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U.S. Senate candidates debate at Grand Island

By Pat Higgins

GRAND ISLAND — President Reagan's economic policies sparked debate Friday between the three candidates for a Nebraska U.S. Senate seat at The Associated Press Convention here.

Sen. Edward Zorinsky and Republican challenger Jim Keck agreed that Reagan's economic program deserves support, but they argued about who would be more effective in that support. Independent candidate Virginia Walsh said that she would try to oppose Reaganomics if elected.

Zorinsky and Keck agreed on most issues facing the country, but Keck said that a Republican should hold the office. Walsh disagreed with the two major party candidates on almost every issue.

Concerning his support for Reagan, Zorinsky said that the president's economic program would not have passed the Senate without his support. However, Keck said that the president will be endorsing him in an upcoming commercial.

"President Reagan said that Jim Keck can help make this country great again," Keck said. "The main issue in this election is one of reaffirming the mandate of 1980. Like it or not, this election will determine if we continue in the same direction or reverse course."

Democrats the minority

Keck said that Zorinsky is ineffective because the Democrats are the minority party in the Senate. A Republican would do more for Nebraska, he said.

Zorinsky said that there are too many Republican and Democratic senators but not enough U.S. senators. Both parties are moving toward the center, Zorinsky said. But because of his independence, Zorinsky said that he is able to support the president when he is right on the issues.

"I don't think that either party has a monopoly on idiots," Zorinsky said. "I supported President Carter when he made the right decisions, and I do the same with President Reagan."

Walsh said that she entered the race



Incumbent Sen. Edward Zorinsky, left, Republican Jim Keck and independent candidate Virginia Walsh await questions at a Friday night debate in Grand Island sponsored by The Associated Press.

because the cost of Reagan's economic policies has been too high. It is wrong to cut back on social programs while the Pentagon is given "a blank check. . .

A supporter of the nuclear freeze proposals, Walsh also is concerned about social justice for women, minorities and the handicapped, she said.

"It is quite evident that the other candidates agree on policies," Walsh said. "I am the alternative to Reaganomics."

Social Security favored

All the candidates said they favor Social Security benefits for the elderly.

Zorinsky said that the Social Security program has to be put on a sound actuarial basis. A bill sponsored by Zorinsky would eliminate waste in the program, he said.

"If we ever break our commitment to (the) elderly, our country will cease being different from every other one," Zorinsky said. "Social Security benefits to the elderly will be cut over my dead political body."

Keck said that all government programs should be cut back, except for Social Security and defense. Payments for the elderly should continue, but the Social

Security system may have to be changed in the future, he said.

Walsh said that if the Social Security system is falling short of funds, more should be transferred to it from general revenue. Money for Social Security could be made available by cuts in the defense budget, she said.

Zorinsky and Keck strongly supported right-to-work laws. However, Walsh did not.

"I have a strong commitment to organized labor. I have a vivid memory of what life was like before many unions were organized. The problem is that working people don't have as much power as corporations," Walsh said.

Plan needed

Keck said that an aggressive commodity export plan is needed. He also said that more effective work in the Senate would make a difference.

"I find it interesting that agriculture problems have increased since Ed Zorinsky took office," Keck said.

Walsh said that it was "ludicrous" to have low commodity prices at the same

time as bumper crops. Foreign exports should not be relied on because of high transportation costs, she said.

On social issues, a variety of stances were taken by the candidates.

Zorinsky said he favors a constitutional amendment for prayer in school, opposes abortion and supports tuition tax credits for private schools. Endorsed by the Nebraskans for Right to Life, Zorinsky was co-sponsor of a bill that would ban abortions. Private schools need support because their financial collapse would endanger the public school systems, he said.

Keck said he also is against abortion and that he opposes the school prayer amendment and tuition tax credits. Prayer in school should be permitted but not required, he said.

"I'm a religious man, and I think that there are ample opportunities to pray," Keck said.

Walsh said that she is a pro-choice supporter, and is opposed to the prayer in school amendment and tax credits for private schools. Walsh's seven children attended parochial schools.

"The term (voluntary) is always used with the school prayer amendment, but I can't picture it really being voluntary," Walsh said. "This is a pluralistic society with no consensus on any one religion."

Gubernatorial candidates square off on issues

By Pat Higgins

GRAND ISLAND — Gov. Charles Thone is calling the Legislature into a special session Nov. 5, three days after the election, to discuss the estimated \$30 million shortfall in revenues.

At a debate with Democratic challenger Bob Kerrey, Thone said an across-the-board cut in the operating expenses of state agencies should be made. In 1981, a 3 percent across-the-board cut was made that affected the budgets of all agencies except the correctional system.

"Of course, it's not popular to be calling a special session," Thone said, "but the budget has to be cut. It would be a political zoo if the special session would be called in before the election."

Kerrey opposes an across-the-board cut. Education and transportation budgets and state revenue sharing with local governments should not be cut, but cuts in government operating expenses like office equipment, data processing and postage costs should be made, Kerrey said.

"Spending cuts should begin at home," he said. "The

expense of running the Governor's Mansion has gone from \$25,000 in 1978 to \$67,000 in 1982."

Kerrey said he has asked a committee of 50 prominent Nebraskans, headed by Lincoln tax attorney Bill Wright, to look at Nebraska's financial situation and provide long-range information on funding and revenues and some analysis of New Federalism.

"I've scrutinized the record of the chief executive officer of the state and he hasn't stepped forward to make any long-range plans," he said.

Thone said he would not raise taxes and that the hallmark of his administration has been economy and efficiency. Nebraska's mix of sales and income tax is a fair one and with "heads-up leadership," the Legislature will respond to the revenue shortfall, he said.

"My tax council is the Unicameral," Thone said. Kerrey is unrealistic in his proposed budget cuts. Because state aid is 55 percent of the budget and aid to education is more than 20 percent, Kerrey's proposed cuts would come out of too small of a base in the budget, Thone said.

"I faced the financial crunch last year," Thone said, "I find it interesting that Bob Kerrey didn't support budget cutting just eight days ago."

President Reagan's New Federalism program must be analyzed, Kerrey said. Because Nebraska piggybacks its tax rate to the federal tax rate, the next federal tax cut on July 1 will also decrease state revenues, he said.

"I'm not blaming Mr. Thone for the state of the national economy, but we need to be making long-range plans. We're only planning three months ahead now," he said.

"I can't stand here and say that I'm a thousand percent behind the president's policies," Kerrey said. "I will say that I created 600 jobs in the last few years," he said, referring to his Grandmother's Skillet and Lounge restaurants. "Mr. Thone took credit for it, but I was the one who did it."



Staff Photo by Craig Andersen

Royalty crowned

The UNL 1982 Homecoming king and queen were crowned during halftime of the Nebraska-Kansas State game Saturday. Brenda Heyden, a junior agricultural economics major, and Chip Winter, a junior integrated studies major, were chosen as Homecoming royalty. The king and queen were chosen by a student vote Wednesday. Runners-up were juniors Sandra Bushey, a speech pathology major, and Joel Long, a business administration major.

Continued on Page 3