

Congressional races challenge state's Democrats

By John Hopgood

With one week until the election, it appears that the Democratic candidates in the 1st and 3rd Congressional Districts have their work cut out for them, while polls indicate the 2nd District race is too close to call.

In the 27-county 1st District, which includes Lincoln, incumbent Douglas Bereuter of Utica faces Democratic candidate Rex Story of Lincoln.

Bereuter, 40, says his main concerns are strengthening the military and developing a comprehensive energy program.

An American Legion member, he said he would vote for conscription of women into the military as one means of shoring up what he termed America's "inadequate defense posture." He favors a military pay hike and weapons development.

The first-term Congressman also supports reduced bureaucracy and containment of health care costs.

BEREUTER, A graduate of UNL and Harvard University, won his seat in 1978 after one four-year term in the Nebraska Legislature. He is on the House Interior and Small Business Committees and a member of the Rural Caucus and the Veteran's Caucus.

The Nebraska Chapter of Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Lincoln Journal have endorsed Bereuter.

Challenger Rex S. Story, 26, has made energy his priority issue, claiming that the country's economic and security problems stem from U.S. reliance on Middle East oil. Story would like to see America become energy self-sufficient and wants a large-scale government project to develop alternative sources of energy.

Story, a political newcomer, criticizes Bereuter for opposing a mandatory hospital-cost control bill if voluntary guidelines don't work. Story noted his opponent is supported by health-care political action committees.

A graduate of UNL, Story is personnel director for Central States Distributors and is single.

SIXTY-TWO percent of 200 persons polled by the Omaha World-Herald on Oct. 1 said they would vote for Bereuter, compared with 15 percent for Story. Another 21 percent voiced no opinion and two percent said they would vote for neither candidate.

This year's most hotly contested Congressional race is occurring in the 2nd District, a five-county district along the Missouri River, which includes Omaha.

Rep. John Cavanaugh, 34, will not run for re-election because, he said, he is choosing to concentrate on family obligations instead. In 1976, Cavanaugh was the first Democrat elected in the Omaha-dominated district in 28 years.

Running in a close race for Cavanaugh's seat are Hal Daub and Richard Fellman, both of Omaha. Susan Putney is also campaigning on the Libertarian ticket.

Republican Hal Daub, 39, favors a constitutional amendment to balance the budget. Daub proposes to tie government spending to the level of the Gross National Product in a given year.

DAUB'S CAMPAIGN manager, Jeff Jepsen, said inflation, taxes, and unemployment are the issues concerning people in the 2nd District. Jepsen said his candidate supports the Kemp/Roth bill which calls for an across the board 30 percent tax cut for businesses to stimulate the economy and create more jobs. Daub also supports a lower minimum wage to decrease unemployment.

Daub wants a five to seven percent real increase in defense spending, supports raising both the military pay scales and the educational requirements for enlistment, and suggests offering alternative terms of enlistment. He proposes three and five year plans.

Daub would also target spending on

development of conventional forces.

AN EXECUTIVE with an Omaha feed company, Daub has never held public office. He ran unsuccessfully against Cavanaugh in 1978. He has been endorsed by 13 mayors in the district, and by the VFW, the National Chamber of Commerce, and Americans for Constitutional Action.

Douglas County Board of Commissioners Chairman Richard Fellman, 44, is a Democrat, who says inflation, taxes, and defense are the most important issues.

The Omaha attorney disagrees with his opponent's support of the proposed Kemp/Roth tax cut bill calling it inflationary. He would rather see a decrease in the capital gains tax and give an allowance for tax-free savings accounts up to \$2,000.

Unlike Daub, Fellman is against a constitutional amendment to balance the budget. He points out that it "only takes 50 percent" of Congress to cut spending while an amendment would require a two-thirds majority to pass.

FELLMAN AGREED with Daub that America needs a stronger defense and favors a larger defense budget.

Fellman is a former state senator and a former farm editor for the Lincoln Star.

The Lincoln Journal, Nebraska State Education Association, and the Nebraska AFL-CIO endorse Fellman's candidacy.

Susan Putney, 29, of Omaha, is Nebraska's only Libertarian candidate running for Congress. Putney said inflation can be curbed by cutting government spending by 97 to 98 percent and eventually eliminating the Federal Reserve Board. Unemployment is caused by excessive government regulation, she said.

Putney differs from her opponents on the military defense issue, favoring spending cuts. She said the Libertarian platform calls for defending American borders only and not defending other countries or contributing foreign aid.

CALLING TAXATION "armed robbery," Putney said taxes should also be lowered and favors an amendment to balance the federal budget.

Putney has never held public office. She once waged an unsuccessful campaign for the Omaha Metropolitan Utilities Board.

A KMTV poll gives Daub a 43 percent edge over Fellman, who had 38 percent support.

The race appears to be a toss-up, according to the Omaha World-Herald poll, which shows 39 percent favoring Daub and 38 percent for Fellman. Sixteen percent and no opinion and four percent indicated they would vote for Putney. Another four percent said they would not vote.

THE 3RD District covers the western two-thirds of the state. Republican incumbent Virginia Smith of Chappell is running for her fourth term against lawyer and cattleman, Stan Ditus of McCook.

Both candidates target agricultural issues as the main concern of the 61-county district, but the contest is considered to be the dulllest of the three Congressional races.

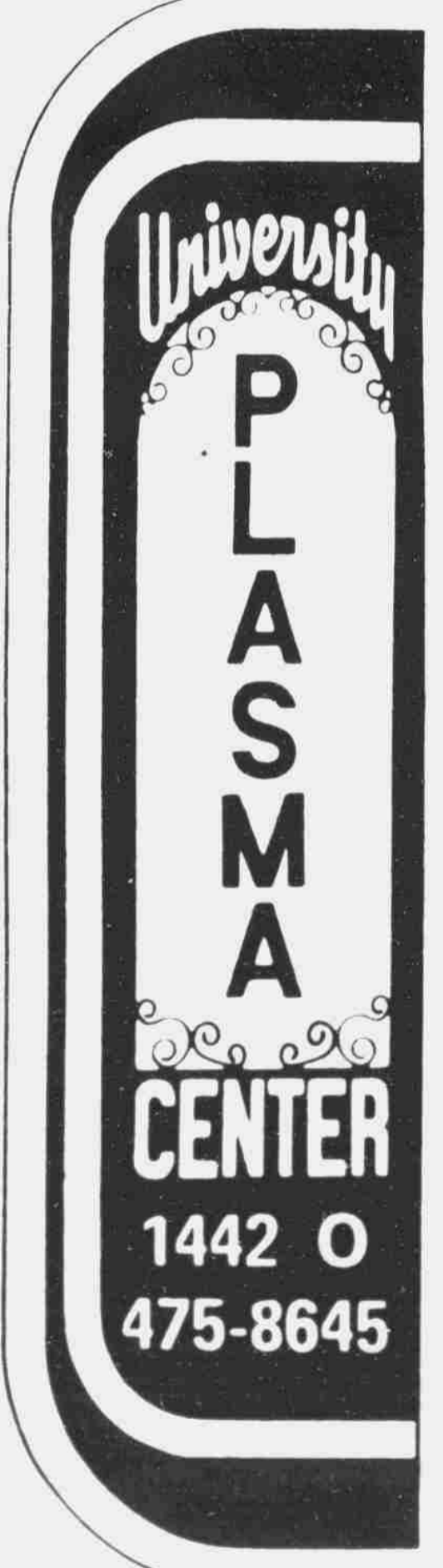
Ditus, 45, criticizes his opponent for her saying Congress spends too much and has too much bureaucracy. Ditus said such criticism makes Smith an ineffective representative.

"She has not developed a significant rapport with her colleagues in the House," he said.

Smith disagrees, pointing to her appointment to the Appropriations Committee, one of the most powerful committees in Congress, after her first term.

Polls give Mrs. Smith, 69, a commanding lead over Ditus, who is running for elective office for the first time.

The Omaha World-Herald poll indicated Smith would win 73 percent of the vote while 12 percent would vote for Ditus. The newspaper said 13 percent had no opinion and two percent would not vote for either candidate.



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