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**Capitol View**

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**Sasse Wants to Leave the Circus in Washington**

I will admit that I have never been very excited about Nebraska’s representation in the United States Senate. I blame it on growing up in the Curtis-Hruska era when it seemed like we just kept sending the same two guys to do the work of the nation.

Roman Hruska was born in David City and served 22 years in the Senate from 1954 to 1976. Carl Curtis was born in Minden and served 24 years from 1955 to 1979 in the Senate after a 15-year run in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1939 to 1954. Both were Republicans. Both were notably conservative.

The edgiest thing either one of them did was when Curtis was cited as a “staunch supporter” of troubled President Richard Nixon – go ahead and Google Watergate scandal. Hruska was born a year before Curtis and died a year before Curtis died. They were both 94. Put that in the history book and close it.

So, you understand why all the recent furor over Nebraska’s junior Senator Ben Sasse, also a conservative Republican, has left me a little nonplussed. He’s 50, has a wife and three kids and wants to leave the Washington circus where he has served since 2015 and take a shot at being a college president again.

He’s apparently the leading – and only – candidate to be the next president of the University of Florida. He did a similar gig at Midland College (now Midland University) in Fremont back before he went to the Senate.

I like what he apparently told the Tampa Bay Times newspaper recently. "I'm excited frankly about the opportunity to step away from politics and onto a team of big-cause, low-ego people who want to build stuff and serve students and plan for the future," he said.

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Big cause. Low ego. I’m sure there are those who take offense with that. I don’t. Pretty much sums up politics in the Beltway as I read it. It’s a free country and he has faithfully served seven years of his sentence. No need to suffer through any more at the expense of creating good national policy that may, or may not, serve Nebraskans.

The bigger part of the drama comes in the speculation caused in Lincoln when pundits realized that Governor Pete Ricketts would soon be unemployed and just might see an easy pathway to the U.S. Senate through the Sasse resignation.

Remember that Ricketts ran for the Senate seat in 2006 and lost 36 percent to 64 percent against Democrat incumbent Ben Nelson, himself a former governor.

So, speculation ran wild that Ricketts would appoint himself to the seat, a move that is conveniently allowed under Nebraska Statute 32-565. Other governors in other states have done that, but political scientists were quick to point out that they haven’t always fared well in subsequent elections.

So, Ricketts took the high road and boldly declared he would let his successor name the next U.S. Senator after Sasse officially resigns (speculated) in December. He also declined to say if he was interested in the seat, but we know better.

Given that the presumptive next governor will be Ricketts’ friend, conservative Republican Jim Pillen, the appointment would be forthcoming on an easy path. Of course, Pillen has to win, and Ricketts has to decide he wants the job. Oh duh!

As for Senator Sasse, take your Harvard and Yale degrees and go off to the land of Academia where you can mold young minds to become big cause, low ego builders of things. Best wishes.

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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*.