

Rasure say youth is his advantage

By **TOMBETZ**
The Goodland Star-News

A Goodland man was the first to announce for the District 40 State Senate seat seven months ago, and he is working hard in the final weeks before the primary election to win.

We caught up with Dan Rasure, 22, a 2001 graduate of Goodland High School, Saturday morning while he was riding in a fair parade in WaKeeney,



Dan Rasure

and interviewed him while he drove on to the next parade in Grinnell.

Mr. Rasure opened a campaign office at 1011 Main in Goodland in January, and has been busy traveling around the 40th District and meeting people. He is seeking the Republican nomination for the seat.

"We have driven 32,000 miles so far," he said. Following the parade in Grinnell, he was headed to Oakley, then to Scott City, there was a barbecue in Dighton and then on to Ness City for the final stop of the day.

The Senate district has grown by three counties this year, and Mr. Rasure sees that as a good thing.

"I like the addition of the three new counties," he said. "It brings a new emphasis on oil and gas exploration which we have in the district, and the correctional satellite facility in Stockton which they want to expand."

Mr. Rasure served internships for Congressman Jerry Moran and Sen. Sam Brownback while finishing his bachelor of business management at McPherson College last year. Graduating in December, Mr. Rasure decided to come back to Goodland and work with his parents, Kevin and Christie Rasure, at the family business, Rasure's Do It Center.

When he announced for the seat held by the late Stan Clark, R-Oakley, Mr. Rasure said he felt it was time for change after 10 years.

"We have seen declining population and I felt it was time to stop that," he said. "While Clark had many positive points, he had been there for 10 years and I felt it was time for a change."

Mr. Rasure said he believes his youth is an advantage, and that his enthusiasm is a valuable asset.

"I think being young is an advantage," he said, "because people want to see the young people get involved and know that we need that type of enthusiasm to help keep people in northwest Kansas."

"Young people want to come back here, and we need to find ways to help them."

Asked to compare himself to his Republican opponent, Rep. Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell, Mr. Rasure said he thinks he knows the education system better.

"If we don't have a change we may see as many as five districts close in the next year or two," he said. "There are many in trouble like Quinter, and there have been large cuts in Oberlin."

"Ostmeyer is part of the problem as he has been on the education committee for years and his solution has been 'let it rain, and every-

thing will be all right.' "We have seen droughts and times of rain, but the population continues to decline, and our schools are in trouble now."

"I think agriculture is important, and always will be in our area, but we need more to bring people...."

Looking at the school finance situation Mr. Rasure says it is time for the hard decisions.

"We need to make a commitment that nobody leaves Topeka until they get something done," he said. "The property taxes keep going up, and I don't feel this is a good way for local people to have to pay to keep the schools open."

"I believe we need a statewide plan, and that we probably only have a year or two to convince the representatives from Johnson County that they should support a statewide school finance plan."

If there needs to be a tax increase to solve the school finance problem Mr. Rasure would support it, but it is not his first choice.

"I have been very frustrated because my opponent has said one week he would approve a tax increase, but the next week he says he will not," Mr. Rasure said. "He signed the tax pledge saying he would not increase taxes, but has broken it in his voting in Topeka."

"I would not sign the tax pledge because I feel that is a closed-minded way to approach tough decisions an elected person faces."

The drought has hurt farmers, banks and businesses, and Mr. Rasure said he believes it is a good time to push economic development.

"We need to make sure we are not overtaxing people and work to keep as many here as possible," he said. "... it seems to me ... the state should take a more active role in helping small business, like we have in tourism."

Talking about the costs of agriculture leads to the subject of water.

"We are always going to be concerned about the aquifer," Mr. Rasure said. "We don't know what we have, but we do know what the drops in water level are...."

Mr. Rasure said he is not sure what is the best way to save the aquifer, but he does not like Sen. Sam Brownback's "buy-back" plan.

"I know a lot of people would do it," he said, "but I think it would take a lot of money out of our area."

"We have an older farming base, and I don't want to see them cash out ... and not leave the younger farmer an option."

Looking at Kansas 10 years from now, Mr. Rasure said he has a vision of progress and stores opening and schools having to expand.

"I have a vision that we are seeing stores open and schools having to hire teachers because the population is increasing," he said.

"We have to start today, pulling ourselves up and helping each other. We need to work together."

"Being young, I can bring a perspective to the Legislature that is not there to let people know that there is a good life in northwest Kansas. Part of that is diversification and relying on more than agriculture."

The Senate

Three in race for 40th District

Ostmeyer has conservative banner

By **TISHA COX**
Colby Free Press

Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell gave up his seat in the state House of Representatives to run for the 40th District Senate seat this fall.

Rep. Ostmeyer, 61, had filed to retain his seat as representative for the 118th District, but withdrew to run for the Senate seat that had been filled by Oakley resident Stan Clark after his death two months ago.

Rep. Ostmeyer and Goodland Republican Dan Rasure will face each other in the primary election Aug. 3, then the winner will go up against Democrat Tim Peterson of Monument.

Having just completed his second term in the House, Rep. Ostmeyer said he is giving up his seat to run for the Senate because he feels a conservative needs to continue on in the 40th District seat to protect the interests of northwest Kansas, help reinforce traditional family values and to take a stand on issues like school funding.

By e-mail, Rep. Ostmeyer answered questions about his stance on

issues ranging from school finance and economic development to water issues and transportation.

On the issue of school finance, Rep. Ostmeyer said he supports "adequate funding" for kindergarten through 12th grade education for all students in Kansas with as little of the money as possible coming from the property tax.

"I would hope the Kansas Legislature would develop school finance legislation which provides for minimal reliance on the property tax for support of public elementary and secondary schools," he said. "Schools will open this fall, and the money is already budgeted."

He said taxes shouldn't be raised. As soon as the economy takes a turn for the better, he said, he'd like to see some cuts restored in the state budget. Those would include demand transfers, money the state usually gives back to cities and counties for property tax reduction. Rep. Ostmeyer said it was one of the first things cut when the state hit budget troubles and it needs to be restored to higher levels to help lo-

cal governments. On economic development, he said, cities, counties and development directors need to get involved to "create a business-friendly atmosphere and have incentives to encourage new businesses to relocate to western Kansas."

Rep. Ostmeyer said he is in favor of alternative energy sources.

"I support wind farms and ethanol production," he said. "I helped pass tax incentives my first term for ethanol production."

Rep. Ostmeyer also said farmers don't need any new regulations tossed their way.

"This new 2004 economic development act will address some of the problems in western Kansas," he said. "I have always supported diversified farming and most farm issues are solved on the federal level."

Water was another issue he weighed in on.

"The state is currently working on water issues," Rep. Ostmeyer said. "We need to make sure generations to come have access to water. We must conserve."

He touched on transportation and health care. Rep. Ostmeyer said he supported the 2004 transportation

plan and he said rail service needs to be protected, which would help save wear on roads. He doesn't support increasing speed limits in the state because he thinks people are already driving too fast.

Rep. Ostmeyer said the state must find ways to control health care costs or it will "consume the total state budget in the future."

"Socialized health care is not the answer," he added.

As far as issues in northwest Kansas are concerned, Rep. Ostmeyer said he thinks the most pressing issues are protection of the ground water supply, money for local government and trying to stem population loss in the region.

"When I talk about local government, that includes cities, counties and schools," he said.

Rep. Ostmeyer and his wife Kay have seven children and 13 grandchildren. A fourth-generation farmer, Rep. Ostmeyer and his wife farm with their oldest son Terry.

He is a member of Immaculate Conception Church of Grinnell and enjoys spending time with his grandchildren and working on antique cars.

Peterson holds the Democratic line

By **PATTY DECKER**
Colby Free Press

Born and raised in Oakley, Tim Peterson is the only Democrat vying for the 40th Senate District seat that came open following the death of Sen. Stan Clark in a dust storm last May.

With Republicans Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell and Dan Rasure of Goodland battling it out, Mr. Peterson won't know until after the August primary who his challenger will be.

He said he hadn't planned on running for the Senate, but plans changed when Mr. Clark was killed earlier this summer.

Mr. Peterson has served as the chair for the First District Democrats since 2001 and was its treasurer from 1995-2001.

Mr. Peterson said his top priorities will be school finance and health care issues. When asked if he believes school in Kansas will start this fall, despite a district court order in Topeka, he said, "Of course. The Kansas Supreme Court knows the importance of schools."

Admitting that the problems with school finance didn't happen overnight, he said, it isn't something that will be fixed overnight either.

As for any increases in school finance and where the money will come from, Mr. Peterson said he will not support unnecessary taxes.

"There are two important questions that must be answered," Mr. Peterson said. "First, can we make more dollars available for the classroom by streamlining administrative costs? and second, are there areas in our state government where we can reallocate money to be used by schools?"

Mr. Peterson said he isn't convinced that the state needs to raise taxes. "If taxes must be raised," he said, "I will not support any legislation that raises property taxes."

With respect to health care and the state's role in the current situation, Mr. Peterson said he believes the state should work to lower the cost of health care and help expand the prescription drug program.

"Our senior citizens should not have to choose between medicine and food," he said, "and the cost is also forcing middle class families to gamble on their health care needs. This is not right."

Proper health care should be provided to everyone, he said, and that can be done without socialized health care plans.

A great potential for jobs in Kansas would be to look at economic development based on value-added industries, he said.

"Likewise, we have only begun to tap our tourism industry in northwest Kansas," Mr. Peterson said.

"We must work together as a northwest Kansas region to develop our tourism industry, and that will take leadership that I will try to provide."

Closer to home, Mr. Peterson said he believes people in this area are concerned with the survival of their families.

"We want the best for our children and our older parents," he said, "and we want to keep our towns safe and healthy."

Kansas is the best place to live, he said, and he wants to see it stay that way. Mr. Peterson said he thinks we must encourage development of ethanol alcohol plants and other agriculture-related industries.

"The increase demand for grain by ethanol plants raises the local grain prices," he said. "A few cents per bushel increase in the local price of grain translates into millions of dollars to be circulated locally."

There are no easy solutions in keeping people farming, he said.

"Structural changes to agriculture have turned farmers into managers," he said, "and smaller profits per acre have forced farming operations to become larger."

The Peterson family farms land east of Page City, in northwest Logan County, growing wheat, milo, corn and sunflowers on 2,800 acres.

With the state budget still in the red, Mr. Peterson was asked what the Legislature should do.

"I believe that administrative cost for state government should be the same as any well-run business or

charity," he said, "and that is, around 3 to 5 percent of the total budget."

"I don't think we have reached this objective, and if economic factors change, we must be prepared for worst-case scenarios."

Another issue Mr. Peterson believes is critical is the state's highways. He said the state must continue its highway program, which he said is critical for economic development in northwest Kansas.

He said he would support raising the speed limit.

"Everyone is driving faster than the speed limit anyway," he said, "and this doesn't encourage respect for laws."

Mr. Peterson and his wife Rebekah have two children, ages 12 and 10. His educational background includes a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Kansas with a major in geography and quantitative methods (statistics).

Two years ago, he became nationally registered as an emergency medical technician and serves with the Logan County Emergency Medical Service.

He is the past chairman of the Farm Service Agency state committee and currently serves as the vice-chair of the Kansas Agricultural Remediation Board. Mr. Peterson was appointed to the board by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and confirmed by the Kansas Senate in January.

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