

Knights Advance To Second Round



BRIDGET LICKING - WITH LOVE PHOTOGRAPHY

The Sandhills-Thedford Knights hosted the Hyannis Longhorns on Thursday, October 20, in the first round of the NSAA Class D2 State Football Playoffs. The Knights came out on top with the 80-28 victory. The #5 Knights will be on their home field again on Friday, October 28 when they host #12 Central Valley (8-1) in Thedford with kickoff set for 6:30 p.m. A complete D2 State bracket may be found on page 16.

Rural Nebraskans say: ‘Not much optimism here’



COURTESY

Rural Nebraskans are not optimistic about the economy in the next year, according to the 2022 Nebraska Rural Poll.

When asked in late spring and summer about their expectations for various economic items in the next year, most rural Nebraskans surveyed believe the following will become worse: inflation (87%), gasoline or fuel prices (87%), grocery prices (86%) and interest rates (85%). In fact, more than four in 10 respondents believe fuel prices, inflation, grocery prices and health care costs will become much worse in the next 12 months.

The annual poll surveys rural Nebraskans on their views and opinions on various local, state and national issues, as well as their quality of life and access to services. Questionnaires were mailed to 6,102 households in Nebraska in May and June, with 1,105 households representing 86 of the state's 93 counties responding. In its 27th year, the 2022 Rural Poll focused on the state's economy and other issues, said Becky Vogt, the poll's manager.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, economic growth in Nebraska was steady in early 2022. However, with an increase in inflation, the impact on household budgets and businesses presents some concerns for Nebraskans.

This concern is reflected in the less-than-optimistic perspective regarding the economy over the next 12

months. This is significant because residents' expectations can impact the economic success of their communities, said Steve Schulz, associate professor of supply chain management at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

"Optimism and hope improve perceptions of successful businesses in rural communities and the ability to attract new companies in the future," he said.

The questionnaire focused on Nebraska's economy, from basic economic status to employment characteristics. Overall, 43% of rural Nebraskans surveyed believe their personal financial situation will become worse or much worse during the next year. More than six in 10 respondents with household incomes under \$40,000 think their personal financial situation will become worse, compared to just over a quarter of those with the highest household incomes (\$100,000 or more).

"This finding is likely because lower-income households spend more of their disposable income on basic goods, such as food, gas and housing, and these are items that are particularly prone to the current round of inflation," said Brad Lubben, extension associate professor of agricultural economics at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. "While folks may feel confident about their job security given workforce challenges and low

unemployment, they are concerned that the living costs are currently rising faster than their compensation."

That said, few rural Nebraskans surveyed are making or considering employment changes, with only three in 20 respondents actively seeking a better-paying job.

While many rural Nebraskans are not looking to change careers, they still place a significant value on employment characteristics. Characteristics that workers value include a focus on feeling valued; the type of work; safety; autonomy; and opportunities to advance or improve.

"Connecting to our work and valuing it is a part of our culture as Nebraskans," said Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel, an associate professor and extension specialist at the Panhandle Research and Extension Center in Scottsbluff. "I think it is in our DNA. You see this historically through our low unemployment rates and our propensity toward multiple job holdings."

The Rural Poll is the largest annual poll gauging rural Nebraskans' perceptions about policy and quality of life. The margin of error is plus-or-minus 3%. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Department of Agricultural Economics conducts the poll with funding from Rural Prosperity Nebraska and the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Sandhills Fire Relief Donations Grow

Donations continue to grow for the Sandhills Fire Relief scheduled for Friday, November 11 from 5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. at the Thomas County Fairgrounds Event Center, 83861 Highway 83, Thedford.

There will be a live and internet auction, BBQ meal cooked by Slow Poke Barbecue of Oconto and evening entertainment by Borderline Band.

The Thedford Volunteer

Fire Department will be providing a cash bar.

The internet auction will close at 8:00 p.m. All proceeds from the auction and barbecue will go to the ranchers and local fire departments.

To donate items to the internet or live auction you may contact Dr. Scott Reynolds or Dr. McKenzie Beals at the Broken Bow Animal Hospital - 308-872-5281. Please take pictures of items and email

them to bowanimal@yahoo.com

To make a monetary donation, you may send it to Custer County Foundation, P.O. Box 304, Broken Bow, NE 68822 or Nebraska Cattlemen Disaster Fund, 4611 Cattle Drive, Lincoln, NE 68521.

To view internet auction items go to their Facebook page at Sandhills Fire Relief. Please RSVP to the Sandhills Fire Relief Facebook "Event" page.

Voters decide several key issues in November

Secretary of State Evnen is reminding voters that Nebraska's general election for 2022 is November 8.

"My message to Nebraskans is that we will maintain the integrity of our vote," Evnen said. "Every legally cast vote will count."

The polls will open on November 8 at 8:00 a.m. CT and close at 8:00 p.m. CT. Voters are reminded that Daylight Saving Time ends on Sunday, November 6.

"Elections matter and your vote counts," Evnen said.

Thomas County Clerk Lorissa Hartman reminds voters the final day for in person voter registration is October 28. The County Clerk's Office will be open until 6:00 p.m. that day.

Sample ballots are being published in this issue of the *Thomas County Herald*. Please look over these ballots.

Local races include:

County Attorney (Vote for One): Kurt Dam Arganbright.

County Clerk (Vote for One): Lorissa Hartman.

County Commissioner (At Large - Vote for Two): John Seeley and Lewis Herbaugh.

County Sheriff (Vote for One): William Joseph Smith.

County Treasurer (Vote for One): Andrea Thomas.

Thomas County Airport Authority (Six Year Term): Herb Hall.

Thedford Public School Board of Education (Vote for Three): Dixie Hoffman, Alison Werner, Gary L. Cooper, Spencer Burk.

Mullen Public School Board of Education (Vote for Three): Caleb Hoyt, Patrick Wright, Casey Phillips, Robert Teters, Liza Simonson.

Sandhills Public School District 71 (Vote For Three): Reed Larsen, Rory Zutavern, Jeff Martindale.

Village of Thedford Board of Trustees (Vote For Three): Phil Kuenle, Darren Rinstine, Albert Fisher.

Village of Halsey Board of Trustees (Vote For Two): Loren Eaton and Wilma Heinowski.

Voters will also be deciding retention of judges, member of Legislature District 42, Governor and Lt. Governor, and other state races.

The Village of Halsey is seeking to impose a sales and use tax of one-half percent upon the same transactions within the Village of Halsey on which the State of Nebraska is authorized to impose a tax.

This week we look at the two initiatives on the General Election ballot.



Initiative Measure 432

This initiative will amend the Nebraska Constitution to require that, before casting a ballot in any election, a qualified voter shall present valid photographic identification in a manner specified by the Legislature to ensure the preservation of an individual's rights under the United States Constitution.

Supporters contend:

Nebraska voters deserve to have confidence in our election process because it ensures our entire system of democracy, which protects our freedoms. Nebraska is one of only 16 states where no documentation is required to vote, and it is time to increase election security measures. Requiring an ID is a common sense move which is already required to do everyday activities like purchase alcohol, board a plane, set up a bank account, apply for government benefits like SNAP or Medicaid, pick up a prescription, and rent or buy a house or car. Requiring ID's to cast a vote will ensure election integrity and increase voter confidence in the process.

Opponents contend:

This constitutional amendment imposes severe restrictions on your right and ability to vote. It is unnecessary; no cases of voter impersonation have ever been found in Nebraska's elections. This amendment does not specify the type of ID required and tasks the Legislature to decide. Nebraska voters already are required to provide verification of their identity when registering to vote. In other voter ID states, seniors, low-income, and highly mobile workers are often prevented from voting. At least 54,500 to 70,000 Nebraskans will be immediately affected, plus thousands who carry ID's with out-of-date information. It is a costly fix for a nonexistent problem: a similar bill in 2018 estimated \$2.9 million in first-year taxpayer costs and an annual cost of over \$570,000.

Initiative Measure 433

The object of this petition is to amend Nebraska's minimum wage

law to increase the state minimum wage from \$9.00 per hour to \$10.50 per hour on January 1, 2023, to \$12.00 per hour on January 1, 2024, to \$13.50 per hour on January 1, 2025, and to \$15.00 per hour on January 1, 2026, to be adjusted annually thereafter to account for increases in the cost of living.

Supporters contend:

Nebraskans who work hard full time should not have to live in poverty. Right now, working families can't make ends meet because wages haven't kept up and parents can't afford to pay rent and put food on the table at today's minimum wage of \$9 an hour, just \$18,000 a year. Initiative 433 will gradually increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2026. This will benefit people employed as home care aides, school aids, waitstaff, and skilled assembly line workers as well as thousands of children in Nebraska whose working parents make less than \$15 per hour. When a minimum wage worker in Nebraska gets a small raise, that's money that goes directly into Nebraska communities, small businesses, and the local economy.

Opponents contend:

The minimum wage was never meant to be a "living wage," but an "entry level" wage for young people or first-time workers. These wage increases are a 66.7% surge over three years and increase inflation. Most minimum wage jobs are with small businesses or franchises and those owners cannot afford higher wages. This hits rural Nebraska harder where the cost of living is lower. This increase causes employers to raise prices for their product or service and pass those costs onto consumers. Increasing the wage every year will force businesses to "step-up" their other salaries, which is also inflationary. A higher minimum wage forces companies to reduce their workforce and increase automation. This measure forces increases for tipped wage employees. Some small businesses will close because they can't afford the new mandatory wage.