Opening Remarks 60th Anniversary Celebration May 2023

Written and delivered by Lisa J. Lesniak

Good evening, everyone! I’m Lisa Lesniak president of the Democratic Women of Boulder County. Welcome.

I would like to express my gratitude. Thank you to both the incredible board of Susan Boucher, Carol Callicotte-Belmon, Cathy Carlson, Sharon Conley, Jenn Dempsey, Dave Gross, Dita Hutchison, Cathy James, Barb Knapp, Tina Marquis, Lisa Wade and the stupendous celebration committee of Joanna Clark, Cathy James, Barb Knapp, Kim Matthews, Tina Marquis, and Lisa Wade for all their hard work and dedication in making tonight’s celebration possible. And thank you to Wei Wang for her technical expertise tonight and all year.

I also want to acknowledge our founding members and past board presidents. If you are one of these amazing women, please stand so we can give you a well-deserved round of applause.

Thank you to our table hosts who purchased a table and invited their friends. If you are a guest at a sponsored table, welcome! I encourage you to consider becoming a member tonight and receiving your September meeting at no charge.

And, finally, we are graced tonight with several lifetime members who have sustained our beloved organization through the years – Linda Flack, Diane Rosenthal, Dorothy Rupert, and Bev Sears as well as the first woman president of the CO Senate, Joan Fitz-Gerald. Please raise your hand or stand.

Thank you to all our elected officials in attendance tonight and our Boulder County Democratic party officials, please stand.

Hard to believe it’s been a year since receiving the honor to lead this venerable organization. We’ve discussed this celebration every month since then. We’re so glad you’re here to celebrate with us.

So, 60 years. I think a lot of us feel like we’ve lived 60 years since 2016.

If we take a moment to remember or imagine this country 60 years ago when we were founded, we see a nation in political turmoil and war. It is during this tumultuous time that a group of women gathered for camaraderie and purposeful meetings envisioning a better future for themselves, their families, and their community. Those early assemblies led to women running for office, I know - scandalous! But it was the enjoyment of each other’s company and finding a shared sense of purpose in politics that has sustained this organization these many years.

The 1970s brought considerable change and opportunities for DWBC to increase our impact on local issues. We raised money through bake sales and cookbook sales. May sound quaint now, but women know what to do with the tools available, and we use those tools to achieve new means for better ends like electing women to office.

The 1980’s were a time of cultural change that was simultaneously stifling (Reagan, cough, cough and just say no) and liberating (Madonna, material excess, fall of communism). But we steadily continued our march towards a position of trustworthy leadership in Colorado politics. The return of a Democratic administration to the White House in the 1990’s renewed our faith in our work and girded us for the “turn of the century” and Y2K.

A series of unfortunate events, not Y2K, ultimately lead our country to an uneasy place in the “oughts” - the presidential election was decided by SCOTUS (hands up in wonder) and the unimaginable attack on US soil. Through it all, we remained steadfast, meeting consistently and promulgating plans to improve our local and national landscape.

This work resulted in the election of an incredibly articulate and intelligent man, Barack Obama. Make sure to get a selfie with him and Pres Biden before you leave!

We thought we had reached the pinnacle – the end of racism, economic recovery for all, improved world standing, health care reform. Well, the rose-colored glasses quickly fogged, but renewed interest in DWBC surged in the 2010’s. The backlash to our dream of peace love and justice roared in with overt racism and antiquated views of women culminating in the election of an orange-tinged disruptor.

We were not deterred. In fact, our membership grew in numbers and strength. We held our monthly meetings educating our community, we engaged in campaigns making calls, knocking doors, writing postcards, and electing Dems across CO so that today, we stand here with all statewide seats held by Dems - 2 terms in a row. We have a supermajority in the CO house and a significant majority in the CO senate. And we did this work during a Pandemic. Gotta love women – we get it done!

In our monthly meetings, we explore critical issues like affordable housing and preventing violence. We broadcast engagement opportunities to promote the policies we hold dear like reproductive healthcare for all. And most importantly, we elect officials to implement those policies.

DWBC produces results. We educate, engage, and elect to defend and advance democracy yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The work continues and is more critical than ever – and we need you.

In your program, you’ll find a short “Vote Your Values” survey, please take a minute to complete it and leave it on your table or in the box on the registration table -- we want to hear from you!

Tonight, enjoy delicious food and drink, have fun with the Trivia Bowl, listen to our guests Adam Frisch and Secretary of State Jena Griswold and appreciate the 2023 legislative wrap up from Sen Fenberg, Rep Amabile and Rep McCormick!

We stand on the shoulders of our mothers and sisters, who profoundly and prophetically founded DWBC in 1962, poised to lead for the next 60 years as an organization dedicated to our common values and love for democracy.

Thank you all – and best of luck to you in our Trivia Bowl! BTW, tips are welcome in the jars on the bars for our amazing servers.

Now, Cathy James will lead us into the Trivia Bowl!