

## **Political notebook: Parties' bus tours travel statewide**

*By Janell Cole and Don Davis*

*The Forum - 11/01/2004*

While North Dakota Democrats rested Sunday after a statewide campaign bus tour, Republicans were just getting started on a similar "victory tour."

The parties' bus tours feature all statewide candidates traveling the state together, holding rallies with supporters in various cities along the way.

Democrats left Wednesday morning on a five-day trip with 16 scheduled stops, ranging from Regent to Rugby and Wahpeton to Williston. It included a stop in Fargo on Saturday and concluded with a Halloween party in Bismarck on Sunday night.

Republicans had a spaghetti supper in Minot on Friday night, but took Saturday off and launched the tour in earnest at noon Sunday in Dickinson. They traveled to seven other cities Sunday and today.

The Republicans are in Fargo at Playmakers at 6 p.m. today and then it's home to Bismarck late tonight.

American Indians don't tend to vote in as large numbers as other Americans, but a national effort is afoot to increase that turnout.

Minnesota tribes are involved in the effort, which in many cases features billboards and advertisements with pictures of Indians in their native dress. A headline reads: "80 years ago, they couldn't vote ... you can."

As with any category of voters, no one knows how many will head to the polls Tuesday, but leaders of the Leech Lake Band of Chippewa in north-central Minnesota have high hopes.

Stephen Miller, a public relations official for the band, said Chairman George Goggeye Jr. and other Tribal Council members expect 50 percent to 60 percent to vote. That would be noteworthy because the average turnout is 17 percent.

To encourage voting, the band offers free breakfast and lunch to each voter, and the person who drives the most people to the polls will be rewarded.

Roland Riemers of Grand Forks, Libertarian candidate for governor, announced Friday he had finished his tour of 270 North Dakota cities. The last stop was Thursday in Leonard, where he discovered almost no one home.

"On Thursday evening, the exhausted Libertarians ignored the town's 100-year hamburger celebration and quietly placed literature and signs about the town," Riemers wrote. "They congratulated a few residents who had resisted the town's fetish for hamburgers and then drove their now-empty campaign van back to Grand Forks."

Most North Dakota politicians say a serious candidate should have attended the hamburger feed, thereby meeting all the residents at once and in person.

In another unconventional wrinkle, Riemers announced he can't drive across the state to retrieve signs the Libertarians posted and planted, so he's hoping the public will gather them up after today and recycle them.

Prison wardens who work for her nominated Minnesota Corrections Commissioner Joan Fabian to be corrections person of the year, an award the Minnesota Corrections Association presented to her last week.

Fabian, under fire from Democrats over sex-offender releases, is proud her wardens nominated her.

"There is not much in corrections that Commissioner Fabian has not experienced firsthand," the association said in a statement. "She's experienced, bright, and knowledgeable -- and a true leader. She clearly understands the issues, asks staff for input to which she truly listens, and makes sound decisions."

That is a glowing report on a commissioner who has been in the hot seat for a year. The heat started when Alfonso Rodriguez Jr. was arrested in the disappearance of Dru Sjodin from a Grand Forks, N.D., parking lot.

The Corrections Department had not suggested that Rodriguez be committed indefinitely to a state hospital after his release, as it does when many other sex offenders are released.

Fabian has worked in Minnesota's corrections community since 1970, most of the time for Ramsey County.

One sign of the end of the campaign comes when candidates start issuing media advisories telling us where and when they're voting.

It's not quite as self-serving as it sounds. If they didn't put out the information, the stations and newspapers would be calling to ask because they often want to photograph the occasion.

Gov. John and Mikey Hoeven announced they'll be at their polling place, an elementary school a few blocks south of the governor's residence, Tuesday morning.

And Rep. Earl Pomeroy will be at his polling place, a southeast Mandan bowling alley, in the afternoon.

Pomeroy is holding his election night party in Fargo.

Thursday was a day for misstatements in St. Paul.

Republican State Chairman Ron Eibensteiner kept calling a state revenue-sharing proposal with tribal casinos a tax, even though the state cannot tax tribes -- and despite the fact that reporters gave him several opportunities to retract the word "tax." After hearing from Gov. Tim Pawlenty's office, the chairman called reporters to say he misspoke.

Eibensteiner also called Pawlenty's efforts to get tribes to contribute to the state "a plan." The governor never has gone that far and eventually Eibensteiner decided the governor's efforts might be "the start of a plan."

House Speaker Steve Sviggum, R-Kenyon, then praised Pawlenty's effort to "renegotiate the compacts" state and tribal officials signed 15 years ago regulating Indian gambling. When reminded that Pawlenty never has sought to renegotiate the agreements, Sviggum relented.

Readers can reach Forum Capitol reporters Janell Cole at (701) 224-0830 or Don Davis at (651) 290-0707