Cornhusker Boys' State

Bulletin

Volume 17, Issue 2 Lincoln, Nebraska Tuesday, June 3, 2014

Senate Candidates Sasse and Domina meet for the First Time at CBS 2014 Forum

Article on Page 10

2014 Newspaper Staff Selection and Roster

For your 2014 Bulletin, your Executive Board will include: The **Editor**, Austin Stone, **Page Designers,** Ben Logston, Isaac Pavkovic, and Conner Volcoun, and **Copy Editors,** Ted Degner, Chris Jurich, and Tyler Ruzicka. The Bulletin has served Boys' State's needs since 1998. ***Don't leave for breakfast without reading it!***

Alamo
Carl Thon
Joe Ferris

Bataan
Tristan Bruce
Ben Logston
Christian Pfeifer

Belleau Wood
Xavier Hurst
Chance Kennicutt
Cesar A.M. Linare
Dempsey Tapley

Bunker Hill
Noah Fisher
Brodie Mackling
Jared Polack

Gettysburg
Dawson Cozad
Chris Jurich
Mathew Ramierez
Colten White

Manila Bay
Will Patterson
Adam Pinkelman
Cody Rieken
Adrian Silva
Conner Vokoun

Valley Forge
Ted Degner
Isaac Pavkovic
Jayden Rannells

Yorktown
Cade Nelson
Jordan Werth

Larry Sternburg, Talent +

By Adrian Silva, Manila Bay

Stepping up to the podium, dressed in a very sharp looking suit, Larry Sternberg from Talent+ gave Boys' State delegates a new way at looking and dealing with people. Traditionally, people try to fix their flaws and hammer them out. People spend lots of time trying to figure out what's wrong with them, and what's wrong with the people around them, and how to fix those problems.

However, Larry Sternberg is against that, and told delegates to stop trying to change people! Larry said, "Trying to change people doesn't work." His explanation for this was that people are built the way they are and it is hard or impossible to change the way you are. You create a better relationships with people when you accept who they are. Instead of trying to fix one's flaws, you should work around them.

Larry Sternberg stressed that everyone has talents, and said that you shouldn't focus on the things you're not talented at, and instead focus more on the things you are good at. Larry also shared a formula with the delegates. That formula was [Talent + Fit] * Investment = Growth. With this formula you should be able to figure out what talents you are best at. Larry told the delegates, "Don't listen to other people's opinions, listen to your results. If your results are good, then you're doing something right."

Larry Sternberg's speech was very relevant to the problems of most high school students. Problems such as finding what you're good at, and stressing out about the things you're not good at. Delegates gained new perspectives on themselves and others, to achieve individual success and excellence.

Ignoring Weakness?

By Jayden Rannells, Valley Forge

Larry Sternberg of Talent+ emphasized the importance of strictly focusing on individual themes or strengths and presented very well. However, as I left his session, I wondered "Was his opinion on weaknesses worth leaving the comfort zone for?"

Sternberg preached accepting one's weaknesses and he is driven by the idea of managing, not changing. Though the point is valid, how do we improve ourselves after our strengths are maintained? There are famous examples of people turning weaknesses into strengths, and, in the end, improvement is improvement.

I'm by no means saying Sternberg is wrong, but if you're hard working and kind, but realize that you are a cynical person, why would you accept your cynical ways when you can work on becoming less pessimistic? Why accept your cynicism when you can just eliminate the weakness, even if you don't make it a strength.

I'm asking that you write on your folder or on the back of a paper the strength you're most proud of and the weakness you want to improve and see how you can use that strength to change that weakness. Ignoring a problem doesn't solve anything. If you ignore that a bridge broke, get ready for some unneeded submarine lawsuits.

Belleau Wood Town Report

By Chance Kennicutt, Belleau Wood

Belleau Wood has been a buzzing hive of activity over the past couple days as the final ballots have been tallied and the final election results posted. Karsten Schuetze won his mayoral campaign and the City Council, consisting of Jonathan Snider, Bailey Fletcher, Emmett Beckler, Nathan Pettid, and Danny Bauer, was selected. In addition, Xavier Hurst was elected as County Supervisor and Noah Sherman, Loren Steinman, Skyler Arent, Kellen Korinek, and Jameson Bennett were all elected to the School Board. Finally, a tough legislative campaign consisting of sixteen participants was narrowed down and Samuel Roth, Cody McCain, Eyobe Mills, Cesar Mauana Lihares, Daniel Reynoso, and Kempsey Tapley were all elected to represent the proud city of Belleau Wood in the Legislature. With the end of the days campaigns, citizens of Belleau Wood continued to get to know one another through various ice breaker activities and concluded their first night at Boys' State. The city watches as its new officials take the reigns and the larger plans and ambitions of its citizens begins to take shape.

Bataan Town Report

By Tristan Bruce, Bataan

The town of Bataan is full of all kinds of people including the Mayor Scott Riley. Scott encouraged members to run for state and county offices. The town nominated Scott Riley (Federalist) to run for governor, due to his impressive qualifications.

The townspeople of Bataan eagerly ran for different offices. The people of Bataan also talked about how excited they were to participate in the many sports offered at Boy's State. They learned about the school board and how to run a City Council meeting as well. The people of Bataan are more than ready to see what Day 3 has to offer.

Yorktown Town Report

By Jordan Werth, Yorktown

On Monday, Yorktown held its first meeting with the elected officials from the City Council and the School Board. The elected City Council officials from Yorktown had a passionate debate discussing new rules for the town. The school board also had its first debate of Boys' State. The five City Council officers discussed topics such as gun control, motorcycle safety, and pollution created by motor vehicles. They made amendments to the ordinances while citizens asked questions relating to the topic at hand. The debate proved to be entertaining as Yorktown now has a new set of laws that were set into motion. During the School Board debate, they debated topics pertaining to school suspensions.

They debated if the length and severity of the suspension were justified. The five board members made amendments to the school laws in order to make the Yorktown School District a safer and cleaner place. Both the City Council and the School Board members had lively debates and passed laws that will improve Yorktown in many ways.

Lead With Your Strengths

By Ben Logston, Bataan

"If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will go its entire life believing that it is dumb".

This famous quote was stated by the accentuated mind of Albert Einstein. It appropriately describes Larry Sternberg's presentation. His presentation featured promotion of his company, Talent+, and taught how to "Lead High Performance Teams". Mr. Sternberg stressed upon focusing on your strengths and leading your work place with those strengths.

Another point that Mr. Sternberg brought up was that there are normally "themes" (personality traits) that last throughout a person's life. These themes are normally difficult to change. He suggested that we should not try to change people, and while a bad habit might exist, it's better to work around their personality than trying to force them to change.

Mr. Sternberg had many inspirational quotes and ideas that he gave to the participants of Boys' State. His perspective on many of today's controversial topics offered a new way to look at these problems. He definitely showed his leadership skills by demonstrating his public speaking abilities and teaching the Boys' State participants the necessary knowledge to confront problems in a new way, and create a much more efficient work place.

Manila Bay Town Report

By Cody Reiken, Manila Bay

Early Monday morning there were several of Manila Bay's members up and waiting at the dining hall and one of them boldly said: "We are starting where we're going to end this week: In first."

Several ordinances were discussed. One such law eaffects all people that visit the City of Manila Bay. Any person visiting has 3 choices for entrance into the territory of Manila Bay: 1)Run two laps around the floor in under 35.1 seconds (the fastest speed of all city members), if you fail to do so you will be charged a $20 fine. 2)Say the official pledge of allegiance to Manila Bay. 3)Pay a $50 fine because you refused to either of the other options. All fines are paid in Boys' State money, not real cash. Another law was passed banning excessively loud talking before 7:00 a.m., excluding counselors because of wake-up calls. The punishment for said law is 4 laps around the floor. I'm confident that our leadership in Manila Bay will continue to pass good laws for our town.

For those wanting to know the pledge, here it is:

I pledge allegiance to Manila Bay
Of the United Floors of Harper Hall
And to the dormitory from which we stay
One Brotherhood
Under Weeder
Indivisible
With Green and Justice for all
Manila Bay all the Way

Ganesan Named Speaker of Legislature

By Cesar Linare, Belleau Wood

After an intense showing of very prestigious credentials, the Boys' State Legislature has elected Vishwanath Chena Ganesan to be the Speaker of the Legislature. Chena, as he is known for short, is a member of the town Bataan, and a denizen of Elkhorn, Nebraska. Some of his most prestigious credentials noted at the voting included a 36 ACT score, placement at Congressional debate, and membership in various leadership clubs at his school. Chena will now preside over the meetings and policy-making process of Boys' State.

The voting process included many candidates. Among all the candidates, three of them had a vast amount of recognition in high school debate, including Chena, Cesar Magana Linares of Fremont, and Colten White of Kearney. The exhibition of high standardized test scores and club memberships were very prevalent at the event. With a well-rounded and highly involved group of students in the Legislature, the prospective Governor will be very busy in passing an interesting set of legislation.

Political Action Committees

Adam Pinkelman, Manila Bay

The second day of Boys' State was filled with informational speakers and the creation of multiple PACs. PACs are Political Action Committees. The PACs were created for the interests of health care, agriculture, right to bear arms and government surveillance. As most things go, the intimidation of meeting new people took hold in the formation of each PAC. But luckily the staters broke the ice and were able to make successful, strong PACs. The PAC covering public surveillance was able to quickly establish a Chair Person, Secretary, Treasurer, and all other positions. This PAC is seeking strong membership by any concerned stater. This PAC is seeking to support the next Boys' State Governor Candidate who shares its same agenda.

Correction

On Monday, the incorrect photo for Bunker Hill's Mayor was published. Sorry, Zach, and Congrats again!

Not Judge Judy

By Jayden Rannells, Valley Forge

Attorney, Andrew Loudon, and former Boys' Stater himself knows more than just small claims court regardless if he is active in the courtrooms or not given his specialty. Andrew explained the differences between Civil court and Criminal court here in Nebraska and gave us the inside to his beliefs and learned information through the years.

Civil court is the court that typically covers money, but expands to damages, divorces, and contracts. The Nebraska Civil courts are made up of the small claims court which handle cases dealing with less than $5,000. County court is the next stage that deals with cases in the range of $5,000 to $50,000 and is followed by district court which handles cases above $50,000 as well as divorce. These cases can range about two years and consist of appeals which can lead to the US Supreme Court. Mediation is popular and consists of three rooms which the mediator handles the conflict but allows for the plaintiff or defendant leaving whereas what an arbitrator says goes. Evidence cannot be added and their are bench trials run by the judge and jury trials.

Criminal court is that which covers criminal accounts where the state is the plaintiff and the defendant is the criminal who typically convicted unless the rare instance that reasonable doubt is present. The alleged criminal can declare a speedy trial avoiding possible state evidence if they try too quickly to avoid later evidence. County court handles misdemeanor cases which are less than a year whereas district court handles felony cases that result in more than a year.

Andrew stressed going to Jury duty if selected and met his wife at the Boys' and Girls' State dance. Nebraska's court and judicial system is a complex and unique, but is worth knowing.

How Do School Boards Work?

By Noah Fisher, Bunker Hill

Today, five representatives from each town flocked to Hamilton 112 for a crash course in city and state school boards. The meeting was headed by Marcia Herring, Director of Board Development, and Jennifer Jorgensen, the Legal Counsel of the Nebraska Association of School Boards.

During the meeting the Boys' Staters learned the ins and outs of city and state school board, from electing officials to working their way through a school board meeting. The duties of members on the school board range from hiring and firing school officials to discussing school budget plans and policy. The boys were able to read and even amend policies that are already in place in some school districts: Drug and Alcohol Testing Policies, Eligibility for Student Activities and student participation on school boards. The Boys' Staters were especially interested in school eligibility policies. Over the course of 10 minutes they debated and discussed minimum GPA requirements, maximum number of failing classes allowed, and disciplinary reports.

After the students had discussed the policies and made amendments the early morning session of Boys State came to an end for Monday, June 2.

Valley Forge Town Report

By Jayden Rannells, Valley Forge

This week, the "black-shirts" in Lincoln doesn't refer to the dominant Husker defense, it refers to the fourth floor members of the Cornhusker Boys' State city of Valley Forge. Monday was an early morning for the guys, and some weren't ready for it, but they didn't let it show. Mayor Greenwald got to work with County Supervisor/Clerk in the afternoon and the city councilmen to start addressing the ordinances. Ordinances consisted of making cocaine illegal, declining concern for motorcycles due to their absence in the town, and abstaining on the controversial handgun ordinance. The school board took heat and controversy, but that's to be expected in broad scenarios composed of bias. The members are all getting ready for choosing their path and continue to be inspired by Quint and the ambition to win and leave without regrets.

Weather Report

70% Chance of Rain

H: 88 °F | **L:** 68 °F

McGill Speaks to the Legislature

By Colton White, Gettysburg

Nebraska is unique in many ways. One of which is the unicameral system that comprises the Nebraska legislative branch. On Monday, June 2 at the 2014 Cornhusker Boys' State, Nebraska State Senator Amanda McGill of District 26 based in Northeast Lincoln discussed with attendees the function of the unicameral.

As one of forty-nine state senators, McGill gets first hand exposure to the intimate functions of the legislative branch. She serves on the judicial committee, and is the chair of the urban affairs committee. Currently, she is one of only ten women serving in the unicameral.

One clear difference between the legislatures of Nebraska and other states is the fact that Nebraska's is non-partisian. McGill cited this difference as a strength that should be praised, rather than a flaw in the system, saying it minimizes party polarization that is prevalent in other states. Another key advantage that Nebraskan legislators have at their disposal is a more streamlined system. Less party conflict cuts down on costs as well as time elapsed between the passage and rejection of bills.

The dynamics of the checks and balances within the state government have changed in recent years. As stated by senator McGill, "When I first started in the unicameral, the Governor had a lot more influence than he has now." The main reason for this evolution revolves around the governor soon leaving office. As a "lame duck," Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman cannot use the foreboding of several more years in office to sway senators towards his position. That being said, the checks and balances system remains a keystone of the unicameral, as both the governor and the Nebraska Supreme Court have the authority to overturn pieces of legislation.

Despite the constraint of having to work within a balanced budget each year, senators like McGill are able to work efficiently and effectively to serve the Nebraska people. This is the core motivation of nearly all the unicameral senators. The Boy's State attendees present would serve themselves well by taking heed of the words spoken by senator McGill, and hopefully take her inspiring words back to their own communities and find ways to serve others.

Normal People, Great Potential

By Xavier Hurst, Belleau Wood

"Ordinary people can become great civil servants" -Wayne Janssen

In room 110 of the Hamilton Hall complex there was a expose on how people of different government roles at the city level conduct themselves and government business. Marlene Johnson, West Point's mayor, enlightened the boys on her duties as Mayor of her great town. Johnson has served 15 years as mayor and has opted to run for another term and currently has no competition. She is the first woman mayor of West Point and is the longest mayor in office, as the previous was only 14 years. In the expose she highlighted the pros of her job. She said that she loves being able to help the city grow and watching it as she does everything she can to support the city.

Not everything the mayor does is fun though, as she often deals with criticism and unruly citizens who bring their complaints to her. She further explained how she handles them with kindness and respect, and she expressed that remaining calm helps sort of "defuse" the situation and allows the citizen to calm down and think rationally.

As for her role in passing laws, she states that she leaves most of that to the city council, although there has been a couple of times when she has had to step in and cast the deciding vote in certain ordinances that are locked in a tie. Overall, she stressed the importance of city government, especially in Nebraska. This State is comprised of 530 towns, and of that only 32 towns are bigger than 1001 people. City government is highly essential in most towns of our great state. So next time you think city government doesn't matter think again!

Alamo Town Report

By Tyler Ruzicka, Alamo

After the the 2014 Boys' State program kicked off on Sunday, the boys in Alamo started working, and have been busy ever since. On Sunday night, the "Alamonians" separated into the Federalist and Nationalist Parties and elected officials to head their respective parties in the town, candidates for Town Mayor, School Board Representatives, the County Supervisor, and the City Council Memebers. After many short (but sweet) speeches, Alamo elected Carl Thon as mayor, and Nathan Truong as County Supervisor.

As the next day started, the population of Alamo split into five workshops that dealt with different areas of government. Later, they enjoyed listening to speaker Larry Sternberg, who teaches about leadership, unique strengths, and teamwork.

In the afternoon, the town of Alamo held a city council meeting. Many new ordinances were proposed. Some, like the ordinance that all Boys' State members not wearing a red Alamo shirt would have to run two laps around the 7th floor, didn't pass. However, there was an ordinance made that stated that any member of Alamo who didn't refer to our dear counselor Marcus Manley as "Uncle" Marcus would be required to run a lap around the floor.

Since then, Alamo has been preparing for elections and sessions in many ways, from making friends with other towns to preparing ways to awe and impress their opponents and voters.

Bunker Hill Town Report

By Brodie Mackling, Bunker Hill

When first arriving at Bunker Hill, you will see a crowd of yellow. When meeting the citizens of the town of Bunker Hill, you will see a bunch of people with the same goal: to win. The first night at Bunker Hill was a very busy one: the citizens were split into Federalists and Nationalists to run for State Offices and County Offices (Political and Non-Political). During the first morning in the town of Bunker Hill, the council of the city proposed city ordinances. The six members of the council passed and decline different ordinances during this time. After trying to better the town, the school board got together to discuss policies for the school. These two meetings were very important for the town. As you can see, the first part of the week is very busy and important.

The Power of PACs

By Mathew Ramierez, Gettysburg

On Monday, Boys' State participants woke to another day of endless possibilities and opportunities to serve their respective towns. One such way for Boys' Staters to seize the day was by developing a political action committee, or PAC, that addressed a major political issue that drew their interest.

Before taking on this task, however, PAC members had the exclusive opportunity to attend a presentation by lobbyist and former state senator John Lindsay as well as Brad Stevens, the Director of Candidate Identification for Aegis Strategic. The duo began by each giving a brief job description and then concluded with nearly an hour of answering questions for the curious masses of participants.

One of the more eye opening moments of the assembly occurred when a Boys' Stater asked whether or not our votes actually mattered, as many lobbyists represented specific corporations or the wealthy majority. Lindsay responded with a rather shocking response when he proclaimed that, "If the [voters] knew how much influence they had over their elected officials, we'd be toast." This was a rather shocking comment coming from a lobbyist with years of experience in his profession.

Later in the day, it was time for Boys' State participants to take part in the formation of their own PACs, noting the information they'd learned earlier in the day. No time was wasted as citizens from each town enthusiastically divided into their own interest groups. It was evident that each individual was ready to bring glory back to their towns as they decided the issues that will ultimately steer the upcoming gubernatorial elections. It could be said that they were taking the advice of Brad Stevens when he told the PAC participants to, "Get out there and take advantage of our political system, you'd be surprised how quickly you progress."

PACking?

By Jared Polack, Bunker Hill

A Political Action Group (PAC) is a group of people who band together to fight for an issue that they all believe in. A PAC will organize, raise money, and lobby the legislature in order to educate the law makers on their topic of choice, and to pass or assist in the creation of a law in accordance with their beliefs. During elections, PAC's can also raise money and support candidates that they feel support their ideas.

During Monday's PAC meeting, the room was packed almost to its extent; people were stirring and the excitement was high, as it was time to choose which PAC the Boys' State lobbyists would be in. During the organizational meetings, many PACs were created, including a Healthcare PAC, an Agriculture PAC, a Civil Liberties PAC, Privacy PAC, and a Public Security PAC.

While some groups were scrambling for ideas, Brandon Jackson from Yorktown, proposed the idea of lobbying to allow school staff to carry firearms on campus. During this conversation, the PAC also discussed what type of training would be needed for the staff and whether it would be optional or required for them to carry a firearm. The PAC looked at what kind of opposition this type of legislation would face and has a good start on their points and arguments. After discussion, the Agriculture PAC decided that they would be lobbying for water rights and the Civil Liberties PAC decided to define the extent of which the government can investigate the citizens' personal emails and phone calls and what is or is not a probable cause to trigger such an investigation.

Overwhelmed, But Not Overcome

By Dempsey Tapley, Belleau Wood

This article is dedicated to those who still don't have a complete understanding of everything going on at Boys' State. I consider myself among this population. Being from an extremely small town, the rules of debate and Latin that seem to be constantly uttered between kids from Omaha and Lincoln still fly far above my head.

I was sitting in the first legislative meeting of Boys' State and was completely blown away by the talent and prestige of the individuals that I am sharing Harper Hall with. Most of the events and activities these Boys' Staters have gone to State or Nationals in, I'm pretty sure my school doesn't even offer. Although the thought of being a part of a Debate Team seems appealing, I'm unaware of a school within 100 miles of my own that has it. To someone who has less then 15 people in their class, the idea of speaking in front of 400 of Nebraska's finest seems beyond terrifying.

This is not a declaration of weakness, but an anthem of sympathy for all those who came not knowing anyone, and not much has changed since Sunday afternoon. The feeling of being overwhelmed is not a unique feeling, nor a debilitating one. The distraction of viewing yourself as inferior to those with scores of 36 on their ACT and national debate champions, or feeling inadequate to be of any importance to the Boys' State Government is very tempting. Regardless, it does no good to entertain thoughts that hold no ground in reality.

The fact of the matter is everyone here is representing their towns, their schools, and their American Legion Posts. This fact alone demands the best and most pure effort of every citizen wearing the American Legion Emblem. Whether from a class of 600 or six, the best of the best are represented here. Diversity, at times, does complicate equality, but the lack of political, public speaking, or diplomatic experience is no excuse for any drop of the intensity of ones' drives toward their goals. If the extent of your diplomatic involvement is supporting a PAC, then it is your most dignified responsibility to give every ounce of your overall effort to your role in that PAC. Though we may feel a bit overwhelmed, we should still try our best to be active and integral parts of 2014 Cornhusker Boys' State.

Undersatnding Perspective

By Christian Pfeifer, Bataan

It's all about us. The way we view things, the way we go about dealing with certain situations, the way we interact with individuals who oppose our ideas and opinions. In all reality, it's not about having your ideas shot down or having everything turn out the way you want it. It's not even about having the best opinion. It's all about perspective.

Nebraska is the only state that has a unicameral legislature. The difference between a unicameral and bicameral legislature is that one, a unicameral, has one combined house. A bicameral legislature has two houses: the Senate and the House of Representatives.

When it comes to choosing which to work with, lobbyists love a unicameral legislature. It is much easier to explain to senators and other clients where their money and all of their expenditures are going when there is only one house. A lobbyist's job, is to persuade legislators to support a certain cause or business.

Today while at an open forum, lobbyist and state senator John Lindsay spoke to 150 of Boys' State's delegates regarding what it is like to serve as a lobbyist who travels around the country and persuades countless legislators to support his causes. During the discussion, Lindsay proclaimed his position on the political spectrum as left of center, meaning he tends to support more liberal causes and businesses.

Alongside of Lindsay was a man who placed himself right at the center of the political spectrum, which means he leans more conservative when it comes to choosing causes to support. A 2001 Boys' State alum, Brad Stevens, had a lot to say about the differences in beliefs of himself and John Lindsay. Not only was Stevens a former Boys' State delegate, but he was also a state legislator at one time. He said that during his time as a legislator, lobbyists were continuously on his case about supporting their causes. Although it was irritating more often than not, some decisions about who to support were made that otherwise would never have been thought of.

So, in the grand scheme of things, lobbyists aren't all petty and vexatious. Often, they lead to decisions made by legislative officials that are crucial to the involvement of the government in society. In order to understand the views of others, and think the way they do, a person has to get out of their own head, and look at situations through someone else's perspective.

City Government and How it Works

By Carl Thon, Alamo

On Monday morning, many of the Boys' Staters left their floors in Harper Hall to go to different seminars. Only a small number went to hear what the mayor of West Point had to say. She came to Boys' State to tell the candidates what being mayor is all about.

West Point is a mid sized town with only about 3,500 people. The town has a movie theater that has been refurbished to look similar to how it looked in 1911. The town has small town events that help entertain its citizens. The annual car show is the town's major event. If you're around West Point in the month of September, then you may want to take a walk down Main Street and see the awesome cars that the area has.

According to the mayor, West Point has problems that many small towns have. The hardest thing is getting people to stay. This is why they hold the car show and try to get small events that interest young people. Young people are what small towns need to grow and continue to exist, she said. Many kids leave the small town and go to big cities to attend college. Many small town kids end up staying in the city for work, and the hard part is getting them back. The more the town does to set itself apart from other small towns, the better they do getting young people back.

The thing she left the young men in the room with was "you can only be patient and respectful of others." When you enter the "real world", you will find others who you won't agree with or won't work well with, but be patient and respectful and those people will eventually return the kindness and compassion.

Sasse, Domina Forum

By Colten White, Gettysburg

Starting off the race for the Nebraska Senate general election, Democrat Dave Domina and Republican Ben Sasse offered their perspectives on several issues for an audience consisting of both 2014 Boys' and Girls' State Delegates. The two candidates began the forum with opening statements. Domina's primary message throughout his introduction consisted of a theme for an "honest country." This was driven home through the use of multiple examples, ranging from the banking crisis to the Keystone XL Pipeline. While no official rebuttals were allowed during the forum structure, Sasse offered a conflicting introductory theme that opposed "promises that don't add up."

The first question of the evening revolved around domestic surveillance. Beginning the discussion, Domina flatly stated that the use of Drones against U.S. citizens, at home and abroad, as well as the collection of metadata by the NSA, are not permissible. Stating that he "fundamentally disagrees" with the Obama administration on this issue, Domina appeared to distance himself from his party's national leader, possibly due to the fact he is running as a democrat in a solidly republican state. One criticism that both candidates shared the burden of throughout the forum was the trivial back-and-forth over the categorization of the U.S. as either a republic or a democracy, something better left to an eighth grade civics course than a senate race. Sasse differentiated his opinion by stating his agreement with the use of drones in most cases. He agreed with his opponent on the illegitimacy of the NSA.

Continuing with the evening was the question of the federal government's role in the legalization of marijuana and gay marriage. Sasse began his response with a declaration of support for traditional marriage, and boldly stated that some studies show that kids are best raised in an environment with a father and a mother. No studies were cited, and Domina also questioned the legitimacy in his response, stating that he has never seen any data to support Sasse's claim. Sasse left the issue of marijuana up to the state lawmakers. Domina contradicted this view, stating that the federal government has a duty to correct issues between states such as Nebraska and Colorado on the legal/illegal transport of marijuana. Domina placed his stance on marriage in support of decisions made by states, rather than by nature.

In terms of the ever constant struggle between fossil fuels and the environment, the candidates offered differing views once again. In an extremely progressive environmentalist stance, Domina called for a "complete and total" repeal of federal subsidies for fossil fuels, and supported the reallocation of those appropriations for renewable energy. Impacting his case in strong manner, Domina stated that the younger generations will see the negative effects of climate change. Sasse, on the other hand, went with a very run-of-the-mill conservative approach to the energy debacle. He stated that the federal government should stop the "war on coal," and fully use all fossil fuels available in the U.S.

Seeing that Sasse is one of the premier opponents of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), it made sense to include it among the questions for the forum. While huge amounts of discussion time were devoted to this subject, it can be summed up simply. Sasse supports the full repeal of the ACA, while Domina supports continuing to work on reforming the bill.

The final two questions tackled very different issues. The second to last question discussed Education and Student Loans. Sasse greatly opposed the common core education plans, but defined the federal role more in terms of grants. Domina urged the electorate to trust teachers and help relieve student loan debts. While he disparaged debts owed to for-profit institutions, it could be said that Domina ought to have focused more on debt owed to all institutions, even public universities.

The final, and possibly the most intriguing, question of the night was in regards to party polarization and gridlock. Domina used harsh anti-party language that in many ways was a brilliant critique of the party alliances that exist in the current political climate. He detested the "tribal" language of political parties, and urged everyone to drop labels when discussing ideas and policy. He stated that parties have no inherent utility or value, and that they should only exist to facilitate discussion. Sasse offered a more moderate approach, saying that Washington needs fewer savvy politicians, and more figures who are connected to the people. Despite these similarities, he lacked the vigorous critique of the party culture that was employed by Domina.

While the closing statements offered little new information, both candidates brought to a close the end of the beginning, for the 2014 Nebraska senate general elections. All in attendance have witnessed the beginning of a saga that will last several months until the general elections take place. There was possibly no better place to start this race than at Boys' and Girls' state.