

ELECTION ★ 2014



Soon to be elected State Senator Mike Rounds, left, visited with students at University of South Dakota on Monday to encourage them and other to 'Go Vote!'

SARAH WETZEL / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Rounds' visit to USD encourages students to vote

By Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

Former Governor and U.S. Senate-elect Mike Rounds made a stop at USD Monday on the eve of Election Day to rally the support of students.

"I support Governor Rounds," said Jason Nerland, political science and history major. "He is a great candidate especially for students. He's got a great economic future plan for students where we can actually have jobs in the future. In the economy we're at a spot where we're on the edge of a cliff and I think Governor Rounds is a candidate that will pull us back onto solid ground. He created a lot of jobs for south dakota even during a national recession. I think he's the right candidate for the job."

Rounds was joined by current Governor Dennis Daugaard and Lieutenant Governor Matt Michels.

In Michels' comments, he referred to those in America's history who have died in order to give us a better life.

"That's what we're asking for now and a change in the US Senate so we can have Republican leadership in the US Senate," Michels said. "In 48 hours the sweetest words we could hear are 'former majority leader Reid.'"

According to Rounds, there is a definite possibility that those words will indeed be heard.

"We need six changes in the United States Senate from Democrat to Republican to change the course of history for our country," he said. "It doesn't come along very often like that when you get a chance to make a difference."

"This is a critical time in our country's history," he said. "It's not just a matter of firing Harry Reid as the majority leader of the Senate. It means bringing in folks that really want to see brighter days ahead for America."

The governors commended the USD students who had gathered for their support and participation.

"When you folks turn out more than 60 strong in D-Days parade, it's a fabulous message to people all the way along; young people at the University of South Dakota are actively

engaged in the process," Rounds said. "What a powerful message that is for them that they need to get involved as well."

"It might be hard for you to believe but these governors and I were young once," Michaels said. "We got involved like you did in service, doing what you're doing right now. Thankfully you're getting out and getting everybody voting and that's the really important thing that we've been talking about."

Daugaard agreed. "I wouldn't be the governor if it were not for the engagement of folks like you," he said. "I'm very pleased to have served as governor the last four years. It's such a great state."

Rounds on the issues: Rounds also gave an insight on his vision for the future of the country.

"Think about what happens if we can stop what's going on in healthcare, if we can repeal and replace Obamacare with a patient-centered plan," he said. "Think about what happens if we can actually get the Keystone pipeline through so farmers and ranchers can actually get their grain to market. Think about what happens when we tell the bureaucracy in Washington that's running things that we're not taking it anymore and that we know that we do not work for them but they work for us...so the bureaucrats have to get their new rules approved by Congress in the future. We're taking back control of our country."

According to some supporters, the power that the current government holds is indeed too much.

"The federal government has taken too much power away from the states," said Dick Wadhams, Sioux Falls resident. "As former governor [Rounds] understands that better than a lot of candidates."

Wadhams' wife, Wendy agrees.

"It feels like Washington D.C. has sort of infringed on personal freedom and he wants to bring more freedom back to folks in South Dakota," she said. "In the states you have to balance your budget. D.C. hasn't had a balanced budget in how many decades?"

"The Senate under Democratic control won't even vote on a budget."

By Regina Garcia Cano
Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — South Dakota voters approved all three issues on Tuesday's statewide ballot — bringing an increase to the state's minimum wage, changes to health insurance provisions and likely expansion of gambling options in some state casinos.

Individuals earning minimum wage will see a \$1.25-an-hour bump in their paychecks to \$8.50 starting in January as a result of the approved Initiated Measure 17. The Democratic- and union-backed proposal also will increase the \$2.13 hourly tip wage to half the minimum wage and tie future increases to the cost of living.

The increase would represent about \$50

additional per week for a full-time worker. The federal minimum wage was last increased in 2009.

Jim Plut, a 66-year-old Belle Fourche resident, said he is "pretty far right of center," but voted to increase the minimum wage.

"It's only right. They just don't get paid enough," Plut said Sunday morning as he finished up his weekly post-church breakfast with friends.

Voters also approved Initiated Measure 17, which gives patients more leeway on selecting doctors within their health insurance networks. Doctors who agree to the conditions set forth by insurers, including payments for services provided to patients, could join the insurer's preferred provider list. Preferred providers, also known as in-network, usually are less

expensive than those outside of a network.

Well-funded supporters spent more than \$560,000 in advertising to convey to voters that their proposal could provide the state's patients more freedom to choose their doctor.

"If I have to go to a horse doctor because my insurance tells me to, that's not right," said Patricia McEntee, 65, of Sioux Falls.

Opponents had argued that the measure will neither provide more choice nor reduce costs.

The third proposal, Amendment Q, approved by voters gives the Legislature the authority to add roulette, keno and craps to Deadwood's casinos and, under a federal law, tribal casinos. Deadwood casinos currently offer slot machines, poker and blackjack.

Supporters said the new games could help revitalize Deadwood, where casinos have seen stagnant revenues in recent years, in part because of new casinos in Iowa and Colorado.

Larry Groll, a 65-year-old transplant from El Cajone, California, said Sunday that he voted early in favor of allowing more games.

The retired police sergeant who moved to the historic town eight years ago, said other gambling towns like Las Vegas and Laughlin, Nevada, already have similar games and said it makes sense for Deadwood to have the same.

Opponents, however, argued that the additional games could bolster the negative effects of gambling, such as increased crime, suicides, addictions and divorce.

DAUGAARD EARNS 2ND TERM

By Kevin Burbach
Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard won re-election handily Tuesday, beating out state Democratic Rep. Susan Wismer in a wave of Republican victories in South Dakota.

Daugaard had largely been considered a shoo-in to win a second term as Wismer, a six-year

state legislator and accountant who campaigned on the idea that state government needed a diversity of opinions, struggled to gain name recognition with voters.

Daugaard swept to victory — up 3 to 1 on Wismer with most of the vote counted late Tuesday — with strong support among both men and women and in all areas of

the state, according to preliminary results of an exit poll conducted for The Associated Press and television networks.

Wismer ran strong among voters who approved of President Barack Obama's performance and those who identified as Democrats.

She was the first woman to run for governor with a major

party in South Dakota, but she largely downplayed that significance, choosing to focus instead on her blueprint for the state.

Daugaard campaigned lightly, making the occasional campaign stop and public debate, but mostly depended on his record of limited government that he established during his first term in office.

NOEM CRUISES TO RE-ELECTION

By Regina Garcia Cano
Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Republican Rep. Kristi Noem breezed to a third term as South Dakota's lone member of the U.S. House on Tuesday by soundly defeating Democratic challenger Corinna Robinson.

Noem's victory was anticipated as Robinson, a retired Army veteran,

struggled to build name recognition and a strong fundraising base. Noem, who was first elected in 2010, took a low-key approach to campaigning, airing few television ads and only in the race's final weeks.

Noem has focused on issues such as agriculture and human trafficking during her time in Washington. She said her priorities for her newly

earned term will include working on two trade agreements being negotiated with nations in the Asian-Pacific region and with the European Union that could increase the state's agricultural exports.

"In South Dakota, we have over 20,000 jobs that rely on agriculture," Noem recently told The Associated Press. "If we were able to expand our

exports, South Dakota's economy would go crazy."

Noem's campaign ads focused on her work in Congress, including one about her efforts to assist South Dakota ranchers after an October 2013 blizzard that killed off and dispersed thousands of cattle.

Although Noem coasted to victory, not all voters believed she deserves another term.

ROUNDS WINS SOUTH DAKOTA US SENATE SEAT

By James Nord
Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Republican Mike Rounds bought his ticket to Washington with a pitch heard around the country: Help the GOP take back the U.S. Senate.

Rounds beat out three opponents for South Dakota's open seat in a race that was once considered close enough for national scrutiny — and money.

The former two-term governor had support from men, older voters, those who identified as conservative and those who felt the government is doing too many things that should be left to businesses and individuals, according to preliminary results of an exit poll conducted for The Associated Press and television networks.

"I will not forget the people of South Dakota," Rounds said in his victory speech. "I will not forget our roots right here in the heartland of America."

South Dakota was among the top targets in the Republican Party's successful quest to net six seats and take control of the chamber for the final two years of President Barack Obama's term.

Rounds led late Tuesday night with a more than 20 percent margin over his nearest rival with about a quarter of the vote yet to count.

His Democratic opponent Rick Weiland had a strong showing among those who identified as liberal or Democrats, according to the poll of 886 voters, which includes preliminary results from a telephone

survey of 260 who voted early or absentee. And former GOP Sen. Larry Pressler, who ran as an independent, could not draw enough votes from Rounds to affect the outcome.

The race was briefly considered competitive in

the final few weeks of the campaign. Rounds' opponents said his support had eroded amid criticism of the EB-5 visa program, causing money from the campaign arms of Senate Democrats and Republicans to pour in.

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