



By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Ever since he was a little boy, Nebraska Sen. Beau McCoy of Elkhorn has followed politics.

Growing up in Colorado just across the Nebraska border, McCoy remembers at the age of seven tagging along with their state senator, a family friend, in the Colorado statehouse.

At an early age, McCoy understood the importance of public service as a way of giving back. In 2008, McCoy won the 39th District seat in the Nebraska State Legislature and was re-elected in 2012.

Now, McCoy has his sights set on a higher form of public service. He's making his way across the state, campaigning for the Republican nomination for Nebraska governor.

During a stop in Imperial last week, McCoy said Gov. Dave Heineman has been a great governor. "He's been a tireless advocate for the state."

McCoy has joined Heineman in his pursuit of cutting taxes and growing jobs.

He said Heineman has taken stands on some major issues, such as his opposition to Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act.

He has also sought to revamp the entire tax system by replacing income tax with sales tax. In fact, it was McCoy who introduced the bill in the Legislature for Heineman.

That bill led to an interim study to look at the entire tax system in the state.

"I've been with him on those fights and will continue to do the work he's done," McCoy said.

Like Heineman, McCoy opposes expanding Medicaid because of the unknown costs in the future.

While the federal government has said they will pay 90 percent of the cost after three years, no one knows what that cost is going to be.

He said Heineman has set a high standard for the kind of 21st century governor Nebraska needs and he wants to continue Heineman's legacy.

Conservative without a doubt

McCoy said he's a conservative Republican, "Without a doubt."

As an evangelical, McCoy said he's a strong pro-life supporter and believes in traditional marriage.

Same-sex marriage goes contrary to what it says in the state Constitution, he said. He does not believe in granting benefits for same-sex couples.

"There are daily assaults on marriage between a man and a woman. I will be rigorous in defending that," he said.

McCoy has also fought to keep the death penalty in Nebraska and feels most Nebraskans support that effort.

Like Heineman, McCoy believes taxes in Nebraska are too high. "It's time we put the taxpayers first," he said.

He noted the ag sector is getting hit really hard with the escalating land values in the past several years.

He believes ag land should be valued at 65 percent of value for tax purposes versus the present 75 percent. That would provide some property tax relief.

He also believes the state needs to put more money into the Property Tax Credit Relief Fund started in 2007 by the Legislature. Every two years, the budget includes \$130 million in the fund.

With higher property values, McCoy said that money doesn't go as far as when the fund was created in 2007.

Putting more money in the fund would put money directly into the hands of those paying property taxes, he said.

If elected governor, he will also seek to make changes to the state income tax rates.

Presently, Nebraska's top tax rate is 6.84 percent. He believes that needs to be around 5.5 percent for the state to be competitive.

He noted a single filer who makes \$29,000 will find themselves in the top bracket; for a couple that number is \$58,000. As a result, there's a tremendous amount of people in the state paying the highest tax rate.

Small business owner

As a small business owner, McCoy said he also understands what it means to make a payroll and build a business. He runs a roofing business with his family.

He said that growing up on the family's Colorado ranch gave him an appreciation for what the ag economy means to Nebraska.

McCoy and his wife, Shauna, have four children, three girls and one boy, ranging in age from three to 10.