the Treasury. But, at the same time, the law requires the Treasury to sell new bonds on the open market to finance its budget deficits, and the Fed can only acquire those bonds in the open market. It would, of course, be cheaper for the Fed to just give the government cash, thereby avoiding


Creighton University senior and Creighton Whiteclay Awareness president Dave Fuxa read the following statement at the January 22, 2013 news conference in Omaha announcing a student-led boycott of Anheuser-Busch products:

Good morning.

My name is Dave Fuxa. I am a senior at Creighton and the president of Whiteclay Awareness, a group founded on supporting the indigenous of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Today I am before you to announce our next step.

Student groups at Creighton, University of Nebraska-Omaha, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Creighton Prep High School and others are collaborating as advocates for the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. As students, we are motivated by this injustice and the lack of action on the issue. We find it completely unacceptable that such a blatant and ignorant violation of human rights exists, and demand that the people of Pine Ridge be treated with the rights and respect they deserve. Despite our efforts and the efforts of others, no effective changes have been made at Whiteclay or Pine Ridge to date.

We are announcing a national boycott on Anheuser-Busch, with the slogan “Boycott Bud, Support Pine Ridge.” We are asking all boycott participants to refrain from all Anheuser-Busch products that contain the recognizable “Bud,” including Budweiser, Bud Light, Bud Select, Bud Ice, and other “Bud” brand extensions until Anheuser Busch oversees the closing of the four off-sale liquor stores in Whiteclay, Nebraska (Arrowhead Inn, Jumping Eagle Inn, D&S Pioneer, and State Line Liquor) and we demand that Anheuser-Busch construct an effective rehabilitation center under the guidance of tribal authorities.

Anheuser-Busch is the focus of our boycott because 78 percent of alcohol that is sold at Whiteclay is an Anheuser-Busch product. While other beer companies are stakeholders, none come close to the market domination of Anheuser-Busch. Additionally, Anheuser-Busch is a national brand that has the capability to comply with our demands and ensure residents of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation are treated with dignity and respect.

You may be wondering why university students are actively pursuing justice in a far-away community. My answer to you is this: It is everyone’s duty to stand up to injustices in our world today. As Nebraska and United States citizens it is our duty to stand up to the injustices in our community.

Whiteclay is one of those wrongs. Our announcement today isn’t only demanding an end to unjust sales; this is an announcement demanding that human rights no longer be ignored and that we all commit to do what is necessary to provide all those who live in the United States the rights and dignity they deserve. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a national hero we celebrated yesterday, so eloquently put it in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail”: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

While a successful boycott may be measured in the closing down of Whiteclay and the construction of a rehabilitation center, our involvement as students and as citizens will not end until people are treated with dignity and respect.

We stand here today as students and as citizens motivated by Martin Luther King Jr. and the legacy we remember him by. These injustices are not something we can, nor will, ignore. Pine Ridge is part of our community, they are our neighbors, and they are being treated unjustly.

I am going to stand up for Pine Ridge, we are going to stand up for Pine Ridge, and I hope you will stand up for Pine Ridge.


Join the Boycott: Sign the petition at whiteclayboycott.blogspot.com

“Chronics a painful odyssey that should give pause to the caring, the oblivious, and those who don’t give a damn.” Frank Lahore, Grooteboekdorp Tribe of Namibia

The Battle for Whiteclay

DVD copies of are available from NFP for a suggested donation of $15.

Paypal and credit card payments accepted.

Call 402-475-4620, or send written requests to: Whiteclay DVD, c/o Nebraskans for Peace, 941 ‘O’ Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508
The Trillion Dollar Coin, conclusion

the transaction fees paid to private bond dealers and adding to the government’s accumulated debt to private bondholders.

Lately, however, the Fed has moved even further towards serving the broader private financial sector by engaging in a much wider form of monetary expansion called ‘quantitative easing’ (QE), where it buys not only Treasury bonds, but a great variety of assets from banks and other financial groups. The alleged purpose of QE is to not only keep interest rates low and thus induce more lending and investment, but to strengthen bank balance sheets by replacing questionable assets with newly minted cash.

A Trillion Dollar Coin

No doubt by now you’ve heard that the White House could circumvent the whole debt ceiling problem by issuing a platinum coin and having the Federal Reserve buy it in exchange for newly printed cash. Thus, the government would get cash without issuing new debt, and budgeted expenditures in excess of tax revenues could be met without puncturing the debt ceiling. A couple of weeks ago, the White House explicitly rejected the coin as a solution to the debt ceiling, even though Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman pointed out that the coin gimmick could indeed work as claimed.

Despite a 1982 law restricting the Treasury’s ability to mint coins, the law does allow the Treasury to mint unlimited amounts of platinum coins (apparently as commemorative tokens to celebrate certain patriotic events). Such commemorative coins usually state a nominal dollar value that is unrelated to the actual value of the platinum in the coin, so there is no reason the Treasury could not print $1 Trillion on the face of a small platinum coin.

At the same time, the Federal Reserve Bank can create as much money as it wants, and it can use that money to buy anything it wants for whatever it wants, as its QE activities attest. So, if Congress has not challenged the Fed for purchasing corporate stocks, corporate bonds, ‘collateralized real estate debt obligations’ (CDOs), and other lousy assets to clean up bank balance sheets, why could the Fed also not just buy a beautiful platinum coin from the Treasury for $1 trillion? In this way, while the Treasury cannot borrow directly from the Fed, it can sell something to the Fed. By doing this, the Fed would create new money to pay the Treasury $1 trillion, which it could then use to write Social Security checks, military paychecks, and interest on its economy is growing, and it is needed to stimulate economic activity when the economy is crashing. Letting the private financial sector create the money tends to lead to overexpansion during good times and rapid contraction of money when times are bad—exactly the opposite of how the money supply should be managed. There is no obvious reason why banks should get to spend free money instead of the government of the people, for the people.

In order to deal with the unnecessary debt ceiling, the government should indeed take advantage of the legal quirk allowing it to mint a platinum coin so that it can acquire newly minted money from the Fed to spend what Congress has already authorized.

Government Debt and Income Redistribution

Government debt is not harmful, per se, nor is debt, in general. Since ancient times, humans have incurred debts and obligations. After all, what are social obligations, if not implicit debts? There are times when borrowing is better than starving or dropping out of school. However, financial debt does tend to redistribute wealth from the poor to the wealthy. And, because debt repayments exceed initial lending by the amount of interest paid over time, creditors gain at the expense of debtors. In the case of government debt, taxpayers effectively pay the interest on the public debt. Since most government debt is owed to Americans, most government debt represents payments by future U.S. taxpayers to U.S. bondholders. There are some foreign bondholders as well, and this represents a net loss of interest income to the country. But, government debt represents mostly future tax payments by middle-class taxpayers to make payments to the relatively wealthy Americans who hold most of the Treasury bonds directly or indirectly through various funds, trusts, and financial firms. Therefore, the rise in government debt worsens future income distribution in our country.

On the other hand, using the Fed’s printing press to transfer money directly to the government in exchange for a token platinum coin rather than continuing to force the government to borrow from wealthy people would eliminate this redistribution. Overall, with less explicit government debt, fewer future tax revenues will need to be transferred to the wealthy in the future. Of course, to keep the amount of money under control, the Fed will have to offset this new money creation by engaging in less QE activity. This shift in Fed monetary policy would constitute a potential loss to banks and wealthy asset holders. Also, the financial sector loses the income from transacting the Treasury bonds and bills that would otherwise be issued if Congress simply raised the debt ceiling. Most important, perhaps, is that by having the Fed directly provide prudent amounts of money (as long as we have unemployment and excess capacity) to the Treasury and avoiding further debt increases, anti-government ideologues would no longer be able to use the debt ceiling and the fear of debt to justify further cuts in our already insufficient social safety net.

So Bring On the Trillion Dollar Coin

In order to deal with the unnecessary debt ceiling, the government should indeed take advantage of the legal quirk allowing it to mint a platinum coin so that it can acquire newly minted money from the Fed to spend what Congress has already authorized. Since no further debt is created, the Fed’s money creation would effectively help most future taxpayers—that is, our children and grandchildren—instead of the wealthy interests who benefit from bailing out today’s financial industry and receiving the future interest payments on government debt. If the Fed refuses, the president should then simply mint smaller denomination platinum coins and pay its larger vendors directly with them.

Mint those coins, now.
solve the problem. In the past, when massive school shootings have occurred, the NRA has first told us that it would pray for the gun victims and their relatives and later asked us to believe that the time to consider gun policy was not right because emotions were too raw. Today the organization knows that it cannot use such delaying tactics. Hence, it has made its ‘constructive’ contribution to the gun debate by urging us to post armed security guards at every school, thereby turning all schools into forts.

As Senator Diane Feinstein has observed, there was armed security at Columbine when 13 people were killed and 27 injured. The killer at Newtown shot his way into the school, and he could easily have killed any security. We are asked by the head of the NRA to believe that another wave of arming ‘good guys’ will emasculate the ‘bad guys,’ but life is not a Western movie. The killers have a variety of maladies, and they acquire access to public places through a variety of stratagems not identified by black hats and white hats. Since the gun industry funds the political functions of the NRA, its return payment to its funders is to try to create conditions, even in schools, where guns and fear are everywhere and gun sales go up. No amount of arming security can protect all public places of the kind where massacres have occurred—college campuses, street corners, movie theaters, department stores.

Much attention has gone to the question of what to do with disturbed individuals. Obviously we need better procedures to get to keep firearms out of the hands of the mad and the mixed-up. However, even the disturbed have been taught to trust in violence. All of the shooters were men, and our culture—save for that in the ‘historic peace churches’ like the Quakers and Mennonites—teaches young men that one of the things that makes them manly is a control of the tools of violence. The Swedish method of teaching young males what it is to be a man and what it is to use a gun responsibly is very different from ours, and we should study how Sweden handles these things, for its history with guns is radically different from ours.

Paul Olson, conclusion

Social Security, conclusion

than average income because, unlike the Social Security system, there is no ‘insurance’ component to individualized private pension accounts. Even more worrisome is the likelihood that a privatized system would ignore the interests of poor workers altogether. No financial firm wants to manage small savings accounts (except for, perhaps, the ‘pay-day loan industry’!). In short, only wealthy workers, with large amounts of wealth to manage, would get quality financial service.

One other point needs to be emphasized. Raising the retirement age, reducing benefit payments, or other measures mentioned by various so-called ‘reformers’ effectively destroy what the Social Security system was originally set up to do: eliminate old-age poverty. First of all, life expectancy is not rising for the working poor. So, for those who most need Social Security, raising the retirement age reduces retirement income proportionately. And, while college professors might not find it physically difficult to keep working for one or two more years, many lower-income workers perform more physical and/or unpleasant jobs. It would be cruel, not to say unhealthy and even dangerous, to make a roofer or a waitress work full time until they are 68. Why not just let millionaires pay Social Security taxes on their full income (and enjoy a nice extra retirement benefit), and leave everything else the same?

In short, we need beware of the alleged solutions that ‘reformers’ of the Social Security system offer. We should tell the likes of Erkine Bowles and Paul Ryan that what has been the single biggest reducer of old-age poverty in this country does not belong on the negotiating table. Neither now or in the future.
Your Foundation Speaks
by Loyal Park, Nebraska Peace Foundation President

While we have heard bad things about the ‘fiscal cliff’ legislation that was passed by Congress on New Year’s Day, they did one thing that positively affects seniors and their IRA accounts. With the legislation it is now possible for seniors (over age 70) to gift up $100,000.00 to their favorite qualified charity completely tax free. Nebraska Peace Foundation qualifies for that tax-free distribution.

For some who may not have an immediate need for the funds of the Required Minimum Distribution each year, this is a chance to gift that amount and not have to pay taxes on it. Depending on each individual’s situation, this could be a substantial tax savings. It may be possible to make a tax-free gift to NPF and still take the standard deduction on your income tax. Check with your financial advisor or tax consultant to see how this could benefit you.

Speaking Our Peace
by Paul Olson, NFP President Emeritus

Nebraskans for Peace has long endeavored to stem local violence and violence against and among youth. In the 1990s, we worked on teaching students mediation and problem-solving. We continued that thrust into the early 2000s as we endeavored to get schools to offer mediation training to kids and lobbied the Nebraska Department of Education to encourage the same effort. We labored the longest and hardest on anti-bullying policy—first with the Nebraska Board of Education and then, in 2008, with the Legislature, when we succeeded in getting a bill passed. Last year, we, with others, succeeded in including an anti-bullying policy in the accreditation policies for local schools put out by the Nebraska Department of Education to encourage the same effort.

Except in the bullying efforts, we have largely failed.

Nebraska’s three congressional representatives and two U.S. senators (Nelson included) carry an ‘A’ or ‘A+’ rating from the NRA, and have been as supine in voting for the provisions that enabled Newtown and the thousands of mass and individual gun murders in our country (32,000 per year as compared to 50 in England and Wales which have strong gun laws) as any congressional delegation. They did not change their tune at the time of the Omaha shopping mall killings, and one doubts that Newtown will change their perception of the Almighty gun.

This is ironic. They all profess to be devout Christians, but apparently their Jesus does not tell them, “He who lives by the sword will die by the sword,” or “He who lives by the gun will die by the gun.” Our representatives primarily belong to churches that honor patristic Christianity, but they apparently do not know that early Christians—for the first 300 years—refused military service and all other forms of violence (see Roland Bainton, “The Early Church and War.”)

Most of all, they do not honor the history of our state whose pioneers were mostly European peasants who had no use for guns beyond hunting and who resisted military conscription and intervention. This pioneer mindset was epitomized in the statesmanship of George W. Norris and William Jennings Bryan—America’s most distinguished early critics of our culture of violence.

A recent letter to the editor (12/18/12) in the Lincoln Journal Star alleged that “Guns gave us our freedom and will keep our freedom.” But it was not guns that gave us our freedom. It was people who knew when to use guns and when to put them aside, always to use them at the behest of the larger society and with limited and publicly approved goals. If you think that guns create freedom, ask the parents of the 20 dead children what freedom guns gave them.

The NRA represents itself as a grassroots group of innocent hunters, but its legislative agenda is massively supported by those companies that have everything to gain from promoting fear that one will be naked before terror without a gun.

According to a 2011 study by the “Violence Policy Center,” the NRA has received between $14.7 million and $38.9 million from the gun industry since 2005: from Blackwater (now Xe); Arsenal, Inc.; Benelli; Beretta USA; Browning; DPMS Panther Arms; FNH USA; Glock, Inc.; H&R 1871, LLC; Marlin Firearms; Remington Arms Co., Inc.; SIGARMS, Inc.; Smith & Wesson; Springfield Armory; and Sturm, and Ruger & Co., Inc. Twelve of the NRA donors manufacture assault rifles.

Beretta gave the NRA a million dollars to work to overthrow gun control laws. In addition, the NRA and the Koch Brothers have allied to fund the “American Legislative Exchange Council,” a group that promotes ‘stand your ground’ laws, guns on campuses, immediate firearms purchases, and restrictions on local gun control laws. The NRA has also opposed treaties regulating the international guns dealers whose weapons our soldiers face almost daily on overseas killing fields.

Now the NRA claims it will help

NFP Scholarships for High School Seniors in All Three Congressional Districts

Nebraskans for Peace will award three $500 scholarships to one Nebraska high school senior in each of Nebraska’s congressional districts and six $100 scholarships to two seniors in each congressional district. Application essays must focus on one of the Nebraskans for Peace priorities. For more details and the application, go to: nebraskansforpeace.org

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