

Benkelman farmer, rancher, business owner jumps into 44th District race

Written by Wauneta Breeze
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By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Steve Stroup of Benkelman said for as many as 30 years he's wanted to be more involved.

Now with his four sons grown and having the time to devote to it, the farmer, cow/calf operator and small business owner is going to do just that.

Stroup, 56, announced last Monday that he will be a candidate for southwest Nebraska's 44th District state legislative seat.

Current 44th District State Sen. Mark Christensen of Imperial will leave the Unicameral after the 2014 session due to term limits.

"Nebraskans are a special people, and together, we have made Nebraska a special place," said Stroup.

"As a farmer, small business owner and father of four, I know that we must focus on growing our economy, preserving our natural resources and protecting Nebraska values, if we are to move our state forward," he added.

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He foresees water to be the No. 1 issue he'd be facing should he be elected next year.

"It's extremely critical and a very complex issue, but it ties back to everything in the 44th District," he said.

Education and growing the rural economy are the next issues of most importance, as well as "maintaining the family and Nebraska's traditional values," he said in an interview Tuesday.

"Whether the issue is property taxes, managing our water resources or improving our education system, what we need from District 44 is a voice that understands and represents the farm families and business owners of the district," he said.

Stroup has served on numerous local community boards and agricultural organizations, including the Ag Society, the 4-H Council, Cultural Arts Board and his church council.

In August 2012, he was accepted into the Nebraska Agriculture Leadership Council's LEAD program, and will complete that program next year.

He considers himself a fiscal and social conservative. He is a registered Republican.

Born and raised in Benkelman, he graduated from Benkelman High School in 1975 before completing his associate degree in production agriculture at the University of Nebraska School of Technical Agriculture in Curtis in 1977.

In 2006, he completed an associate degree in Health Information Management through Western Nebraska Community College, and went on to start a small business related to medical coding.

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He raises irrigated corn and cane hay, the latter for the family's cow/calf operation.

He and his wife Julie live in Benkelman. They have four children: Zach, 32, J.C., 30, Nate, 29 and Jordan, 24, and six grandchildren.