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 **Capitol View
Commentary by J.L. Schmidt**

**Statehouse Correspondent**

**Nebraska Press Association**

**How About a Gubernatorial Candidate from Greater Nebraska?**

The posturing has begun and the Republican field for the governor's race in 2022 is already crowded. Sides have been chosen. As usual, the Democrats are quietly trying to find a candidate.

You know what I'd like to see? Somebody who is not from Lincoln or Omaha getting in the race to represent Greater Nebraska. Sure, Republican candidate Jim Pillen is from Columbus and Dave Heineman claims Fremont while Chuck Herbster says he's from Falls City.

But I'm talking west, like Dwight Griswold back in 1941-1947. He was born in Harrison and is buried in Scottsbluff. Or Frank Morrison who hailed from McCook and served three terms from 1961 to 1967. Or Bob Crosby (1953-1955) or Keith Neville (1917-1919), both from North Platte. That’s my idea of representative government.

It's bad enough that the state is divided into two time zones. Folks on the other side of that line often face the frustration of realizing that state government shuts down an hour earlier for them. Do you ever wonder why there has been movement over the years, some of it quite serious, to detach part of the state to become parts of Colorado or Wyoming? There are social and economic reasons.

So, what better way to be inclusive than to find a candidate who can identify with the mostly rural area in which they grew up. It’s probably easier for them to identify with urban needs. They’ve been to Lincoln and Omaha and the other “big” cities on the Platte River. That experience may be what has solidified their desire to stay put in Greater Nebraska.

It’s a bit of a stretch for big city folk to understand the rest of the state once they get west of South Ninth Street in Lincoln. It isn’t that they haven’t been made aware of the needs (healthcare, internet connectivity, law enforcement training, etc.) It is difficult to see it the same way as the people who live it every day.

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Ben Nelson, governor from 1991 to 1999, was probably the last to keep a legitimate foot in both area codes. Granted, he was already established in the insurance industry and legal profession in Omaha and Lincoln when he defeated Nebraska’s first female governor, Kay Orr. But his mother was still living in his boyhood home in McCook. That kept him connected.

Orr (1987-1991) was born in Iowa as was Mike Johanns (2009-2015). Jim Exon (1971-1979) was born in South Dakota. Even Frank Morrison was born out of state, in Colorado. But all had established themselves firmly in business, government, or politics in the Lincoln-Omaha area. Orr’s Lieutenant Governor, Bill Nichol, was from Scottsbluff. He, too, was born in Colorado, but was in business and politics in the Panhandle community.

Norbert Tiemann (1967-1971) was from Wausa. Dwight Burney (1960-1961) was from Hartington. Ralph Brooks (1959-1960) was from Eustis. Victor Anderson (1955-1959) was born in Havelock which later became part of Lincoln. Val Peterson (1947-1953) was born in Oakland. Arthur Weaver (1929-1931) called Falls City home. For Adam McMullen (1925-1929) it was Wymore and Sam McKelvie (1919-1923) was from Fairfield.

Pardon the lengthy list and history lesson, but the point is, it doesn’t always have to be Lincoln or Omaha. It’s a big state. Sure, the Republicans outnumber the Democrats and the Independents, but don’t tell Ben Nelson or Bob Kerrey or the late Jim Exon that Democrats can’t win the gubernatorial race.

Here’s the kicker, it took bipartisan support to get those men elected. Such victory often comes after Republicans have split ranks and bloodied themselves in ugly primary battles.

Democrats and Independents take note. It looks like the Republicans are headed for one of those primaries again.

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*J.L. Schmidt has been covering Nebraska government and politics since 1979. He has been a registered Independent for more than 20 years.*