

JOHNSON

From Page 01

candidates for his seat in the U.S. Senate. Two names that pop up repeatedly are his son's – U.S. Attorney Brendan Johnson, and former Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin.

Former Gov. Mike Rounds, a Republican, has already announced his Senate candidacy.

A reporter asked Johnson if he has discussed a possible U.S. Senate bid with his son.

"I think there are several good candidates out there," he said, "and you'll have to ask Brendan about that. It's no great secret that I'm not running again, and I've discussed that with him and a lot of people. But I've not discussed in detail what comes next, whether it's Stephanie or Brendan or whoever."

The senator indicated that he doesn't plan to take a highly active role in the 2014 election.

"I'm busy enough with my Banking Committee duties and the Appropriations Committee, where I'm chairman of ... a subcommittee," he said, "and I'm the number two Democrat on the Energy and the Natural Resources Committee, and I'm number two on the Indian Affairs Committee. That is enough to tide me over."

The senator said he and his wife plan to live in South Dakota full time after he leaves office.

"I want my legacy to be that I worked hard to bring the party together, and factions in South Dakota together. I'm proudest of all that I brought the Indians and cowboys together with Mni Wiconi," Johnson said, responding to a reporter's question. "The cowboys don't get water unless the Indians get water, and the Indians don't get water unless the cowboys get water. I take a special point of pride in that."

He admitted that being able to concentrate solely on work and not a campaign will "be strange," eliciting laughter from the audience. "I've planned for elections 36 years in a row, and it's now time to give it up ... I'm certain that I can get over it."

"It's so bittersweet," said Vermillion native Ben Nesselhuf, who serves as chairman of the South Dakota Democratic Party. "Nobody has given more of themselves to the state than Tim and Barb Johnson over the past 26 years, and nobody has earned retirement more than those two."

Nesselhuf said Johnson's political success is legendary in South Dakota.

"I think him winning his first term by 20 points, which is really unheard of in South Dakota in open Congressional seats, really laid the groundwork for his continued success. He also had a fearless tenacity in running against and defeating an incumbent senator, fighting off a challenge from then Rep. John Thune (in 2002), and being a guy who, I think, was really comfortable with the fact that he was progressive-minded," he said. "He didn't go where the wind was blowing; he fought for what he believed in and he would come and defend it, and was very successful at doing it."

Local politicians attending Tuesday's press conference included District 17 State Sen. Tom Jones, a



Sen. Tim Johnson and his wife, Barb, receive a standing ovation from a standing room only crowd in their hometown of Vermillion Tuesday afternoon. Moments later, Johnson announced that he will not seek another term in the U.S. Senate next year.

(Photo by David Lias)

Democrat from Viborg, and District 18 State Rep. Bernie Hunhoff, a Yankton Democrat.

Hunhoff said he believes Johnson has completed the groundwork that will make it possible for a Democrat to succeed him in the 2014 election.

"The Democrats have had pretty good success on the national level, and I really believe we can be competitive again, in part because Tim Johnson has shown that a progressive can get a lot done in a conservative state," he said. "I don't think our conservative neighbors in South Dakota are adverse to sending a progressive to Washington. We just have to find the right candidate, and they have to have the resources to get their message out."

Nesselhuf believes Johnson's long, successful political career is due, in part, to his ability over the years to articulate a message that resonates with South Dakotans.

"I think he probably, more than most people realized, enjoyed a good political scrape where you put your ideas up against someone else's ideas and see who is going to come out on top," he said. "He did it in a way you don't normally see, because he was never after the limelight, and that's such a rarity in politics ... but I think it was one of his greatest strengths."

"I think about how extraordinary it is that a guy has run for office for 36 years as a Democrat in a highly partisan red state," said Scott Heidepriem, a Sioux Falls Democrat whose South Dakota gubernatorial bid in 2010 was unsuccessful. "How do you explain that? To me, that's the question of Tim Johnson, and the only answer is this is a guy who every time he has run for office has under-promised and over-delivered."

"Eventually, voters say, 'We like that. That's like us. We don't make any promises we don't keep.' He



Sen. Tim Johnson is greeted by Tom Sorensen, assistant dean of the USD School of Law, and Dan Christopherson, former mayor of Vermillion. Christopherson and Johnson grew up together in the community and were classmates at Vermillion High School.

(Photo by David Lias)

never did, and his record of achievement is superb. It's amazing," he said.

Nesselhuf said he had no information that may end speculation about who the Democratic Senate candidate may be.

"I know nothing for certain. There is high interest, very high interest. The names that everyone are talking about are Brendan Johnson and Stephanie Herseth Sandlin," he said. "I think either one of them will be incredible candidates. I know both of them, and think so highly of both them that whoever ends up being the nominee, I think, will end

up being the next senator."

"I believe there will be a really good candidate ready for office, but I also think that today belongs to Tim and to Barb so I'm really not going to speculate a lot about that," Heidepriem said.

Hunhoff said Johnson will always be remembered for his ability to bring people together.

"He brought environmental groups and agricultural groups together, and accomplished great advances in conservation, especially with wetlands and water conservation," he said. "You remember when we used to all fight about wetlands in South Dakota? You

don't really hear so much about that anymore because of Tim Johnson. He just really showed that in the delicate balance of progressive thought versus conservatism, even in a red state, the two are very important and you can operate as a progressive and get a lot done."

Hunhoff credits Johnson's moderation, ability to respect those who disagree with him politically, and his patience for his success.

"He's one of the most patient men in South Dakota, I promise you," Hunhoff said.

Thune notes Johnson's long, distinguished career

By Rachelle Klemme
Public Opinion Staff Writer

Just hours before U.S. Sen. Tim Johnson was expected to make his retirement announcement, South Dakota's other U.S. Senator, John Thune, spoke to reporters following Tuesday's annual BISCO (Business Industry School Coalition) luncheon in Watertown.

"I can't say that I was expecting it," Thune said, but added he had not seen evidence Johnson, a Democrat, was putting the wheels in motion for a 2014 re-election campaign.

"I suspect, that to some degree, perhaps his health contributed to that," Republican Thune said. "He's had a long, distinguished career in South Dakota and I've enjoyed the opportunity to work with him these last eight years."

Thune recalled projects they had worked on together.

"We've worked together on the highway bill in 2005. We worked together on several projects that were important to South Dakota," he said. "I remember doing the drought tour together. We traveled together in western South Dakota a few years back when we were going through one of those bad drought years here, and trying to work on... getting federal assistance and help for our farmers and ranchers."

Water development and rescuing the Air Force Base from the closure list were other issues they worked on together, Thune said.

Thune said while they were affiliated with different political parties and had diverging views on national issues, they worked together on South Dakota issues.

"On a political level, I suppose, the race for that seat will get under way," Thune said. "There are already people who are in that race, and others who are contemplating it."

Tech schools boast high placement rates

South Dakota's four technical institutes boasted high job-placement rates again this year, with a combined graduate placement rate of 97 percent.

The placement report for the 2011-12 school year was presented to the South Dakota Board of Education during a meeting earlier today.

Of the 2,093 graduates responding, 97 percent reported either being employed, continuing their education or entering the military.

The survey response rate was 91 percent, and 89 percent of all those responding said they were not only employed, they were also employed in a training-related career field.

"The really exciting thing

about these numbers is they've been good for several years now – and still they just keep getting better," said Deb Shephard, president of Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown, which was just named one of the top two-year colleges in the country by the Aspen Institute.

The report tracks several key factors, including location, job status, and entry wage through a survey mailed to graduates.

The numbers, including response rate and entry wage, have traditionally been very strong, despite a national economy struggling to rebound after recession.

At its meeting today, the board also approved a new program and a program

expansion for Western Dakota Technical Institute in Rapid City. Western Dakota will be beginning a Precision Machining program in fall 2013, and WDT's Practical Nursing program is being upgraded to an Associate's of Applied Sciences degree.

"These programs align with the state's goals of filling rural health care jobs and growing the manufacturing sector in South Dakota," said WDT President Mark Wilson. "In addition, they also make sense in terms of the development we're seeing in our region right now."

The board also approved a \$7 per-credit increase in tuition and fees for the upcoming year.

Please Recycle

NOTICE TO HISPANIC AND/OR WOMEN FARMERS OR RANCHERS

If you, or someone you know, believe the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has improperly denied you farm loan benefits between 1981 and 2000 because you are Hispanic or female, you may be eligible to apply for compensation. Claims MUST be postmarked by MARCH 25, 2013 to be considered for cash payment or loan forgiveness.

If you think you might be eligible to file a claim, please access the Farmer and Rancher Call Center or Website:

1-888-508-4429
www.farmerclaims.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

SPECIALIZED EXTENDED ACUTE CARE...

Select Specialty Hospitals are part of a national network of specialized acute care hospitals within Select Medical. Our programs and services have been designed to fit in the continuum of health care for those patients that are critically ill and need a longer acute hospitalization for their recovery.

NOW HIRING FOR:
RN – Full-time & PRN
Patient Care Tech – Full-time • Monitor Tech – Full-time

• See Our Website for Details • Competitive pay • Great Staff To Work With!

Please forward your resume to:
Kelly Leaver, Select Specialty Hospital
1305 West 18th Street, Sioux Falls, SD 57105
Phone: 605.312-9595 • Fax: 605.312-9501
kleaver@selectmedicalcorp.com • www.selectspecialtyhospitals.com

Select Specialty Hospital
EOE/Drug Free Environment

Save the Date...

Thursday,
April 18, 2013
4:30PM
Riverfront Events Center

celebrate Women 2013
Six Words of Survival

attitude • determination • confidence • integrity • perseverance