



Voters' Guide

Pages 4 and 5
Uncle Ben?

Nebraska's governor and Democratic candidate for Senate has established a parental role in the eyes of some Nebraskans. And if Nelson does head for the U.S. Senate, the gubernatorial seat will change hands.

Pages 6 and 7
Hagel-ing support

Chuck Hagel's campaign has been picking up steam since it began, and the race for the U.S. Senate is looking to be a close one. Negative campaigning from both sides is making the race ugly.

Page 8
Rematch

In the 1st District race for the U.S. House of Representatives, incumbent Doug Bereuter once again is facing underdog Democratic challenger Patrick Combs.

Page 9
Whose House?

In Nebraska's other races for the U.S. House of Representatives, both Republican incumbents are leading in pre-election polls.

Page 10
Taking an initiative

This election year, ballot initiatives such as 411 and 412 are getting nearly as much attention as the candidates.

Page 11
Across Nebraska

Andrew Sigerson is hoping to give incumbent NU Regent Nancy O'Brien a run for her money, and several state Legislature races - and seats - are wide open.

Foregone conclusions?

Nebraska election season lackluster despite full ballot

From The Associated Press

Bob Dole knows it won't do him any harm to forego campaigning in Nebraska. President Clinton knows that campaigning here probably wouldn't do him any good.

No Democratic presidential candidate has carried the Cornhusker state since Lyndon Johnson overwhelmed Barry Goldwater in 1964. Democrats hope Clinton can claim one of the state's five electoral votes by winning a majority in the 25-county 1st Congressional District, which includes Lincoln. But they aren't betting on success.

The GOP has numbers on its side. There are 484,973 registered Republicans; 374,787 Democrats; 117,485 independents and 97 Libertarians in the state.

Anne Boyle, an Omaha Democrat and Clinton supporter, said that in presidential races, "the people in Nebraska have pretty much trained themselves that they look at the party first."

The Nov. 5 election has been lackluster in Nebraska despite an open Senate seat and state ballot questions on such issues as gambling, taxes and education.

"It may be that the presidential race is a foregone conclusion both ways," said Robert Miewald, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln political science professor. "Dole will carry the state and Clinton will win the election."

Johnny Podkonyak, a farmer and rancher in Garden County, was disappointed in the presidential race.

"To me it's a sorry situation that you can't get two better guys than this," he said. "I don't think we've got much of a choice. Neither one of them impress me."

His interest also has not been piqued by the race between Democratic Gov. Ben Nelson and Republican Chuck Hagel to replace the retiring Sen. James Exon, a Democrat.

"I don't know that there's any big difference on an issue that's got anyone's attention, or comes to mind, with Nelson and Hagel," said

Podkonyak, 63, of Lewellen, a Democrat. "I think Nelson's done OK as governor and I'll probably go with him."

With a few weeks remaining before the election, he had not studied two controversial constitutional amendments involving property taxes.

Political analyst Richard Shugrue, a law professor at Creighton University, said lack of interest in elections is easy to understand.

"Two things have happened," Shugrue said. "One is the whole dumbing down of politics across the board, from local school boards to U.S. Senate races. It has generated almost a demand for bumper-sticker explanations of everything. The public attention span has pretty much been destroyed through constant bombardment by television."

Nelson led Hagel, 51 percent to 38 percent, in a telephone poll conducted Oct. 14-16, but 11 percent of those surveyed were undecided. The poll by Mason-Dixon Political/Media Research Inc. of Columbia, Md., had a

margin of error of 3.5 percentage points.

The Republican Party has thousands of volunteers to walk precincts and work telephone banks for Hagel in the last two weeks before the election, said Kevin Fry of Ewing, the 3rd District GOP chairman. He said they view the election as a chance to have a Republican from Nebraska in the Senate for the first time since Sen. Dave Karnes was defeated in 1988.

Nebraska's three Republican congressmen were favored to win re-election.

In the Omaha-area 2nd District, Rep. Jon Christensen faces Democrat James Martin Davis, a lawyer and former Secret Service agent. Rep. Bill Barrett of Lexington faces a marginal challenge to a fourth term from Democrat John Webster of Ord. Rep. Doug Bereuter of Lincoln seeks a 10th term and a second victory over Democrat Patrick Combs of Lincoln in the 1st District.

Deja vu: Defeated candidates create rematches of '94 races

From The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defeated in the Republican landslide of 1994, former Rep. Ted Strickland took to showing up at his successor's Ohio appearances with a video camera, gathering ammunition for his comeback bid.

Connecticut Republican Edward Munster came so close to winning last time, he attended an orientation seminar for new House members. He's running against Democratic Rep. Sam Gejdenson for the third time.

In Southern California's 36th District, Republican Susan Brooks spent most of last year contesting the results of the 1994 election, which she lost to Democratic Rep. Jane Harman by 812 votes out of 195,808 cast. This year, she's battling Harman again.

These campaigns, including Nebraska's 1st District House race, are a few of 1996 congressional rematches — 55 in the House and two in the Senate.

"A lot of these people didn't stop running — the campaign was continuous," said pollster Lee Miringoff, director of the Institute for Public Opinion at Marist College, N.Y. "Some of these people who ran once and were competitive got a taste of it."

The recent record for challengers winning in a second go-around is not promising. In 1994, incumbents won in all but five of the 50 House rematches. The 10 percent of these rematches won by challengers was only slightly better than the 9 percent victory tally for all challengers vs. incumbents that year.

In the Senate rematches, Minnesota

"A lot of these people didn't stop running — the campaign was continuous."

LEE MIRINGOFF
 pollster

Democrat Paul Wellstone is defending the seat he won by 2 percentage points in 1990 from Republican Rudy Boschwitz. And North Carolina Sen. Jesse Helms, one of the Senate's most conservative Republicans, again faces Democrat Harvey Gantt, who finished 6 percentage points behind Helms six years ago.

Several House rematches are replays of some of the closest races from 1994.

None was closer than the Gejdenson-Munster contest in Connecticut's 2nd District. Gejdenson, who had survived a Munster-induced scare in 1992, avoided the 1994 GOP juggernaut by winning 43 percent of the vote in a three-way race, edging out Munster by a mere 21 votes out of 186,071 cast. So uncertain was the final outcome that Munster attended courses for newly elected officials in Washington.

"Fifty-seven percent of the people in the last election voted for someone other than Sam Gejdenson," Munster notes on campaign swings through the eastern Connecticut district.

Gejdenson runs as though Munster were the incumbent, tagging the Republican with embracing House Speaker Newt Gingrich's agenda.

Surprisingly, only two of the 33 Democrats unseated in 1994 are running this year: Strickland's challenge of Republican Rep. Frank Cremeans in Ohio's 6th District, and in North Carolina, David Price's effort to regain the seat he narrowly lost to Republican Fred Heineman.

Months after he lost his seat by 3,402 votes out of 179,124 cast, Strickland was back at constituent meetings — this time not his own but those of his successor.

"My intention is to find out what he's doing," Strickland said, wielding a video camera at one event last year.

Cremeans, in an interview, recalled Strickland's admission that he kept pointing the camera even after he ran out of film.

"I think antics like that are inappropriate and kind of foolhardy," Cremeans said.

In California's 22nd District, Rep. Andrea Seastrand was among the incumbent Republicans who barely hung on in 1994. Having defeated Democrat Walter Capps by 1,563 votes out of 109,008 cast, Seastrand again faces Capps this year.

Forty of the 55 House rematches involve Republican challengers who lost in 1994.

Americans less hostile, poll finds

From The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Americans are feeling less hostile toward government and their own members of Congress since Republicans won control of the House and Senate by exploiting anti-Washington sentiment, a poll suggests.

That development hasn't clearly benefited one party over the other in congressional races, the Pew Research Center survey found.

Among likely voters, 48 percent said they intended to vote for Democratic congressional candidates and 44 percent favored Republicans.

But when asked which party should control Congress if Clinton wins, 46 percent said Republicans and 42 percent said Democrats.

None of that ambiguity was found in the presidential race. Clinton led Dole 50 percent to 28 percent among likely voters, with 6 percent backing Ross Perot.

The Pew survey suggests Dole has dented people's trust in the president by attacking his ethics, but he has not drawn voters to his side by doing so.

It also found that while people favor Dole's proposed 15-percent cut in income tax rates for themselves, they believe it would be bad for the country.