

* Debate gives senators time to air views

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 agriculture, oil and gas, need it. Getting rid of the “use it or lose it” doctrine of water rights – which before had defaulted water rights to the state if they went unused – and instituting a five-year “flex” plan were good steps. This allows farmers to decide how much to pump each year within a five-year total. “It’s voluntary action,” he said. “We’re seeing it for the first time.” Sen. Schmidt said farmers and ranchers are the best stewards of the land, and he applauded any voluntary cutbacks in water use. Sen. Ostmeyer countered that because of the drought, some farmers have been over-pumping for the past two years and they will get penalized with less water available at the end of the five-year plan. He said that although farmers knew that going in, he has also had a lot of phone calls about it, and it would have to be discussed at the Legislature next year.

The candidates were asked about education, and the talk turned to state requirements that cost districts money.

“When we look at these mandates, we have to look at the cost along with it,” Sen. Schmidt said.

Sen. Ostmeyer said several school districts in his area had been forced to spend more than a million dollars getting new fire doors because of a ruling by the state fire marshal.

“Those doors were good for 40 years,” he asked. “Why did we need new ones? We have to use common sense.”

Another question covered the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System. Sen. Schmidt said there has been a lot of discussion, but the first thing the Legislature needs to do is assure people who paid in that the system is going to be there.

“What’s going in and coming out needs to balance,” he added. “There needs to be some reform, and we have done some. We changed it from a defined contribution to a defined benefit.”

Sen. Ostmeyer said the situation will turn out all right for state employees. The original intent of the system was to help schools keep teachers, he said.

“Many teachers were retiring

with nothing,” he added. Rackaway asked about the redistricting process, which was the reason there are two incumbents running in the 40th District.

Sen. Ostmeyer said he and Sen. Schmidt were on the same side in the redistricting debate. He said that during the final days of the process, he reached out to the Democratic leadership to try to get cooperation.

Sen. Schmidt said the whole process was unfortunate.

“I led a fight to save the 36th,” he said. “It was about keeping the district alive.”

Even though the 36th was moved east and Sen. Schmidt suddenly found himself in the 40th, he said, the 36th was able to stay in western Kansas.

Another question covered jobs growth and population decline. Sen. Schmidt said affordable housing is becoming one of the top issues in northwest Kansas, since without it, it can be difficult to recruit new workers.

Sen. Ostmeyer said some towns have stepped up and built housing. He also praised the Rural Opportunity Zone program, which gives tax breaks and student loan repayment to lure out-of-state people into low-population areas.

The candidates were then asked about the governor’s tax plan. Sen. Ostmeyer said people have not given the governor’s program a chance.

“Every day there’s a press release out there saying the governor is failing,” he said. “Give it a chance.”

Sen. Schmidt said that if the governor had a plan that’s working for all of Kansas, he’d be willing to give it a chance. Now, he said, the administration is saying there will be an 18-month delay in getting new revenue.

The final question was about support for senior citizens. Sen. Schmidt said northwest Kansas has a higher percentage of seniors than many other parts of the state.

“Senior centers and programs are absolutely essential,” he said.

“I would never make fun of senior citizens, since I am one,” Sen. Ostmeyer said. “It’s that ‘Greatest Generation,’ the World War II generation, that needs our help.”

Well done, please



NORCATUR VOLUNTEER fire fighter Jeff Roe roasted hot dogs as hungry onlookers wait their turn. This was the second year the firemen held a Halloween feed for the townspeople, and they drew at least 67 hungry folks. They also gave away prizes and some kids showed up in their costumes.

– Photo by Deb Marshall

* Cast your vote

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 watercraft would be assessed separately from other “tangible personal property.”

A yes vote would allow the Legislature to change the way watercraft owners are taxed.

Early voting will be available until noon on Monday. You can get a ballot by calling 475-8102 or going to the county clerk’s office, on the second floor of the courthouse at the intersection of Penn Avenue and Hall Street in Oberlin.

Otherwise, you will need to vote at your polling place. The polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. next Tuesday:

- For the townships of Custer, Lyon, Dresden and Dresden City, go to the Dresden Methodist Church.

- For the townships of Allison, Pleasant Valley, Jennings and Jennings City, go to the Sunflower Senior Center in Jennings.

- For Garfield, Grant and Lincoln townships, and Norcatour City, go to the Norcatour City Hall.

- For the townships of Altoy, Bassettville, Beaver, Center, Cook, Finley, Harlan, Liberty, Logan, Oberlin, Olive, Prairie Dog, Roosevelt, Sappa, Sherman and Summit, as well as Oberlin City Precincts 1 and 2, go to The Gateway.

Senator wants to help schools, work with governor on money

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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Republican Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer wants to push for repeal of the national health care law, keep rural schools from closing their doors and continue working with the governor to slash the state budget.

“I think Gov. Brownback is on the right track with the economy,” he said. “I have a good relationship with the governor, and I worked hard with him to hold out cuts to Medicaid.”

“We need to research where we’re going before we make more cuts to things like health care. If we cut more, it will just make it worse. The handicapped and schools have already been cut to the bone.”

“I have a relationship with the

governor where I can tell him that in our region, certain things don’t work. Maybe they do in Shawnee or Johnson counties, but not out here. And he listens to me, and he understands.”

Mr. Ostmeyer said he is disappointed with the federal government, and believes that it’s time for Republicans to take control of the Senate and the presidency.

“They just pass (legislation) without reading it, and you should never do that,” he said. “This is the most important lesson in our lifetime; we have to know what’s going on.”

People who don’t know what’s going on, and don’t care about it, are the senator’s biggest vexation.

“My biggest frustration,” he said,

“is when people don’t pay attention to what’s going on in politics. When you talk with them about it, you can tell that they haven’t studied the issue.”

“It’s so sad when you see a county where only 23 percent voted. Your vote counts, and if you don’t think it does, well, I’ve seen a representative beaten by 5 votes.”

At the end of the day, he said, it’s all about money with the government, and Sen. Ostmeyer said that right now, that’s the way it must be.

“We need to make sure our fiscal house in order,” he said. “It’s affecting national and state government, and Gov. Brownback is really trying. This is the first time in 20 years we have a half a billion dollars in carryover. Now we have a new 7.5 percent ending balance, the first ever. And we made it from cuts, by cutting education. We need to be careful that we don’t cut too much, though; grades K through 12 are 55 percent of the (state) budget, and we need to be extremely careful we don’t hurt it.”

If he doesn’t win this race, he said, he’s just happy to have served as long as he has.

“There isn’t a day I step in that chamber that I’m not totally humbled after the prayer and Pledge of Allegiance,” he said. “The privilege to shape things for the state’s life – it’s very humbling. I never take it lightly. I respect the system and want to be a part of it.”



Ostmeyer

Democrat says he’s for rural Kansas

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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Democratic Sen. Allen Schmidt wants you to know that he is first a rural Kansan and second a Democrat.

“Don’t just vote labels,” he advised. “Know your candidates and try to ensure that they are in this for the right reason.”

Mr. Schmidt said that while trimming the state’s budget and cutting taxes is necessary, government needs to be sure it doesn’t

just shift the financial burden from one group of people to another.

“Don’t be fooled by tax cuts that may come back to us (in northwestern Kansas) as increases in our sales and property taxes,” he said. “We must be very diligent in making sure issues like this, that look good

on the surface, don’t hurt us, our schools and communities in the future. That takes analysis and good questioning, rather than just accepting something at face value.

“We need to get our budget in line responsibly. This will take some time and some cutting, but responsible cutting means that we must not take the legs out from under programs that we need for our communities and citizens.”

“We need to help and enable our businesses to grow by stopping the overregulating and administrative burden on them and on community banks. If they prosper, we all win. Then keep investing in quality education, stop this partisan positioning and vote the issues with

sound analysis and debate. That is how government works best.

“It doesn’t work well when we become a rubber stamp for a party or a governor. (You have to) challenge each issue to come up with the best solution.”

Mr. Schmidt said he came to his position as a senator, at the behest of friends, and with the backing of retiring Sen. Janis Lee, whom he ran to replace in 2010.

“After talking with my wife Ellen and some of my close friends,” the retired Army man said, “and taking this directly to the Lord in prayer over several weeks, I came to the conclusion that my service to the country was not over, but was just going to take on another shape.”

“So with Sen. Lee’s backing, I ran for the position and was elected.”

More than anything in his campaign, Sen. Schmidt said, he wants

to make sure that rural communities are represented in Topeka.

“With population losses in most of our counties over the last several decades,” he said, “it is obvious to me that we must stand together as rural legislators to ensure we are properly represented in our rural communities. We must be aggressive in increasing economic development.”

“We must keep our schools open as long as our local people believe they provide a viable education for our children. That means we must ensure our kids are funded adequately in rural schools. We must maintain our medical capability by ensuring we have health care for our citizens, and especially the growing population of our elderly. We must support our small businesses and our core industries of agriculture and oil.”

“There are many more things that we need to do, and that means we must stand up and sound off on issues that affect us both directly and indirectly. That takes analysis and willingness to engage at every turn if it is called for.”



Schmidt

Paper will be held for election results

Next week’s *Oberlin Herald* will be one day late so we can include final results of the election on Tuesday.

The paper will be available at the office and on newsstands next Wednesday and in your mailbox

Thursday, Nov. 8. We will be covering all the details of the state senate race in District 40 and the county commissioner race for the 3rd District in Decatur County, plus results of the county dairy issue and the Oberlin sales tax vote to pay for a

new swimming pool.

All deadlines will stay the same, noon on Monday for news and ads.

* Pool needed by all of town

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 which is less than half what new “water parks” in Colby and other area towns have cost. Norton plans a new pool for about twice the price.

Our pool is not a Cadillac; it’s a Chevy, but it will be a serviceable pool for generations to come, cost less to operate, save water and allow many more people to enjoy swimming.

Yes, a pool is expensive. Yes, there are those who say we cannot afford it. At every turn in a town’s

history, there was someone who said it couldn’t be done.

But people planted trees and built City Park. They started the schools. They built a hospital and paved the streets.

Tuesday, we have the opportunity to add our voices – and our money – to that legacy and leave coming generations a great gift, a new pool for their children and grandchildren.

Be sure to vote “yes” on the Oberlin pool/sales tax question. It’s the least we can do to honor those who came before us. – Steve Haynes



Dr. Daniel McGowan, MD FACC
 Cardiologist

He will be seeing patients at the Specialty Care Clinic starting Tuesday, Nov. 6. Call 475-2208 ext 300 for scheduling.



810 W. Columbia, Oberlin, KS * (785) 475-2208
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