**For Release Wednesday, May 27, 2020**

**Capitol View**

**Commentary by J.L. Schmidt**

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**Next Legislature Could Feature Brother – Sister Act**

When the 107th Legislature convenes next January, Nebraskans could see the first brother – sister act from the same family that gave us a father – daughter act, the Cavanaugh’s of Omaha.

Machaela Cavanaugh, elected to represent Omaha’s District 6 in 2018, could be joined by her brother John Cavanaugh if he wins the District 9 seat, which is being vacated by Sara Howard. Howard had succeeded her mother, Gwen, but has been term-limited.

Machaela and John are the children of John J. Cavanaugh III who served in the Nebraska Unicameral from 1972-1976 and then served one term in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1977-1981. He returned to Omaha and resumed his law practice. The younger Cavanaugh finished first in the May 12 primary ahead of Omaha School Board President Marque Snow by a reported vote of 3,459 to 2,896. The top two candidates in legislative races advance to the November election.

Several term-limited incumbents are back in the race as well. Mike Flood of Norfolk, who served from 2005-2013 and was Speaker from 07-13, is running unopposed in District 19 where current Speaker Jim Scheer steps down after being term-limited.

In Omaha’s District 31, incumbent Rich Pahls, who served with Flood from 2005 to 2013 and is now an Omaha City Councilman, garnered 3,638 votes in his race against Millard West High School social studies teacher Tim Royers, a former Nebraska Teacher of the Year, who had 3,335 votes.

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Incumbent Dan Quick of Grand Island had 3,995 votes to 2,391 for challenger Ray Aguilar, a term-limited former state senator who was appointed in 1999 and re-elected twice and served through 2008. At the time, Aguilar was the first Latino state senator.

Former Omaha City Council member Fred Conley bested a field of seven for the District 11 seat being vacated again (term-limited twice) by veteran lawmaker Ernie Chambers. Conley, who had 1,282 votes, will be challenged by Terrell McKinney, a wrestling coach at Omaha North Magnet High School who had 663 votes for second place.

In District 23, incumbent Bruce Bostelman had 5,674 votes to top challenger Helen Raikes of Ashland with 3,408. Raikes is the widow of the late Sen. Ron Raikes who served Legislative District 25 from 1997-2009. He died in a farm accident near Ashland in 2009. Bostelman was backed in his last election by Governor Pete Ricketts who promoted his candidacy and several others to defeat Republican incumbents who had voted against Ricketts on several major issues.

Among others was Sen. Tom Brewer of Gordon in District 43, the first Native American elected to the Legislature. He garnered 8,027 votes in his race against challenger Tanya Storer of Whitman who had 5,093 votes and the endorsement of former Governor Kay Orr.

In District 1, Ricketts’ appointee Julie Slama of Peru had 6,497 votes to 2,232 for Janet Palmtag of Syracuse. Both women are Republicans but an out-of-state funded campaign against Palmtag claimed the Southeast Nebraska resident had cast her lot with political interests in Lincoln. Shame on her, right Governor Deep Pockets?

Ricketts’ appointee Andrew La Grone of Gretna came in second in District 49 voting to businesswoman and University of Nebraska-Omaha

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political science graduate Jen Day. She garnered 5,404 votes against La Grone’s 4,774. He was appointed to fill the vacancy created when former Sen. John Murante was elected State Treasurer.

With Ricketts’ money in play and Republicans circling the wagons already, the November legislative races are worth watching.

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*J.L. Schmidt has been covering Nebraska government and politics since 1979. He has been a registered Independent for 20 years.*