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(Neb.)-Statements From District 43 Candidates Ravenscroft And Davis



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 11/05/2012 11:41 AM

Photo: Members of the community had the opportunity to ask questions of both Legislative District 43 Al Davis (right) and John Ravenscroft (left) at the political forum in Chadron, sponsored by KCSR/KBPY and the Chadron Record.

(Information from KCSR's Chris Fankhauser the night of the Political Forum)

(These are unedited notes from the forum currently taking place)

(Chadron)-Candidates John Ravenscroft and Al Davis were next on the forum for District 43. Ravenscroft asked for a silent prayer for the fire going on in Cherry County. He lives south of Nenzel, on a ranch with his family. He has concern for the way the country is going and wants to get back to less regulation. There are two sides to each issue and they need to be studied to find a common sense resolution.

Al Davis ranches in Cherry County. He is also concerned with the fires in Cherry County. He is very impressed with Chadron. Very diverse economy. Plans for new library. High enrollment with CSC. Fire relief efforts with other counties. He said we should be very proud. He served on the school board for 25 years. Able to keep property tax low, about 1 percent. He is a republican. Does not intend to work on party lines. Will work with the party when can, or against if it works best for the district. Founding member of the Cattlemen of Nebraska. Stand up for the cow/calf sector.

State aid to schools formula. Both have said how it should be fixed. Davis stated it is a complicated formula. A number of functions add into it. Parts of the functions are good, parts are not. For example, the cost per student isn't as cut and dry. He says it is more expensive to educate children in a rural school. Certain number of classes and teachers need to be offered. Needs minus ability to pay. Schools with declining enrollment, cost of students going up. Property valuations going up significantly. A lot of districts lost all state aid. Been a long time since it was redone.

Ravenscroft, said it is a thick stack of paper for the formula. Would like it to be so school board and patrons can understand it. Can't see how you can equalize western Nebraska schools with Omaha. Feels it encourages spending, because if you don't spend it you don't get state aid. To make it simple, take the amount, divide by pupils in state, and that's what the district would get. A lot of money could come back to community in property taxes.

State spending on education has been declining, shifting the burden to taxpayers. Ravenscroft feels the state needs to step up and help students more. But the state tells people how to spend their money. Feels it should be left up to local school boards. Environmental Trust Fund, he believed, was supposed to go to education.

Davis believes primary reason for decline is due to economy. Said John made good point about how the formula encourages spending. Also John said money should be divided equally, and although it looks good on paper, Chadron would suffer over a million dollars lost with that. Still working off premises that were developed off Carnegie. Purchasing classes from other schools can be done across the state, and has been done in rural areas, such as Hyannis.

Asking candidates about their experience that would help them be quickly effective in the Legislature, Davis said he has been involved in boards and many different organizations. He testified before the US Congress in 2002. He has worked with Senator LeRoy Loudon. He has testified before many committees. He feels he is prepared to get to work. Degree in history and in economics.

Ravenscroft stated his time as a county commissioner would be valuable. He worked a lot with the NACO board, who works with the legislature. He said he went to the school of hard knocks, and has common sense. Feels he works well with others, and can express his views effectively.

As for the Heartland Expressway, Ravenscroft said it is money well spent, especially from Alliance south. A lot of beet trucks, safety issues are a concerns. Talking to the Gering road department, they are just waiting for the environmental impact statement to be done. Hopefully it will be done soon so the project can move forward. Understands it is in their 5 year plan for a portion of it. Would do what he could to push it forward.

Davis stated he feels it is vital to western Nebraska, and vital to the economy of Dawes and Box Butte counties. Disgusted it hasn't gotten farther than Minatare. What bothers him most, if it were east, it would have been done 15 years ago. He feels we are a low priority for the Eastern part of the state. Efforts to repeal a measure Fischer submitted, he would try to fight that. He doesn't think they realize what is happening in Western Nebraska in regards to the economy. He thinks it is important, and will do what ever he can to get it done.

If elected, Davis stated he will always have an open door for calls, emails, letters, and will make as many visits as he can to the areas he represents.

Ravenscroft would also have an open door, but would also like to spend a lot of time here, because visiting with people one on one is a good way to keep communication open. Would represent the entire district, and not opposed to meetings such as the forum to answer questions. Requested guidance from those in the district so he knows what is important to them.

Amendment on ballot to increase term limits from 2 to 3, Ravenscroft doesn't think the 2 term deal has been given a fair chance. He understands the idea, but pretty soon people will want 4 terms. Then we will face problems like in Washington with no term limits. Doesn't think you should make a career of being in government. People say you don't know the system in 2 terms, he doesn't think that needs to be. The problem is when people get to know the system.

Davis said he favors the extension because of learning curves in becoming a legislator, and people need enough time to learn what they can and can't do and how to do it. He says the problem with 2 terms is with our form of unicameral government, with 2/3 of the legislators constantly on a learning curve, it is not beneficial. He believes it came about from the terms of Ernie Chambers, and he feels since Chambers has been out for a while, no one knows how to work with him now.

Keystone XL, Davis said people need energy, and he is in favor. He is not in favor of the exemption they have been given and oil spill liability fund. Certain risk to it. Reps in Nebraska need to go to Washington and say this is not appropriate. A spill would cause a lot of damage and be very hard to clean up.

Ravenscroft would like to see the country become energy independent, but we always throw up our hands and say we can't do that. In favor of the pipeline, but should set up more refineries where oil is instead of shipping it out of the country. When you look at fuel prices, if we developed our own energy, the price at the pumps would come down. Feels pipelines are built good. People will do their best to keep from having a spill because they would have to clean it up.

Ravenscroft believes in supply and demand on the labor force. When you work, you should be paid for it. Not in favor of unionizing of public employees.

Davis stated that as a school board member, the negotiating process can be unpleasant, but collective bargaining is practical solution. To sell his product, the people who buy is need to have a living wage.

Davis will work with the Governor when he is right and against him when he is wrong. Gov. has two tax proposals, elimination of inheritance tax. Counties can use that as emergency fund. If eliminated, will see increase in property taxes. Income tax lowering also proposed, sounds great, but need to look at income levels in west and Omaha, big cut will not be as effective here as out east. Taxes made up of sales and income. Income taxes cut, sales taxes go up. Anticipates Gov. will try to eliminate exemptions. Would tax very hard.

Ravenscroft is proud to be endorsed by Gov. Want to make so people with families can thrive, and businesses can come into area. Being commissioner, understands it sounds good to get rid of it, but county commissioners really count on that fund for emergencies. Will increase property taxes. Might be trade off. Open to looking at all avenues of taxation. Look at carefully. Don't make decision off the cuff. In favor of simplifying taxes however they can. Everyone needs to contribute.

Ravenscroft Open Sky Policy Institute. Structural deficit in Nebraska's tax system? Need to look at tax structure. Would be willing to look at their proposals. All options should be on table. Have to decide, do we want less or more government. People want to cut taxes, but also want more services.

Davis agrees there are problems with the structure. It is antiquated. Wants to revisit how taxation is sometimes a local issue. Everybody wants services, nobody wants to pay for them. One thing ignored is sales tax on internet sales. Supposed to pay that, assuming most people don't, they aren't asked to, and don't know they have to. Excluding a great many things on sales tax. Wants to put tax on every item, but down to about 1 percent. But compounding taxes is hard on low income people.

Davis teamsters have representation in this neighborhood, so accepting money from unions in Eastern Nebraska.

Ravenscroft campaigning costs a lot of money. Don't necessarily agree all that unions stand for, but represent a large part of railroad industry. In favor of people getting paid fair wage. Left up to each individual candidate.

Davis wrapped up his attendance by thanking everyone for coming out, restating how impressed he is with Chadron, and Chadron moving in the right direction. Will work hard with constituents out here if he gets to Lincoln. Constituents will be tops in his book.

Ravenscroft thanked everyone for coming out on a windy, chilly night. He feels his experience in county government will be a benefit. He said there are two sides to every issue, and they both need explored. He looks forward to working with everyone in the district. He knows there are a lot of issues. He also believes there are common sense solutions. If you don't have it, you don't spend it. He feels he can move our state forward.