

UNL student plans to run for legislative seat

By Jill Zeman
Staff writer

Philip Erdman, a 22-year-old University of Nebraska-Lincoln student, grew up on a farm nowhere near the state Capitol.

But the senior agriculture education major from Bayard is drawing on his agricultural background to vie for a seat in the Nebraska Legislature, representing the 47th District.

Erdman, who grew up on a farm, said running for political office was not something he had dreamed of all his life.

His first exposure to the Legislature came in February 1999, when he testified at a public hearing.

Following the hearing, several people in attendance told Erdman's father, Steve, that his son should run for public office.

Philip Erdman said although he appreciated the comments, he didn't seriously consider running for office.

"I instantly thought of my weaknesses and not my strengths," he said.

But the more he thought about it and the more people he talked to, the more seriously he began to consider getting involved, he said.

Erdman formed an exploratory committee in April 1999 to decide if he should run for office, and the majority of people who Erdman's committee contacted were supportive, he said.

"That made me realize what a great opportunity it was," he said.

Erdman determined that accessibility, agriculture and action are the

fundamental components of his campaign.

He made himself more accessible by attending small festivals and county fairs in his district.

He has also spoken to high school classes, businesses and a number of commerce banquets, he said.

"I could just throw my name on the ballot, but instead I'm investing my time to get to know the people," he said.

Erdman's slogan for his campaign is "For Legislature For You," he said.

He has applied this to his campaign by going door to door to meet people in his district.

"A lot of people have never been asked for their vote," he said.

Erdman continued to improve his accessibility when he and Matt Kreifels, a junior agriculture education major, designed a Web site, www.erdman2000.com, so his constituents can find out where he stands on issues and how to get involved, he said.

Another of Erdman's priorities is bringing young people back to rural communities.

One plan Erdman suggested to help combat the shift from rural to urban communities is something he calls Operation Vision, he said.

Operation Vision would set up a scholarship fund for students in rural areas to go to college in Nebraska.

The plan would also offer rural-area internships for students, which could result in permanent jobs for the students after they graduate, he said.

Erdman said he feels the plan is important because not every young person who wants to live in a rural area can take over the family farm.

Some people may view Erdman's youth as an obstacle, but he is using it to his advantage, he said.

"My personal values and beliefs may be in line with the older generation in my district, but I also have the ability to reach out to my generation and their issues," he said.

He also said an important aspect of being a senator is adapting to the changing times.

"Things have happened in the past five years (in agriculture) that no one had experience in," he said.

Erdman's father said Philip Erdman has always been self-motivated.

Steve Erdman said when Philip Erdman was in third grade, he told his mother he would be valedictorian of his senior class, a goal he later achieved.

"I don't think he even knew what valedictorian meant," Steve Erdman said.

Steve Erdman said Philip Erdman's campaign is a continuation of his leadership skills, and he doesn't think Philip Erdman's youth will be a major obstacle because other senators have been elected at young ages.

Current Nebraska Secretary of State Scott Moore was elected as a state senator for the 24th District in 1986, when he was 25 years old.

Moore said his youth and exuberance were his greatest assets and said



Heather Glenboski/DN
PHIL ERDMAN, SENIOR agriculture education major from Bayard, NE, is running for the 47th District seat in the Nebraska Legislature. One of his focuses is knowing the people he is representing. He has gone door to door to meet them and even has a Web site.

inexperience should not be a setback for young candidates.

"Unless you've been directly involved in the Legislature, you're inexperienced," he said.

Erdman is not the first to run for the Legislature at a young age, Moore said.

"It's unusual, but not unprecedented," he said.

Erdman has been involved in several activities during his years at UNL.

He served as the Nebraska Future

Farmers of America president in 1996, president of Burr Residence Hall and as a member of the student advisory board for the college of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. He has also been involved in Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Following graduation, Erdman said he plans on returning to Bayard to work as a farmer.

"Having a job outside the Legislature is the only way you can truly identify with the people," he said.

Going without sleep may have benefits

Badger Herald
University of Wisconsin

MADISON, Wis. (U-WIRE) — According to a recent study, pulling an all-nighter may have more benefits than many students believe.

The study, done by researchers at the University of California, suggests that more of the brain actually begins functioning after sleep deprivation. Contrary to expectations, researchers found that after 35 hours without sleep, the pre-frontal cortex of the brain becomes more active.

The pre-frontal cortex aids in short-term memory functions, compensating for the effects of sleep loss.

However, some local experts warned against the findings of the study.

"Mental abilities are impaired by sleep restriction," said Steve Weber of the UW Hospital Sleep Disorder Clinic. "Performance is affected beyond 48 hours."

Many UW-Madison students also find the results of the study hard to believe.

"I hear you go crazy after 72 hours. I believe that your mind starts moving in other directions when you don't have enough energy," sophomore Kenzie Riesselman said.

Other students saw the study as an intriguing insight into the realms of the mind.

"I think the study makes sense," senior Gretchen Chojnacki said. "The body always has ways of overcoming struggles."

According to the study, the region of the brain known as the parietal lobe, which collates information, becomes more active after a lack of sleep.

This compensation is more effective when dealing with language rather than mathematical problems.

Many students experience dreaded all-nighters. Regardless of how mysteriously their bodies function, everyone seems to have a way to combat the nighttime sleepiness.

"As a landscape architecture student, it's almost expected to have a few sleepless nights," Riesselman said. "I

drink coffee and listen to music." Pulling the occasional all-nighter is not unhealthy, Weber said. However, the repetition of constant all-nighters can be hard on the body.

"Repeated episodes of no sleep during a week will affect irritability and nastiness," he said. "This can affect quality of life."

Although drinking plenty of coffee may seem like the answer to staying awake after a long night, caffeine is not something that should replace sleep, Weber said.

"When studying for exams, take a catnap of 20-30 minutes rather than boosting yourself with stimulants," Weber said. "It's better to compensate with sleep than coffee or Mountain Dew."

Even with the aid of naps or caffeine, some students simply can't handle staying awake for 24 hours or more at a time.

"I don't really pull all-nighters," senior nursing student Angie Husky said. "I can't function without sleep."

As a housefellow in a university residence hall, Chojnacki also believes in getting her needed sleep.

"I normally get eight hours," she said. "I can't handle it without eight."

Different student habits and class schedules seem to demand a different amount of sleep each night. UW medical Professor Guillermo doPico said that all students should set schedules for themselves.

"Sleep enough, at least seven to eight hours," he said.

Despite the potential to activate more facets of the brain, sleep deprivation may not be an ideal life-style choice.

"I heard that getting too little sleep actually speeds the aging process," Riesselman said. "This makes me nervous."

Weber mentioned the significance of a sleep study published over a month ago in *Lancet*, a medical journal.

"The study shows that sleeping less mimics the effects of aging," he said. "The bottom line is if you want to stay young and healthy and learn more efficiently, you must sleep."

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