

Candidate Stenberg addresses RNC faithful

■ **The Nebraska Republican Senate candidate says eight is enough for Democrats.**

By **Brian Carlson**
Staff writer

PHILADELPHIA — Republican Senate candidate Don Stenberg addressed the Republican National Convention briefly on Monday, urging Nebraskans to join the "Bush-Cheney-Hagel-Stenberg team."

Stenberg, the Nebraska attorney general, used his three-minute speech to present himself as a loyal Republican in sync with Nebraska values. He jabbed at the Clinton administration and contrasted the visions of the Democratic Party with those of GOP presidential candidate George W. Bush, his running mate, Dick Cheney, Sen. Chuck Hagel and himself.

"After eight years of scandal, tax increases, missing nuclear secrets, military decline, partial-birth abortion and liberal judges, the American people want new leadership," he said.

Stenberg's opponent in the fall campaign is former Gov. Ben Nelson, a Democrat. They are

seeking the seat being vacated by retiring Sen. Bob Kerrey, also a Democrat.

Stenberg said his priorities in the Senate would be rebuilding the farm economy, strengthening the military, building a missile defense system, allowing citizens to invest part of their Social Security payroll taxes in private accounts and lowering taxes.

He also touted his opposition to the abortion procedure called "partial-birth" abortion by its opponents. In April, Stenberg defended Nebraska's ban on partial-birth abortion before the U.S. Supreme Court, but on June 28 the court ruled 5-4 that the ban was unconstitutional.

"If I'd had just one more conservative justice on the Supreme Court, Nebraska's ban on partial-birth abortion would have been upheld," he said. "George W. Bush can make that happen."

Stenberg was one of six GOP candidates who addressed the convention on Monday. They were introduced by Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., the leader of the Republican Senate campaign committee, who said a GOP victory in November would be complete only if the party captured the "trifecta" of control of the White House and both houses of Congress.

Stenberg hopes strong support from his conservative base can propel him to victory over Nelson, a popular governor from 1990-98.

As an incumbent governor in 1996, Nelson lost the Senate race to Chuck Hagel. But in 1990 and 1994, he won enough support from registered Republicans to win governor's races. In 1994, he won by a landslide, gaining more than 70 percent of the vote.

So on Tuesday, Gov. Mike Johanns urged Republicans to stay loyal to their Senate nominee.

A win by Bush, Johanns told the Nebraska convention delegation, "will be a very hollow victory if we don't win the Nebraska Senate seat for Don Stenberg."

Johanns noted that Nelson was a Nebraska campaign chairman for President Bill Clinton and served as Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore's state chairman before deciding to run for Senate.

"He's very, very close to the Clinton administration, and he will vote lockstep with a lady who wants to be senator from New York," Johanns said, referring to first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Nebraska's Senate race could be a crucial factor in whether Republicans maintain control of the Senate, Johanns said. After the recent death of Sen. Paul Coverdell, R-Ga., Georgia's

Democratic governor appointed a Democratic replacement, narrowing the GOP's advantage in the Senate to 54-46.

Nebraska conservatives would regret voting for Nelson, Johanns said, if he "becomes the 51st Democratic senator, and the first

vote he casts is to make Ted Kennedy chairman of the Judiciary Committee." Kennedy is a Democratic senator from Massachusetts.

"Our effort really needs to be on the Senate seat," Johanns said. "It makes all the difference in the

Veterans McCain, Hagel speak to GOP

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that sustained him and inspired him.

"That same faith later inspired millions of Americans to believe in something greater than themselves," Hagel said. "In this man they saw character, courage and strength — a man who fights passionately for what he believes, a man who says it straight, a man who has never stopped believing in the greatness, and the goodness, of America."

"That man, that fighter, that American hero, is John McCain."

When McCain emerged from backstage, he and Hagel embraced twice behind the podium, drawing a standing ovation from the packed arena.

McCain entered to the sounds of the "Star Wars" theme, a campaign theme song. In his remarks, McCain sought to reassure Republicans that he had buried any leftover bitterness from the primary campaign, endorsing Bush early, often and forcefully throughout his speech.

"I am grateful for your kindness to a distant runner-up," McCain said. "And I am proud to

join you this evening in commending to all Americans the man who now represents your best wishes and mine for the future of our country, my friend, Governor George W. Bush."

Voters should cast their ballots for Bush, McCain said, if they believe the United States "deserves leaders with a purpose more ennobling than expediency and opportunism," and if they "believe patriotism is more than a sound bite, and public service should be more than a photo op."

McCain, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, also called for a more disciplined, coherent foreign policy and a renewed commitment to military strength. This is necessary, he said, in order to "help build a safer, freer and more prosperous world, completely free of the tyranny that made the last century such a violent age."

Such a world requires U.S. leadership and an open international economy based on free trade, he said.

"Isolationism and protectionism are fool's errands," he said. "We shouldn't build walls to the global success of our interests and

values. Walls are for cowards, my friends, not for Americans. No nation complacent in its greatness will long sustain it."

But McCain said the United States will have difficulty leading if it did not reach out to voters who had become distrustful of their government.

McCain made this a central idea of his campaign, calling for campaign finance reform.

"Cynicism is suffocating the ideals of many Americans, especially among our young," he said. "And with cause, for they have lost pride in their government."

"Unless we restore the people's sovereignty over government, renew their pride in public service, reform our public institutions to meet the challenges of a new day and reinvigorate our national purpose, then America's best days will be behind us," he said.

McCain and Hagel both are expected to make frequent appearances on the national campaign trail this fall. Their 20-year friendship, Hagel said in an interview, is something he always will treasure.

"It was a powerful moment," he said, "an historic, poignant moment for me."

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