## **Daily Nebraskan Voters' Guide**

## A 'father' figure for Nebrask

Gov. Ben Nelson says his record of service to the state's people has prepared him for Washington.

> By CHAD LORENZ Senior Reporter

He lives in Omaha, he works in Lincoln.

Although he's a Democrat, many of his stands are conservative.

And when he's not busy governing the state, he's campaigning for the U.S.

Gov. Ben Nelson plays many roles, some of them opposite roles, but he has committed himself to one.

Nelson has tried to be a father-figure, a caretaker, during most of his life.

Besides being the father of four children, two biological and two adopted, Nelson has also taken care of his great-aunt and his mother in her later years.

And for the past six years, he has been "father" of the state, doing his best to take care of Nebraska's children and senior citizens.

During Nelson's college years at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, he spent a lot of time around older people when he worked at Lincoln churches.

At church lunches, dinners, baptisms and funerals, Nelson would chat with the parishioners, many of whom were seniors.

"I like their history, I like their stories," Nelson said. "I never got tired of older people."

Nelson made sure she got the best care dence Hall. possible. Dealing with his mother's

forms and useless paperwork until I probably just as bad. began overseeing my mother's Medicare filings," he said.

Nelson met with more demands as a father after his first wife died in 1977 raising his son Pat and daughter Sarah.

"I had to struggle like most single moms and dads do.

At the time, Nelson was the president and chief executive of Central Insurance Department. National Group Insurance. His important role at work and at home sometimes caused problems, like when a baby sitter would cancel before a company meeting.

Through all the challenges, Nelson. realized parenting lessons and strengthened ties with his family.
"I enjoyed it," he said. "It created a

aren't put in that position."

Nelson's role as father didn't end with his family. As governor, Nelson said, he has tried to look out for Nebraska's children in trying to give them an education.

His push for public education in the campaign reflects his appreciation for his own education: a 10-year UNL career including graduate work and a law degree.

Nelson earned his bachelor's de-



GOV. BEN NELSON shakes hands with football fans before Nebraska's game against Kansas.

Until his mother's death in August, working as a counselor in Selleck Resi- Nelson realize all things were limited.

While chatting with students there Nelson was exposed to political role Medicare benefits made him realize last month, Nelson commented that models. that there was a problem in the system. things didn't seem very different from "I had never seen such confusing his years there - and that the food was ther would take him to the cemetery

> While working on his master's dedergraduate students in Philosophy repeat the senator's history again and 410: logic. His former students some- again. times approach him and remind him of the grades he gave.

Nelson worked in the U.S. Department was needed.' of Agriculture and later in the State

school year and his summer jobs supplemented his scholarships in fi-

Nelson graduated with no debt and a brand new Ford Galaxy 500. But that planted," Nelson said.

was the 1960s. 'You can't do today what I did."

bond and a love because most fathers abundance, Nelson still watched every about it during college and in his early dollar. "I watched it so closely, I still have him to run in 1990.

expense calendars with entries to the Nebraska Bookstore," Nelson said.

three coats of paint," carried over from and as executive vice president of the his parents' lifestyles.

Surviving the Great Depression made them value their few assets, he same. Rationing food and supplies durtice, which he kept until he took office gree in philosophy while living and ing World War II also made a young as governor in 1991.

It was also during his childhood that

Every Memorial Day, Nelson's fawhere the Nelson plot was just down from the grave of an outspoken Negree in philosophy, Nelson taught un- braska senator. Nelson's father would

"I grew up in the shadow of George Norris," Nelson said. "It was Also during graduate school, drilled into me to the point no script

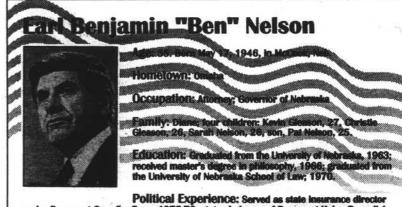
That memory carried into high school, where Nelson was elected gov-His part-time work during the emor of the Hi-Y model legislature.

In the YMCA-based state youth government, Nelson won by getting the nancing his college tuition by himself. block votes from Lincoln and Omaha. "That's when the seed was

That early boost of confidence always reminded Nelson of the possibil-In days of low tuition and economic ity of becoming governor. He talked career, but friends and family urged

Before running for governor, Nelson's only political experience Nelson said his compulsion to save came from working in the upper ranks and his reputation for being "tight as of Central National Group Insurance National Association of Insurance Commissioners.

In 1985, Nelson turned from insursaid, so they taught their only son the ance and opened a private law prac-



under Democrat Gov. Jim Exon., 1975-76; state chairman of Democrat Helen Boosalis' campaign for governor, 1966; elected governor 1990; re-elected in 1994. Other experience: Insurance-law expert and consultant, Kennedy Holland DeLacy & Svoboda of Omaha, 1985-1990; board of directors, First Executive Corp., 1988-1990; executive vice president, National Association of Insurance Commissioner., 1962-85; president and chief executive officer, Central National Insurance, 1980-81.

He admits he didn't feel completely government.

You feel insecure about it," Nelson said. "Even though people call you 'governor,' it doesn't mean you feel

term, during a time of crisis, that Nelson realized how a governor typically feels.

just thrown out a law on personal property tax - a move Nelson fought.

"I remember I was walking outside job they want him to do. the Capitol and one of the local reportgovernor today.'

"It's when you take charge," Nelson prepared to take command of the state's said. "That's when you become gover-

It's that take-charge attitude Nelson said he wanted to take to Washington. Nelson thinks he can give Nebraskans a "higher level of service" by looking It wasn't until two months into his out for their interests in the Senate.

Even though Nelson promised Ne-The Nebraska Supreme Court had braskans in 1994 that he would complete his four-year governor term, he said he'll let the people decide what

"When I've talked to the folks, they ers passed by and said: 'You became say 'I like what you've done. I wish I could have you in both jobs."