

Candidates wait to announce bids

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signature and a check for 1 percent of the job's salary.

In the case of governor, that's about \$650.

The timing of all this depends on the candidate and sometimes has strategic motives behind it.

"He thought it was important to make it official so the people of Nebraska would know that he is definitely in and what his message was," said David Wintroub, Breslow's campaign director.

But the other two, Johanns and Christensen, have made it abundantly clear they are running without officially jumping in the hopper.

"He is running," said Vicki Powell, campaign manager for the Johanns camp. "It's just that we haven't thought about when exactly we want to make the formal announcement."

"I don't think it's necessary (to announce this early)."

John Hibbing, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln political science

professor, agreed.

"Anymore, it's becoming less crucial when they become official candidates," he said. "Especially when you hold another position like they do."

"You might not want to give the impression you are neglecting your duties."

Andy Abboud, Christensen's campaign director, said announcing early was useless.

"I think professionally it's a waste of voters' money," he said.

His camp won't officially announce his candidacy until early next year.

Sittig said it was anything but a waste.

"For those people who aren't well-known, who don't have the same high standing with the public like Christensen," he said, "it is definitely not a waste of money."

"They have an uphill task."

Every one of the candidates, and any others who want to be part of May's general primaries, still have a few months before they officially have to file.

The deadline to file with the secretary of state's office is March 1, and the four camps have said they probably wouldn't file until early next year.

If they don't file, they don't appear on the ballot.

"Filing next year isn't late at all," Hibbing said. "Right now is actually kind of early. We're still more than a year from the election."

But officially telling people you're running for governor does have its benefits, Wintroub said.

"Since the announcement, the campaign has kicked into high gear," he said. "We've received hundreds of calls to join our team. It's made a huge difference."

But the Johanns camp is satisfied with how things are going right now and isn't worried about what the other candidates do.

"We're taking it slow right now," Powell said. "We're just getting him out, going all over the state and doing the media right now. That's really our goal right at the moment."

Bennett designs campaign plan

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could compel him to enter the race by straying from the issues.

"If I see that some of the issues that I'm interested in are not being discussed, then that will only strengthen my resolve to get in the race," Bennett said. "I will not be an antagonist, but a catalyst."

Bennett said he wanted to address the problem of health care coverage, particularly for children. As a member of Gov. Ben Nelson's Blue Ribbon Coalition for health care reform, he worked with Nelson on a plan to insure 28,000 uninsured children.

He also said the state must address economic development, juvenile crime and the influx of methamphetamine traffic in Nebraska.

Bennett said as governor he would seek to build consensus rather

than push his own agenda, an attitude he attributed to his being a "non-politician."

Bennett has held various offices in the Buffalo County Democratic Party. He was the county coordinator for Nelson's successful re-election campaign in 1994 and for Nelson's failed bid for U.S. Senate in 1996.

Bennett was a delegate at the past two state Democratic conventions, as well as the 1996 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

Bennett said one of his goals as a candidate would be to energize young voters. The 18-to-21-year-old vote, he said, is "the least-utilized vote" because young voters don't realize its power.

"It's important to get young people really involved in the process of selecting a candidate for governor," Bennett said. "I think I'm the kind of candidate who could do that."

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Pol Pot expresses no remorse for regime

Leader faults Vietnamese

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — In his first interview in more than 18 years, Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot expressed no remorse for the genocidal regime that caused the deaths of as many as 2 million Cambodians, although he admitted it "made mistakes."

"You can look at me: Am I a savage person? My conscience is clear," Pol Pot told American journalist Nate Thayer last week at the guerrilla group's jungle base in Anlong Veng.

The Hong Kong-based Far Eastern Economic Review magazine released excerpts of the interview Wednesday, and it was to appear in today's edition. Video of the interview was being distributed exclusively by Associated Press Television.

Pol Pot, now 69, took power after a 1975 civil war and embarked on a Maoist-inspired campaign to turn Cambodia into a vast labor camp. Hundreds of thousands died from overwork and systematic executions before Vietnam invaded and toppled the Khmer Rouge in 1979.

Bedridden now and mostly confined to a hut with his second wife and their 12-year-old daughter since his former comrades sentenced him to life imprisonment in July, Pol Pot admitted "our movement made mistakes."

But he claimed the Khmer Rouge also saved the country from Vietnamese domination. "We had no other choice," Pol Pot asserted. "Naturally, we had to defend ourselves. The Vietnamese ... wanted to assassinate me because they knew without me they could easily swallow up Cambodia."

The Khmer Rouge long have claimed to be the defenders of Cambodia against Vietnam and harbor a special hatred of Hun Sen, a former guerrilla who escaped bloody purges in 1977 and returned to head a Vietnamese-backed government in the 1980s.

Pol Pot remained the Khmer Rouge's reclusive leader during a long guerrilla war against successive governments. The group began to break up in 1996, and the last faction Pol Pot led turned against him this year.

Pol Pot defended ordering the execution of thousands of political opponents and denied an estimated 20,000 people were tortured and killed at Tuol Sleng, a Phnom Penh high school.

"You can look at me: Am I a savage person? My conscience is clear."

POL POT
Khmer Rouge leader

Pol Pot blamed most of the deaths during his regime, including those from mass starvation, on Vietnamese agents. "To say that millions died is too much," he said.

Independent researchers have estimated the number of deaths at between 1.7 million and 2 million.

But Ta Mok, the commander of the Khmer Rouge military who Thayer also interviewed, said: "It is clear that Pol Pot committed crimes against humanity. I don't agree with the American figure that millions died. But hundreds of thousands, yes."

It was the first time a Khmer Rouge leader admitted there were more than a few thousand deaths during their rule.

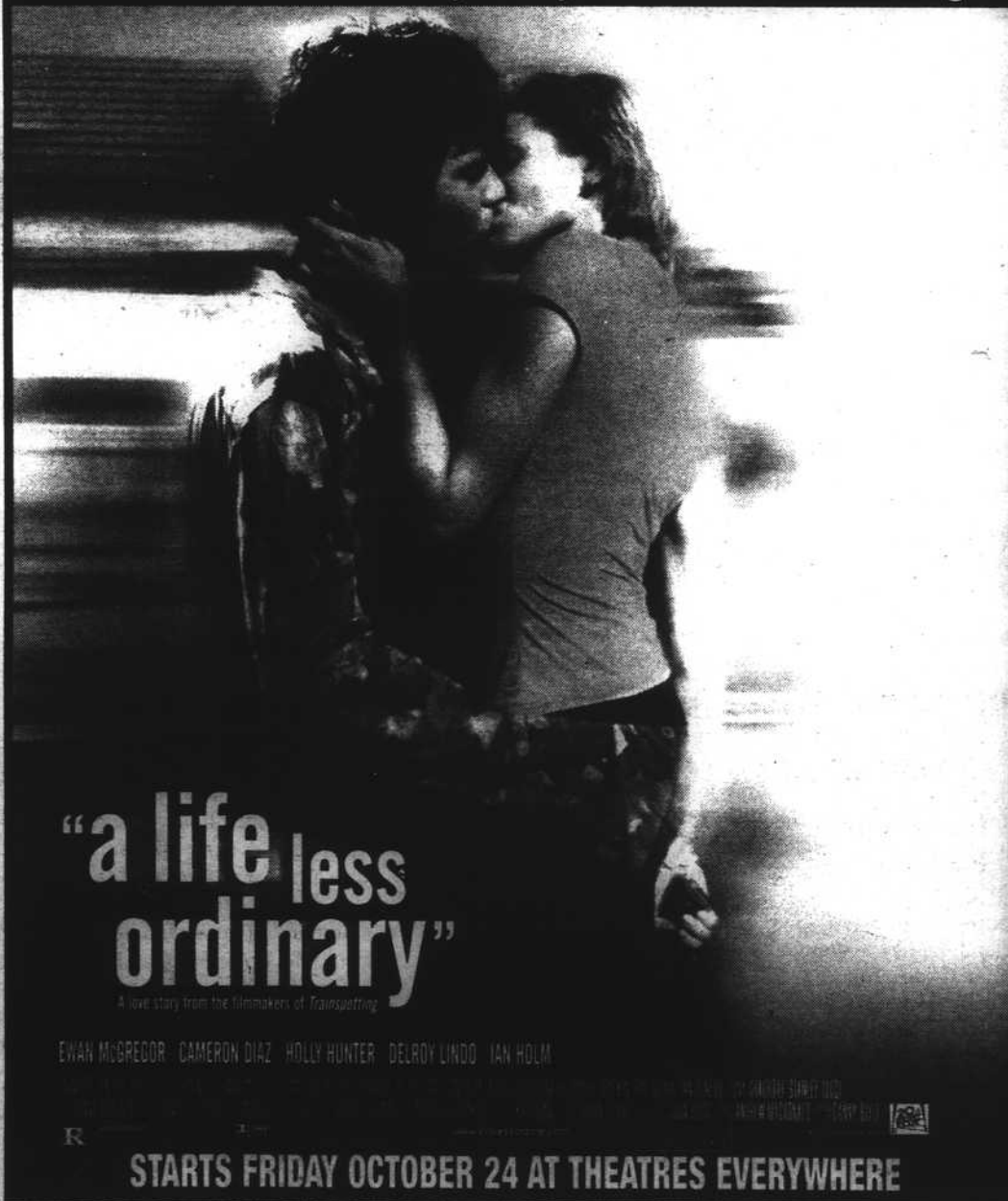
Pol Pot described how he ordered the June 10 assassination of his longtime colleague, Son Sen, the former Khmer Rouge defense minister whose death, along with 14 relatives, led to Pol Pot being toppled by his former comrades.

"You know ... the other people, the babies, the young ones, I did not order them to be killed," Pol Pot said. "For Son Sen and his family, yes, I feel sorry for that. That was a mistake of when we put our plan into practice."

Pol Pot described a long list of health problems, including a possible stroke in 1995. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in a show trial in July that was witnessed by Thayer and a cameraman. Human rights advocates have said the trial was a mockery of justice and urged that Pol Pot be brought before an international tribunal.

Thayer, a former correspondent for The Associated Press, was the first outsider to see Pol Pot since 1979.

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