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(Neb.)-Heineman's Decision Could Shape Senate Race

By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 02/20/2013 07:47 AM

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) - The Republican primary to replace U.S. Sen. Mike Johanns in Nebraska could unfold as an open-and-shut contest or a wide-open race, depending on what Gov. Dave Heineman decides.

GOP officials and strategists say Heineman would enter the 2014 election as a heavy favorite if he chooses to run for the seat. Conversely, party officials say a decision by Heineman not to run would unleash a flurry of candidates with no immediate frontrunner.

Johanns announced Monday that he would not seek re-election in 2014. Heineman has said he is considering a run for the seat, but he has not decided one way or the other.

Heineman, the state's longest-serving governor, has enjoyed consistent approval ratings above 60 percent in polls. He was twice elected governor with more than 70 percent support.

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