Cornhusker Boys' State
Bulletin

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Promoting Party Platforms

By: Evan Zhang of Bataan, Jonathan Wiesenfeld of Gettysburg, and Lucas Askew of Yorktown

This morning, the two major political parties in Nebraska presented their platforms: the Republicans, with Chairwoman Mary Jane Truemper, and the Democrats, with Outreach Director Gina Frank and a colleague. Truemper began her speech by talking about her prior experiences with South Carolina Girls States, and recalled the historical background of the United States and its opposition to tyranny. She portrayed a cycle of government overreach and populism keeping it in balance. She also discussed how she was a delegate for Ron Paul's presidential bid. In particular, Truemper focused on the issue of Nebraska's education, citing the decreasing performance of students within the state and questioned why funding public schools was not solving this issue, and instead advocated for more parental control over schools and educational funding.

During the question and answer period, Boys Staters asked about topics ranging from totalitarianism to her educational credentials, the latter question eliciting a strong reaction from the crowd. Interestingly, the Democratic spokesperson, Gina Frank, began her speech by agreeing with several points that Truemper made, such as the decline of the middle class and the idea that the common people should have influence over the government. She criticized policies of the Trump administration, like Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, arguing that they were elements of authoritarianism. She transitioned towards discussing how she was raised in a highly conservative household and homeschooled for much of her life, and that the policies of Trump would close rural schools. Frank's colleague, argued that many of the problems in the U.S. could be traced back to ineffective economic policies. The questions Frank was asked involved topics like transgender athletes and her opinion on a Stater being compensated for traveling far to go to school. Boys Staters were courteous to Frank and Truemper, despite personal political opinions, and gave both a standing ovation when they entered and left. But what generated the strongest reaction was, of course, the amazing catches of the microphone cube. Although the parties differ greatly on principles, the presentations offered a rare opportunity for young citizens to hear both sides of the story.

Steve Gealy, Attorney at Law
By: Christian Maurer, Alamo

Some of us started our day with a presentation from Nebraska Attorney, Steve Gealy. Steve is a Cornhusker Boys State Alumni from 1969 and served as the State Treasurer. He graduated from Hastings College with a bachelors in education in 1974. He later earned his Masters at Kearney State College, now University of Nebraska at Kearney.

He got his start in law by attending a program at Kearney that allowed him to get his PhD in Public School Administration and his J.D. (Juris Doctor). Through this program he discovered that even though he had a calling in education, there was a more prominent calling in law. After completing law school at the University of Nebraska College of Law he went on to work at a private practice. In law school Steve wanted to pursue estate planning or tax law. Once he was finally able to go out and practice he felt more compelled to cases in the personal injury or civil suits. Through his many years of success as a litigator he now works more with mediation. He shared with the audience that it is much more civil and private.

The audience was mixed with nodding heads between breakfast settling and interesting ideas about our court system from the attorneys point of view. One of the ways that Gealy shared that normal citizens can be a part of the court system is by serving jury duty. We've all heard adults moan and groan about having to sit in a stuffy old court room to hear lawyers bark at each other all day. However, it is a great way to serve in the local government and stay involved in the community. Though there are many levels to the U.S Supreme Court, commonly referred to as SCOTUS in the news, is the ultimate authority in the United States.

With all of the cases that go through the courts many of them are settled in the Court of Appeals. This helps filter some of the work for the Justices. There are very few cases that make it pass the Court of Appeals. These are the ones that typically make it on news reports and deal with problems on larger scales. This part of the court system was explained in more depth by Judge DeLuca later that day. In his tenure, Steve Gealy has tried 135 cases. However, there was only one question that was left unanswered that session, how many has he won?

School Boards: Roles and Responsibilities
By: Hayden Reznicek, Bataan

On day 2 of Cornhusker Boys State, I had the privilege to attend the school board session directed by Marcia Herring. My election to the Bataan school board led to me attending the session.

Entering room 040, I was filled with excitement, as I got to learn more about the school board system and how it affects the education system in every local highschool. The session started off with Marcia asking us what we knew about procedures. A couple of people answered to the best of their abilities in which I participated. She defined what procedures were and how they should be carried out. She went through 9 pillars that the school board is based off of. One of the biggest things that she mentioned was overseeing and overstepping. Overseeing being more of an advising role, making sure everything is running smoothly and in a functional manner. Overstepping taking place when members of the board are controlling the teachers, administration, and organizations. The key role for the board of education is to hire a superintendent and to have them pursue the hiring process of teachers, staff, admin, coaches, etc.

After she finished up with these 9 steps she had us break out into groups and edit a procedure. Some of the options are as follows, phones in school, drug tests, and artificial intelligence(ai). It was an amazing session to attend and she was awarded as an honorary graduate at the end of the session for her years of dedication to Cornhusker Boys State.

Lobbying and Political Action Committees
By: Case Richardson, Alamo

On Monday morning we had the pleasure of hearing from three lobbyists, Tim Hruza, Lillian Butler-Hale, and Nate Grasz. Tim Hruza is a contract lobbyist and as he puts it represents people in front of the legislature instead of a judge. Lillian Butler-Hale works for OpenSky Policy Institute which is a non-profit organization focused on taxes, education, and food insecurities. Nate Grasz works for Nebraska Family Alliance, which advocates for biblical values, life, and religious freedom.

They made clear that they were not as the stereotypes depicted as being a part of government corruption or "working in smoke filled back rooms making deals." But rather, they act to provide information to legislators on behalf of their clients. They also typically don't do the big flashy bills, but rather bills that are small changes that are, as they put it, the bills no one cares about. They also typically work on Christmas tree or package bills, which are bills that are essentially two smaller bills lumped together.

School Board Responsibilities
By: Dierck White, Yorktown

On Monday morning staters' attended a session over School Board Roles and Responsibilities was held in Hawks Hall, and presented by Marcia Herring of the Nebraska Association of School Boards. She started off by explaining the school board's primary responsibility, hiring the superintendent. Additionally, Herring explained that the policy of a school board affects student growth. She stated, "You want a policy that challenges students to become successful."

The school board is governed through policy, missions, and goals. The school board wants an administration based on procedure and staffing. Following school board members may call a private meeting. Like other meetings the community must know that they are calling a meeting but the community is not allowed to attend these meetings, and the school board may only discuss what they told the community they would discuss. She had a very interesting talk lasting a little over an hour and every boy in the session walked away feeling like they learned something.

Setting Expectations
By: Jeff Shen, Bunker Hill

The first day of Boys' State was an intense blur. A carousel of speakers, new people, responsibilities, and opportunities met the boys one after another. Between the dizzying array of responsibilities, the delegates shared moments of loud chanting and fervent discussions about firmly held political beliefs. But as the loud and fast day cycled on, for those final moments, it wasn't. Where the loud discussions had been, were soft pauses and quiet listening. The counselors had sat down with their respective towns and sought to discuss expectations for themselves and the counselors. In Bunker Hill, discussions revolved around creating a welcoming yet demanding atmosphere. Andel Rivangow, the mayor of the town, called for respect for all and objective consideration of the facts. Trey Rittscher added the importance of accountability and focused discussions about the issues we face.

Above the clacking of keys from the counselors taking notes of the discussion, they then shifted the conversation to expectations for themselves. The town members spoke of direct communication and loosening up a little bit. Nayan noted, though, that the boys should remember that communication is a two-way street. Contrasted to the energetic campaigning and athletics during the day, these leadership meetings may seem uneventful. But the boys' true drives are revealed during these meetings. Respect, humility, and ambition. These core tenets were repeatedly central to the leadership discussions and showed a deep solidarity and motivation in the boys.

Bunker Hill Town Report
By: Benjamin Whealy, Joshua Shapiri, Lucas Skalberg

The citizens of Bunker Hill elected Mayor Andel Rivengow along with legislators, vote counters, and a myriad of other government positions. The Staters of Bunker Hill also coined a new chant, demonstrating it with thunderous noise. In more recent news, the Bunker Hill school board banned phone usage in the classroom and the city council hosted a general town meeting regarding personal etiquette and hygiene.

Gettysburg Town Report
By: Joseph Clark

A lot has happened in the town of Gettysburg. First off, Council held their first session and decided that 1) Roosters are banned 2) The national anthem will play during Morning Muster, and we have to stand at attention, and 3) We have two line leaders that will keep everyone in straight lines. Then, the School Board (rightfully) banned litter boxes from the bathrooms. A 10 point grading system was proposed, but wasn't implemented. The biggest thing is Aziz Allam became the Speaker of the House.

Local Government In Action
By: Eli Moody, Gettysburg and Alijah Nelson, Bunker Hill

Yesterday, the town of Gettysburg held a school board meeting led by school board members with strong participation from town citizens. Matters such as use of litter boxes in school restrooms, drastic temperature changes between classrooms, the sanitation of drinking water, and even the grading system were addressed. A diverse citizen population argued both for and against these issues in an orderly and respectful manner; perspectives of teachers, parents, and corporation leaders were represented. Future school board meetings are expected to have similar order and productivity.

During Bunker Hill's City Council Meeting on Monday they reviewed an ordinance regarding the ownership of chickens. Afterward, they made their own ordinances regarding how Bunker Hill will conduct regular day dormitory life, proper bathroom etiquette, and rules regarding commons upkeep. The city council has concluded that the punishment for violations is 10 pushups to the individual and 10 pushups to the collective group, respectively.

Sunday Night Elections
By: Hayden Reznicek, Bataan

On the first full day of Cornhusker Boys State, city and legislative positions were voted on for each town. During the Bataan legislative election, there was a lot of competition. After much campaigning and deliberation, every position was filled. Every floor participated in voting for a city supervisor, three city council members, a secretary, and a mayor. Three school board members were also elected, along with a secretary and a mayor. In addition, three school board members, including boys assigned as superintendent and secretary, were elected. Many individuals got the chance to show off their skills and show how they contribute to their towns/communities. Day two is already heating up with fierce competition, unique and ear-catching chants, and many respectful young men growing their knowledge whilst also showing their skills and assets to their assigned towns. The sky is certainly the limit with these young individuals as they work toward their goals and aspirations.

Manila Bay Town Report
By: Brody Maurer

Manila Bay is booming with town spirit with Luke Melrose as town mayor. The popular new chant "Green Block" has quickly emerged as slang for Manila Bay. An interesting new ordinance has been passed through Manila Bay's City Council such as a requirement to put up the Shaka sign whenever Manila Bay or "Green Block" is mentioned. Manila Bay's School Board has established Green Block Public Schools and made the district class C-1. Athletics have also brought enthusiasm manifesting in cut-off shirts with the Boys Stater's name and number written with Sharpies on the back displaying pride and passion.