

Matt Williams to run for legislative seat

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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MATT WILLIAMS

After 2014, term limits remove Sen. Wightman

He's a candidate for the Nebraska Legislature.

After months of speculation whether Matt Williams would campaign for a seat in the Nebraska Legislature or enter the gubernatorial or U.S. Senate race, the 64-year-old announced his decision Wednesday.

The 36th District is now represented by Sen. John Wightman of Lexington. Wightman will give up his seat at the end of the 2014 session because of term limits.

Williams, who has not previously run for public office, is the first candidate to announce his intention to campaign for the non-partisan seat.

Service is why the chairman and president of Gothenburg State Bank wants the position.

"Our family was raised believing in service," Williams said, noting he recently completed a year at the helm of the American Bankers Association. "I've talked to others about stepping up and accepting responsibility and I'm putting my money where my mouth is."

Leadership is also important, he said, adding that his 40 years of business experience could benefit a state he loves.

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“I lead through commitment, passion and vision coupled with thoughtful compromise,” he said.

Williams said he would also bring his ability to analyze issues to the office and help people come to consensus on issues.

“I firmly believe that democracy is based on finding compromise and that’s a skill set I believe I could bring to the table,” he said.

Williams lauded the state for its healthy cash reserve, low unemployment rate, strong educational system and agricultural economy and a positive outlook for the future.

“And I believe we can do better in all those areas,” he said, noting that creating jobs and educating kids to be the best and brightest are essential as is a strong ag economy. “Our state also needs to work hard to create a positive environment for job growth and economic expansion.

“Tax policy and economic incentives are part of the answer.”

Williams said Nebraskans have more in common than differences and that he’ll work to find ways to create opportunities for everyone regardless of urban/rural status and other issues that can be divisive.

If elected, Williams said he doesn’t have a specific agenda. Seventeen senators will leave because of term limits and much institutional knowledge will disappear, he said.

“My first goal will be to sit and listen and try to understand the issues and process,” he said.

Asked why voters should elect him, Williams said “trust.”

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“I’ll do what’s right and recognize that we may not always agree on the issues,” he said. “I can bring an element of thoughtful compromise into every conversation.”

Herb Duis was the last senator elected to the Nebraska Legislature from Gothenburg.

Duis was elected in 1950, 1952 and in 1968, 1972 and 1976.

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