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Secretary of State speaks at Lincoln Day Dinner

Friday, March 8, 2013

By TIFFANY FRY Times Staff Reporter



Indiana University student Casey Shelburne (left) speaks with Secretary of State Connie Lawson (right) during the Lincoln Day Dinner Friday evening. Shelburne attended the event with family he's visiting from Brazil. [\[Order this photo\]](#)

During the Republican Party's Lincoln Day Dinner Friday, Jodi Lohrman, chairman of the Clay County Republican Party, welcomed guests, explaining the Lincoln Day Dinner's purpose is to celebrate and support the Republican Party, and this year, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.

After the dinner, Lohrman presented the first Legacy Award to long-time Republican volunteer Betty Clerk.

"You are crucial and vital to this community," Lohrman said, naming several ways Clerk has volunteered in years past.

"I'm humbled," Clerk said. "I sure didn't expect this. It has been a privilege."

The Legacy Award will become an annual recognition.

Next, Lohrman introduced the keynote speaker: Secretary of State Connie Lawson, who is approaching her one-year anniversary in the position.

"I've fallen in love with the job and the duties assigned to me as Secretary of State," Lawson began.

She spoke of the state representatives and their duties, as well as some of the bills being carried to the legislature.

"You have wonderful representatives in the legislature," she said of Clay County.

The main topic Lawson spoke on was voting integrity and security in the election system.

"Vote fraud still exists," Lawson said. "It seems like whatever we do, people get around those laws."

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Lawson told guests of an attempted voting fraud situation that took place in Putnam County this year. A college student had voted in California and then tried voting in Putnam County. Lawson told of several others situations in Indiana were people had voted absentee and in person.

"I'm very much concerned with vote fraud in Indiana," Lawson said, giving examples of voting fraud, forgery and perjury in the election system. "We can't stop those, but we can learn from the way the system gets scammed and try to form our laws so we can prevent those scams from happening in the future."

Lawson touched on the topic of the photo ID law in Indiana, which was passed in 2005. She said the law doesn't hurt voter turnout.

She brought to guests' attention how significant just 1 percent of illegal votes could actually be. Lawson explained there are 4.4 million Hoosiers registered to vote. If 1 percent of that number was illegal votes, 39,000 votes should not be counted.

"One percent of voter fraud doesn't sound like a lot ... but over the last 12 years, we've had 10 recounts and the margin of victory combined doesn't equal 39,000 votes," Lawson said. "If we had 1 percent of voter fraud, that's a turn of 10 election results."

Lawson is a former county clerk and a former senator who served on the elections committee for 16 years. She is currently the chief election officer.

"I realize I am more passionate about election integrity and security than most people, but I believe ... (these) are battles we must fight," Lawson said.

Lawson then spoke about the Republican Party as a whole and it's future.

"As I look ahead to 2014 and beyond, I see opportunities for our party to grow," she said. "We need to stay together as Republicans and conservatives to make sure that what happened to us in November does not happen to us again. We should take this opportunity to regroup."

Lawson said Indiana rises above other states in its fiscal wellness and employment rates. She said the party's purpose is to offer a solution to a broader audience than what is does now.

"I believe that one ounce of energy that we spend on anything other than how we learn from the messages and themes of our past election victories and defeats is an absolute waste of energy," Lawson said. "One ounce of energy spent on anything other than trying to galvanize our party is also an absolute waste of energy."

"I firmly believe that Republicans were ready to provide the leadership that our country so desperately needs right now, but unfortunately we did not get elected on the national level. So now in order to make the changes necessary to set our country in the right direction, our party -- all of us -- we have to articulate an agenda that focuses on the needs of the average American and not let our agenda be dictated to us by our opponents. Our purpose can't be just a slogan to win the next election; we have to think about the future of our country."

"Now is the time to regroup, reorganize and reenergize our party."

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"Lawson touched on the topic of the photo ID law in Indiana, which was passed in 2005. She said the law doesn't hurt voter turnout. " because in 2008 there was a RECORD turn out at the polls.

-- Posted by **Conservative Dad** on Sat, Mar 9, 2013, at 6:45 AM

A patriot is one who thinks about the future. A politician, is one who thinks about the next election. As spoken by the SoS.

-- Posted by **Conservative Dad** on Sat, Mar 9, 2013, at 6:48 AM

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