



The News-Press

Ricketts' visit focuses on tax relief

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Nebraska City native and Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts was in town on Wednesday, both for media engagements and also to speak with citizens at a Nebraska City Rotary program over the noon-hour at the Eagles.

Ricketts stopped by the Nebraska City News-Press in the morning to discuss about the purpose of his visit.

"I try to get out and talk to as many groups as possible," Ricketts said. "I do town halls and Rotarys.

"It's just an opportunity to get out and talk to people about what's going on at the capitol and also to get their feedback about a lot of policy issues we've got going on."

Right now, Ricketts said his discussions with Nebraskans often come down to visits about the need for property tax relief.

In the last 10 years, Ricketts said valuations and taxation of ag land in the state of Nebraska has risen significantly.

"That makes us competitively disadvantaged," Ricketts said.

During the last legislative session, Ricketts said a bill was introduced that would change land valuations from a market sales assesment to a income potential assesment, like the model used by neighboring agricultural states.

Ricketts said the bill, which did include some income tax relief as well, stalled in the first round of debate.

Since then, Ricketts said he has worked with Papillion Senator Jim Smith to bring a bill to the floor of the legislature that would address property tax relief through tax credits.

Nebraskans would be able to claim a

tax credit of 12 percent of the total property tax paid during the first year of the program.

That percentage would be gradually increased each year until 2031 when the credit would top out at 30 percent.

While working to create property tax relief, the governor also indicated a focus

to balance the budget without increasing taxes. If the legislature accepts the governor's recommendations, the state budget would grow 0.2 percent.

Recommendations by the governor include restricting spending and making cuts to programs at two percent for this year and four percent next year, with some exceptions, including funding for K-12 education. Ricketts said some funds would be pulled from Nebraska's tax reserve as well. Taken as a whole, Ricketts said his plan would provide for a balanced budget and tax relief.

"Budget and tax relief are two sides of the same coin," Ricketts said. "To have sustainable tax relief, you have to control spending."

Turning to the recently passed tax reform bill at the federal level, Ricketts said the state of Nebraska has a limited window of opportunity to pass a bill to keep taxes from going up here at home.

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Ricketts said the federal tax bill, which eliminates exemptions in favor of a larger standard deduction, has the effect of raising state taxes by \$200 million.

"Our state income taxes are based on those personal deductions," Ricketts said.

A federal tax fix bill would correct this issue by allowing Nebraskans to claim more exemptions on their state returns.

While some legislators have suggested that the state accept the increased revenue and spend it, Ricketts said he is opposed to such thinking.

"I am not going to be in favor of raising taxes, so we need this federal fix it bill," Ricketts said.

With a short session, Ricketts said it's important that the legislature prioritizes the federal fix.

Turning from finances, Ricketts said he has received a great deal of positive

feedback after his "Stand for the Flag Super Bowl Sunday" proclamation.

The intention of the proclamation, Ricketts said, was to send a message of appreciation to those who have served or who are serving in the nation's military. Ricketts said people who choose to kneel for the anthem might not realize that they're actions are hurtful to those who have made sacrifices to further the cause of freedom.

“They’re hurt when they see people not showing the proper respect for the flag,” Ricketts said.

The proclamation encouraged people at home

to stand for the flag during the National Anthem of the Super Bowl and to remember the sacrifices veterans have made so that we can have a Super Bowl.

“It is something that we need to make sure that we respect the flag,” Ricketts said. “We’ve got a lot of positive feedback from Nebraskans about it



Nebraska City News-Press General Manager Tammy Schumacher, left, poses for a picture with Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts during his Wednesday morning visit to the newspaper office.

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