

Hagel camp brings in GOP leaders

By **BRIAN CARLSON**
Staff Reporter

In a race that both Democrats and Republicans say will be crucial in determining which party controls the U.S. Senate, GOP candidate Chuck Hagel has received campaign support from several prominent Republican senators seeking to boost his campaign and push for continued Republican control of the Senate.

Nine Republican senators have visited Nebraska to campaign for Hagel. His opponent, Gov. Ben Nelson, has brought in one Democratic senator.

Hagel said campaign visits from such party leaders as Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi, Majority Whip Don Nichols of Oklahoma and Arizona Sen. John McCain lend him credibility and "place a fundamental focus on what we need to do to get this country turned around."

He said Nelson has avoided outside Democratic help because he is out of step with his party's philosophy.

It has become common practice for party leaders to travel around the country stumping for their party's candidates. Republicans currently control 53 Senate seats to the Democrats' 47, and leaders from both parties are seeking to enhance their party's standing with such campaign visits.

Republican Rep. Doug Bereuter, who is seeking his 10th term representing Nebraska's 1st Congressional District, spent about a day and a half campaigning with Hagel this fall. He said visits by party leaders generally do not make a tremendous difference in election outcomes, but they serve a useful purpose.

"It's somewhat helpful, but not overwhelmingly so," he said. "It isn't the endorsement that helps so much as the opportunity to energize the Republican following."

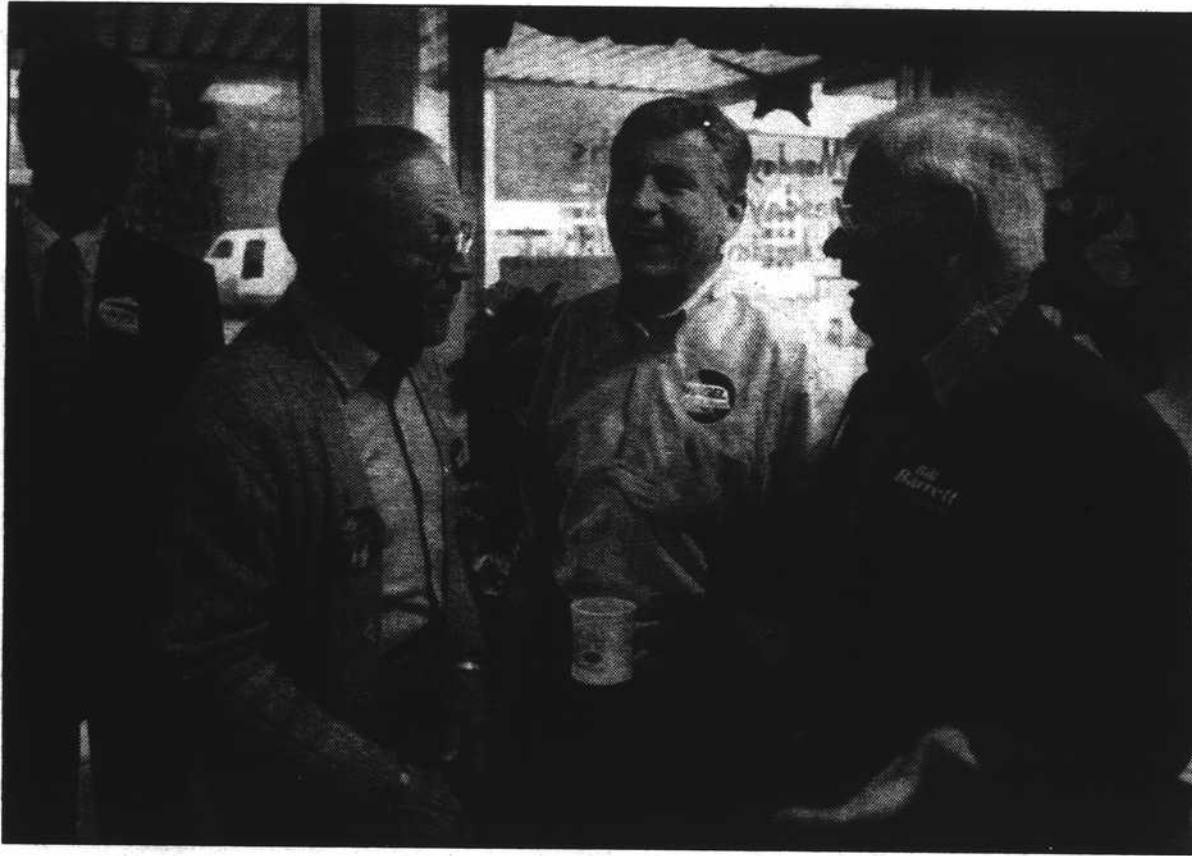
Robert Sittig, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln political science professor, said Hagel needs to make use of help from party leaders because he is not as familiar to Nebraska voters as Nelson, a popular six-year governor.

"It's becoming a kind of ritual," he said. "When a seat is open and you have a candidate who doesn't have an established rapport with the people, you bring in established party leaders to lend him credibility."

But Sittig said Hagel is wrong in his assertion that Nelson's decision not to seek extensive campaign help from national Democratic figures reflects upon Nelson's standing in the party.

He said Nelson, a popular state figure who earned 74 percent of the vote in the 1994 gubernatorial election, would view such visits as complications in a campaign in which he has consistently held a modest lead in the polls.

In a state where a majority of the voters are registered Republicans, Sittig said, Hagel would probably be leading were it not for the popularity built up by Nelson in his two successful runs for Governor.



CHUCK HAGEL talks with Congressman Bill Barrett and supporters in Daddy's Country Cafe in Neleigh during a three-day bus tour through Northeast Nebraska in early October.



CHUCK HAGEL listens in Grand Island while Sen. Don Nichols of Oklahoma endorses him for Nebraska's open Senate seat.

Hagel leads from brotherhood to business

From *The Associated Press*

OMAHA — Chuck Hagel awoke Christmas morning in 1962 to find that his father had died suddenly of a brain aneurysm.

At 16, he became his brothers' keeper, helping his mother to discipline and raise three younger boys.

Now, the perpetual big brother with the easy air of confidence and chiseled good looks wants to assume responsibility as a U.S. senator. If Hagel wins his uphill battle against Democratic Gov. Ben Nelson, he would be the first Republican senator from Nebraska since 1988.

It's a bid even his "bleeding-heart liberal" brother can support.

"Whether you agree with him or not

— and we disagree on a lot of things — if he tells you he supports something, you can take it to the bank," Tom Hagel said. A law professor in Ohio who describes himself as a staunch Democrat, Tom Hagel dodged boobytraps with his older brother in Vietnam but argued with him at home.

"We used to get into violent arguments about politics," Tom Hagel said.

Hagel scoffs at critics, including Nelson, who imply he is a political carpetbagger come home to buy a Senate seat. "It is the height of politics to say you can't represent Nebraska unless you've lived inside its borders all of your life," Hagel said.

He has been criticized for failing to give specifics on how he would save 30 percent by eliminating the federal Department of Education or cut 25

percent from the Federal Aviation Administration.

Nelson scored points at the candidates' second debate when he demanded to know if Hagel would cut student loans, funds to special education or other politically sensitive programs.

His plan would save money, Hagel countered, because money would stay in the state, rather than coming back to Nebraska via the federal government. And, in a political leap of faith, he said he believes the states would continue to provide such programs.

He also acknowledged that his budget is not set in stone.

"America is not going to rise or fall on Hagel or Nelson's budget," he said. "All these budgets are road maps. They're blueprints."

government, cut regulation." He repeats those three items — his mantra — in that order every chance he gets.

He also talks about a return to personal responsibility and a focus on values. He favors a national missile defense system, the creation of block grants to replace the federal Department of Education and a one-third reduction in all regulatory agency budgets.

Hagel, when asked by a reporter or a supporter, says he is running because he thinks the country can do better, that America's golden age is yet to come.

But Hagel says if he is not elected, he will take on the next challenge the same way he has taken on all others in his life, including the Senate race — head on.

"All I can do is my best," Hagel said. "I am not afraid to lose. If I lose, I lose. But I don't think I am going to lose."

Photos by
Matthew Waite

"Golden Age" is yet to come.

ment banker

two children

Institute for Radio and Television,
Bachelor's degree, history, University of
1971.

Army, 1967-68, sergeant; Vietnam
Heart (two), Combat Infantryman's Badge,
(three)

stant to U.S. Rep. John Y. McCollister, R-
erans Administration, 1981-82; co-founder
Collins, Hagel & Clarke, 1982-87; president,