



Watson to challenge Fischer for GOP nod

By **MIKE BUHLER**

mbuhler@norfolkdailynews.com

Todd Watson is seeking the Republican nomination in 2018 to run for the U.S. Senate, but his motivation for running is the same as it was four years ago when he ran as a political independent.

"It's the same reason I ran in 2014: to defend the Constitution," Watson said. "We know



Watson

we have a horrendous Democrat Party, in my opinion, but the reality is we don't have a strong Republican Party in the legislative branch with a backbone. We

can point to the violations of the Constitution and how it's hurt Nebraskan general welfare every day."

Watson spoke to the Norfolk Rotary Club at its weekly luncheon Tuesday and touted several reasons why he believes that he would be a better nominee than incumbent Sen. Deb Fischer of Valentine.

Watson criticized Fischer for some of her votes, including on federal budgets that increased government spending.

"Her pledge in 2012 was to cut spending, balance the budget and repeal Obamacare," Watson said. "Any conservative worth their salt knows

you fire employees that don't do the job they say they're going to do."

Watson also said that his first priority, if elected, is looking out for agriculture. Watson is a native of Lincoln but owns a farm in Wayne County.

"It's no secret our general welfare is really centered around agriculture," Watson said. "One constitutional violation that in my opinion's unforgivable is the forfeiture of the foreign commerce clause with their vote of yes to pass fast-track authority — again, an unconstitutional action."

Watson also would seek to improve national security if elected to the Senate. He criticized Fischer for voting for the Iran arms deal in 2015 and also to give weapons to Syrian rebels.

"I was on the record at the time of the decision saying it was a bad idea," Watson said. "Seventy percent of those weapons went to jihadists."

Watson supports obtaining border security, touted his pro-life views, argued for the defunding of Planned Parenthood and supports an abortion litmus test for judges.

Watson also voiced strong support for President Donald Trump, an area where he said that Fischer and Sen. Ben Sasse were weak.

"We don't have Nebraska leadership that believes in Trump," Watson said.



LOCAL VOICES

Increasing rural internet access

I was reading about Senator Lyn Walz's legislative bills 1113 and 1114, which focus on improving internet access to rural Nebraska. The US Census Bureau reported in 2013 that only 73.4% of Nebraska households had high-speed internet access. That digital divide can be critical in a world where everyday tasks such as applying for a job, accessing a government service, doing homework, or checking with your kids' school performance all require the Internet.

The lack of internet service for low-income students is something the library has been following.

We have issues with students needing internet with email access to be able to login to their Google accounts. We have found that many of them do not have internet at home to complete their homework and cannot access their textbooks because many were only online. As more schools move toward online education and electronic textbooks, the requirement for internet in the home grows exponentially. For low-income students, this causes an



TINA WALKER

undue hardship and puts them at a disadvantage for learning.

Shannon Hageman, the English Teacher for the FPS Learning Center, contacted the library about collaborating on some educational sessions. Through this collaboration, we realized that several of the students in the Learning Center did not have access to internet at home to do their homework.

The Fremont Rotary Club was taking applications for grants they have available for helping children. We applied for a \$3,000 grant to use in partnership with the Fremont Public Schools' Learning Center. The goal is to help provide internet to students that do not have access at home. With the grant funds, we purchased books for a book club, 5 Verizon Jetpacks for high-speed/unlimited access, and 5 Kindle Fire 8s to pair with the hotspots for accessing online textbooks and reading materials. The Kindles come with our Overdrive app already installed.

On January 18th we were able to check out the kindles and jetpacks to the students and provide a short overview of how these devices work. The devices check out for 3-week periods. When the jetpacks come back in, we will wait until the monthly reset date occurs, then check them out again. When the Kindles come back, we also will factory reset them, then check them right back out. The students at the Learning Center are test-driving the program for us. When we get all the policies setup, the process finalized, and everything is working the way we want it, we will add the jetpacks and Kindle Fires to our collection. These will then be available for checkout from the library just like other materials.

By broadening services, resources, and establishing partnerships, this project has helped us meet all four goals of our 2017 Strategic Plan.

Tina Walker is Director of Keene Memorial Library in Fremont.