

Summer Daily Nebraskan

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Nelson, Stenberg promise issue-themed Senate race

By Brian Carlson

Staff writer

In Social Security, tax policy and party philosophy, Nebraskans will see clear differences this fall between Senate candidates Ben Nelson and Don Stenberg.

Nelson, the Democrat, and Stenberg, the Republican, made that clear during a joint appearance on Wednesday before a Lincoln Board of Realtors luncheon at the Hillcrest Country Club in Lincoln.

Nelson, who served as governor from 1991-99, said he wanted to join a group of "sensible centrists" in the Senate who work across party lines. Nebraskans, he said, want "less partisanship, more partnership."

"There is only one team I want to suit up for, and that's team Nebraska," he said.

Stenberg, the state attorney general, sought to associate himself with Republican presidential nominee George W. Bush and Sen. Chuck Hagel,

"There is only one team I want to suit up for, and that's team Nebraska."

Ben Nelson

Democratic Senate candidate

Social Security to allow younger workers to invest a portion of their payroll taxes in private investments.

Private investments would yield a much higher return than today's average annual return of 2 percent for Social Security funds, Stenberg said.

"I trust the American people to make those investment decisions," he said. "I don't think we should condemn a future generation of Americans to a 2 percent return on their Social Security taxes."

Nelson opposes partial privatization of Social Security.

He said the government should place the Social Security trust fund in a "lockbox," using the funds only for Social Security benefits. Then the government should use budget surplus funds to extend Social Security's solvency beyond 2037, the date at which payroll taxes would no longer fund all the promised benefits, he said.

"The issue is, when you take money out of Social Security, what happens?" Nelson said. "It brings the day of reckoning on Social Security's insolvency just that much closer to you."

Nelson said he wanted to use projected budget surpluses to pay down the national debt, preserve Social Security and provide a tax cut.

Stenberg supports a larger tax cut than Nelson, saying the government still would have large enough budget surpluses to protect Social Security and Medicare while increasing defense spending.

On farm policy, Nelson said the 1996 market-based reforms contained in the Freedom to Farm Act were "clearly not working." He said he would "overhaul" the act.

Stenberg said he would amend the Freedom to Farm Act by providing price insurance to farmers when commodity prices take a dive, as prices have in the past couple of years.

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