Cornhusker Boys' State
Bulletin

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"WE LOVE PILLEN!"

By: Christian Maurer, Alamo

This year Boys State had the privilege of having Governor Jim Pillen give a keynote speech. Cheers and anticipation filled the room as we awaited the arrival of Nebraska's 41st Governor. As soon Governor Pillen stepped through the doors, the crowd went absolutely wild! Governor Pillen was just as excited to talk to us as we were to listen to him. Governor Pillen started his presentation with a little background to his life. He is a proud Nebraskan, born and raised in Columbus and attended Lakeview High School. While in highschool, Governor Pillen played football which led him to receive a scholarship from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). He attended the university to study veterinary medicine. Additionally to his studies, he played for the Cornhuskers under Coach Tom Osborn. After graduating from UNL with his doctorate in veterinary medicine he returned home to practice. After practicing veterinary medicine he switched his career focus to his family's business. The Pillen family owns hog barns across the state. After spending some time running the family business he felt a deep calling to run for governor. He shared with the crowd that when he initially got the feeling to run for governor he just ignored, but eventually finally followed his gut feeling of running for Governor. He started to get into what makes a good leader and what qualities would be good to possess. His first point that was taught by his mother was the 7-38-55 rule.

Governor Pillen shared that in communication it's 7% what words you use, 38% how you say it, and 55% body language. Governor Pillen really emphasized the importance of body language. Another piece of advice that was shared was more focused on motivation. He told the crowd to use your dream as a North Star. He encouraged Boys State to never give up on your dreams. The biggest lesson that was taught that night was the power of THANK YOU! Many people took to the idea of how powerful two words can be. During his campaign and governorship, he has maintained no corporate pacs for funding for his campaign and all of his values that he shared with us. When asked about immigration issues, Governor Pillen shared a simple quote that left a huge impact on the listeners, "go through the bridge, not the river." Another major issue that was touched on was education in Nebraska. He shared that he plans to increase the education budget by $350 million and change school funding to be based on a merit system. His ultimate goal for Nebraska schools is to move away from bureaucracy so that more funds can be available to education. It was a huge honor to have Governor Pillen speak to us and share his tips to success and his hopes for the future. On behalf of Cornhusker Boys State, thank you Governor Pillen!

Unity Rally
By: Cael Wiegert, Belleau Wood

As towns gathered in Hawks Hall to hear a presentation by Jim Pillen, floor spirit was high with town chants ringing through the hall. One town chant rose above them all. “I love Belleau Wood - Belleau wood loves you!” This sparked other towns to follow suit with one town cheering for another getting the entire room involved. As more towns filled in, more and more people joined in the Boys State chant, truly showing the unity and connectedness between the loyal towns. Once all towns had joined in the attention was turned to the councilors and legionnaires. Finally ending with boys state cheering, “I love Jim Pillen” and his response, “Jim Pillen Loves Boys State”. The entire room erupted in cheers, finally breaking down the town walls creating a truly connected Cornhusker Boys’ State.

Yorktown Town Report
By: Dierck White

To begin, the staters were up by 6:30 and went about their morning routine. After this, they split up into their two parties, the nationalists and the federalists. During each session, the candidates running for governor or a state position had the option to campaign. Such included a 1-minute introduction, three minutes per town to go around and talk to them, five minutes for the general audience to ask questions to the whole group, and then one minute for the candidates to give wrap up speeches. It was a great opportunity for each candidate to hopefully persuade more people to vote for them. After this event, the staters voted, ate lunch, and then had a few more sessions. The first session consisted of Senator Kathleen Kathy, Senator Daniel Conrad, and Senator Bob Hallstrom, discussing Nebraska legislation. Next, Angie Stanger gave a presentation called Redefining Rural: A Vision for Vibrant Communities. Finally, Josephine Parker and Lily Teeple, founders of Revitalize and Thrive Partnership Program gave a presentation. Each speaker was very interesting to listen to, and it’s hard to believe that Boys State is almost over.

Northeast Nebraska Growing Together
By: Lucas Skalberg, Bunker Hill

Angie Stenger started by calling the Boys’ State audience to action. She explained that the data shows young people are leaving rural areas. This crisis is called brain drain. Nothing is better at showing this decline than the decrease in enrollment numbers in rural high schools. Angie found that “since 2010, the population has increased across Nebraska by 7.4%, but 69 rural counties have lost population.”

Job automation can decrease jobs in rural areas and increase jobs in more populated areas. By bringing education to the people of rural areas, they are more likely to stay in those areas after a lot of these jobs are automated. According to a study of social mobility in rural America, 2 of the top 10% of counties for social mobility in the U.S. are in Nebraska. Some good ways rural areas do this is with different expectations that keep youths involved. (For example, note the much greater involvement in athletics of smaller rural schools). Rural areas can also give more opportunities to youths through early pathways to careers with local businesses. Additionally, creativity can be higher in rural areas because there are fewer services and youths often have to fix problems in creative ways.

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Bataan Town Report
By: Hayden Reznicek

This morning Bataan was awakened by the sound of doors banging and music playing, and it was quite the way to start a morning. Their first session of the day involved going to multiple sessions in Hawks Hall. Boys' State had the privilege of listening to Bob Evnen, the Nebraska Secretary of State, as well as Doug Peterson, a former Nebraska Attorney General… but nothing was as exciting as meeting Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen. The energy is felt even now, reflecting on that evening. Jim Pillen spoke on his beliefs, how he got into politics, and a historic law he passed stating that Trans women would not compete in women's high school and college sporting events. Bataan had multiple people apply for the talent show, and the choir on floor 9 qualified with their rendition of "I want it that way" by the Backstreet boys. Bataan ended its day with a reflection on the U.S. government. Topics covered included what it should do for its citizens, its purpose, how citizens should collaborate, and numerous other ideologies surrounding the US government system. Finally, a "Bataan of the day" was chosen as per tradition and added to the hall of fame.

Manila Bay Town Report
By: Brody Maurer

Unfortunately, Wednesday's talent show audition, which involved most of the town dancing, went south. Wednesday's leadership discussion did go well, eliciting talking points that included leadership and how civilians can exercise their rights. Manila Bay is on a hot streak with the football and basketball teams headed for a championship. The flag committee continues its unrelenting work to make a flag by Friday. Manila Bay's election commissioners Shawya Chaudhari and Kolby LaBeau worked the primary and general elections with silent dedication and truthfulness.

Alamo Daily Report
By: Case Richardson

The Alamo's "Anti Streak" city ordinance on Thursday claimed two victims. The "Anti Streak" ordinance forbids any resident of the town of Alamo from sending useless snaps in the Alamo Snapchat group chat. The two victims claimed on Thursday were Aiden Maddux and Keyton Reck.

Boys' State Across the States
By: Jonathan Wiesenfeld, Gettysburg

Boys State programs vary widely across the country. Hawaii lacks a Boys State program (although Washington D.C. has one), and California has no boys-only state program; instead, it has a co-educational program and a girls-only program. Montana combined Boys State and Girls State in 2024. The services offered also differ significantly between states. Many states offer band as a choice for students to participate in, (Nebraska 2025 does not due to construction around the university), and some have no athletic competitions at all. All states except Alaska, Idaho, and Illinois hold the event on a university campus; Illinois uniquely holds it on a military installation.

Boys' State's Got Talent
By: Matthew Monnich, Yorktown

After the exuberant assembly with Governor Jim Pillen, Staters made their way back to Harper Hall to make room for the talent show auditioners who remained in Hawks Hall. Each act had about one minute to show the selected counselors their desired performance. Some shared passions while others auditioned for the fun of it. Acts included vocal and instrumental performances, dancing, and niche hobbies. Due to the numerous applicants, the auditions ended well after 10 PM. The room radiated exhilaration and thrill as Staters were called up one-by-one to try out. The final count was 12 acts out of 30+ auditioners. Boys State is excited to present the 7th annual Talent Show at 7 PM on Friday, June 6, 2025!

As punishment for violating the city ordinance, Keyton and Aiden had to run from the bottom of the stairwell to the tenth floor, back down to the first floor, and then back up to floor seven. The victims had to run a grand total of twenty seven flights of stairs, and Keyton had to run another seven flights immediately after in order to go to the afternoon sessions.

Cont. Northeast Nebraska Growing Together

Angie stated that the goals of the Redefining Rural (Northeast Nebraska Growing Together) Program are to keep people in the places they came from by giving them the same opportunities that they can get in populated areas and creating inviting communities. Norfolk, for example, was only growing by 26 people per year, a very low number for its population. The goal of the program is to increase this number before the 2030 census.

To achieve this, they are working on: 1. Increasing the density of youth in their downtown. 2. Increasing the number of parks and attractions in Norfolk, such as utilizing the river from where it gets its namesake. 3. Creating co-op scholarship programs with colleges which allow students to study while living in the Norfolk community and networking with employers. 4. Investing in Nebraskan entrepreneurs so they don't have to leave the state to get funding. 5. Retraining the workforce by teaching robotics at a robotics center. 6. Increasing interest in the intersection of arts and culture by encouraging the community to be creative with the implementation of creative districts. Angie ended her speech by showing how these programs have been working effectively. She encouraged the audience to get out into their communities by saying, "If we are going to continue to grow our communities and state, you have to be involved in your local communities."

Leading the Discussion on Race
By: Evan Zhang, Bataan

Race has always been a touchy issue. Many people preach that everyone is and should be treated equal, but in reality, discrimination continues to plague society. Boys Staters were brought to a session today that faced this tough discussion of equality with Thomas Christie, the director for Multicultural Education and Judi M. Gaiabshkibos, the executive director of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs.

After Mr. Zababwa introduced them, the Staters paid their respects to Don Wesely, who was a good friend of both speakers and unfortunately passed away earlier this year. Judi began by talking about how she grew up in Norfolk and paying her respects to Wesely as well. In a positive spin, she told the boys that everybody has losses and we should live our lives in honor of them.

She then moved on to say that it isn't just about race but also gender, stressing that everybody has a story that deserves to be heard and learned from. She explained how a native Omaha tribe doctor had been questioned on her qualifications simply because of her gender.

Thomas, the next speaker, addressed the boys with a challenge to be courageous and think creatively. As an African American and descendant of enslaved people, he understands what it's like to be discriminated against. He goes on to say that most of the information we learn comes from just one perspective and is actually not completely true. He gave the example of how Columbus didn't discover America, but there's still a national holiday. He said that a person can choose to follow the status quo and perpetuate misinformation, or they can choose to differentiate and replace misinformation with missing information. He also gave some interactive examples, like asking the boys what they would think if they saw a female or non-white pilot, to which some replied that they would feel safe, as all pilots get equal training, with another saying they would be surprised at the rare sight. He ends by saying that we are not a melting pot of culture but instead a salad bowl with individuality.

As the session closed, the boys asked questions about elaborating on how women didn't have as much power and opinions on DEI. This session left an important message on the boys as we all consider what we can do to make our country a more equal place. These discussions can be uncomfortable, but it's embracing them that allows us to make the choices for a better future.