

Decision '96

GOP candidates take similar stands on key issues in '96 primary



Aaron Steckelberg/DN

"I think an important issue in this primary is who the voters know and trust to represent them in Washington. I have been a consistent attorney general, and my opponent has changed his views on a couple of issues. People are going to want someone they know and trust."

Don Stenberg

By Ted Taylor
Senior Reporter

The elimination of the current welfare program and the federal Department of Education are only two areas of concern for Nebraska's GOP Senate candidates Chuck Hagel and Don Stenberg.

But on May 14, Nebraska Republicans will decide which of the two men will face Democrat Ben Nelson in the November election.

Hagel and Stenberg spoke to the Daily Nebraskan this week on some of the issues surrounding their Republican primary race.

— On what it would mean for Nebraska to have a Republican in the U.S. Senate.

Hagel: "It would give Nebraska a majority, and that's important because the majority party controls the legislative agenda. Right now Nebraska does not participate."

Hagel said a majority senator also would most likely be given a sub-committee chair position, which he said "would be significant and helpful to the state."

Stenberg: "It would benefit Nebraska a great deal. The Clinton Democrats are taking the country in the wrong direction with tax increases and the veto of welfare reform. A Republican senator would mean lower taxes, a balanced federal budget, regulatory reform and a strong national defense."

— On following the party line vs. what the citizens of Nebraska may want.

Hagel: "The most important job a senator has is to do what is right for America and what is right for Nebraska. Party loyalty is important to both Democrats and Republicans. I would vote with the Republicans a great majority of the time."

Stenberg: "I don't see it as a question of following the party line. It's a question of what the candidate believes in and what his positions are. I am a Republican because I agree with smaller federal government, lower taxes and less regulation. I think that's what a majority of Nebraskans want as well."

— On eliminating the Federal Department of Education.

Hagel: "I would be very supportive of abolishing the Department of Education. It's a senseless and needless waste of taxpayers' money. Why do we need a multi-billion dollar federal department to tell our people how we should be educated? Let our parents have a role in that education."

Stenberg: "I favor eliminating the Department of Education. I feel local school boards provide better education than a federal bureaucracy in Washington. We would have a better educational system if we handle it locally rather than by federal mandates."

— On Gov. Ben Nelson going back on his written pledge to complete his second term as governor.

Hagel: "It's negative for the both of them. (Stenberg, the current Nebraska attorney general will not fulfill his term if elected.) They both asked for four more years; Nelson signed a pledge. They are each going to have to answer to that. All we really have is our trust, our word, our honor. If you say one thing and do the other, that reflects on who you are and if you can be trusted in Washington."

Stenberg: "Those situations are different. I never made any pledge or written promise to serve a specified period of time in order to entice the voters to vote for me. Nelson did. They did vote for him, and now he wants to

back out of his side of the agreement. It's an issue because if he won't keep his promise on that, if he promises to balance the budget, is that another promise he will break?"

— On the federal welfare program.

Hagel: "First of all I would bring it back to the states, counties and cities where it's accountable. Welfare has failed over the past 39 years. We've had a 'one size fits all' mentality, but our welfare program in Nebraska is completely different than in New York. Second, the only way to break the circular cycle of hopelessness is to allow local communities to become involved to help these people get skills. We can accomplish all this here at the state and local level."

Stenberg: "I believe we should eliminate welfare as a federal entitlement. It should be in the form of block grants to the states to let them handle it. It would be a more cost-effective welfare program — one that helps the people who really need help. If we want real welfare reform, we are going to have to send a Republican to the House and Senate."

— On negative campaigning.

Hagel: "I said in the beginning that we would conduct our campaign the right way by presenting my records, my values, my beliefs. I just don't believe in tearing your opponents down. I don't think the state or the nation is well-served with that kind of nonsense. I should be judged on who I am and what my accomplishments are."

Stenberg: "As I've always said, I intend to run a campaign on the issues. That's what we've been doing, and that's what we'll continue to do. But the voters do want to know the difference between the candidates, and that is part of the campaign process."



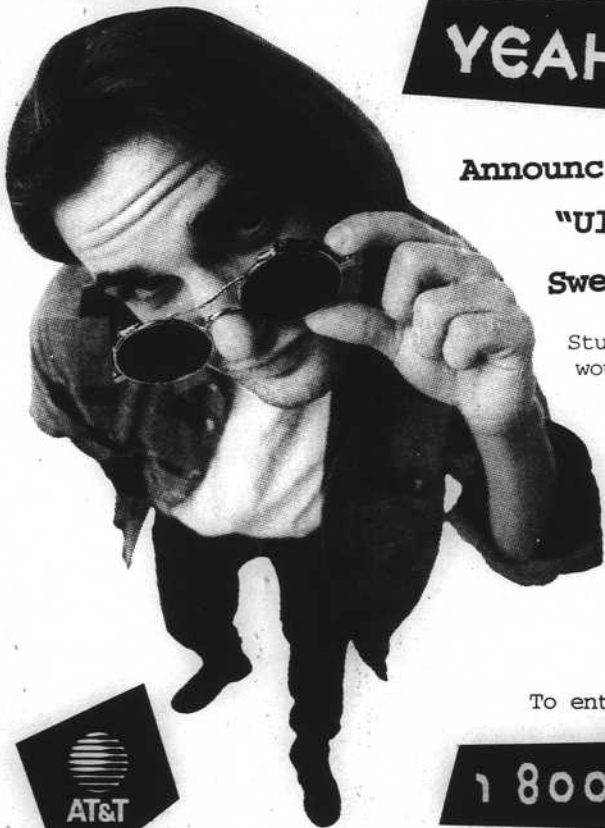
Aaron Steckelberg/DN

"The lasting effects (of the election) will be significant because we are talking about the future course of our country and how we will start to engage in a global economy. This country needs real-world experienced leadership, leaders who have accomplished things outside the political circle."

Chuck Hagel

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