

2010 gubernatorial candidate visits Pipestone

By Kyle Kuphal (July 29, 2009)

The pool of possible gubernatorial candidates has risen to about 25 following Gov. Tim Pawlenty's announcement that he will not seek another term as governor of Minnesota in 2010. One of those candidates, DFL State Representative Paul Thissen, stopped in Pipestone last Tuesday for a chat with local Democrats.

"I'm here tonight because I'm running for governor next year and I just wanted to introduce myself to folks," he told about 30 people gathered at Dar's Pizza.

Thissen made the stop at Dar's, two days before formally announcing his candidacy on Thursday from his Minneapolis home. The visit was part of a two-day tour of southwestern Minnesota that included stops in Marshall, Lake Benton, Luverne, Woodstock and Pipestone. He also made a stop at the headquarters of Juhl Wind, near Woodstock, during which he took a look inside a wind tower and discussed wind energy.

The purpose of the tour, Thissen said, was to talk to the citizens of southwestern Minnesota and find out what issues are on their minds. The most common concerns he'd heard during the trip, he said, involved healthcare, higher education and renewable energy.

"I think that the new energy economy is critical across the state, but particularly here," he said.

When asked about the recent layoffs at Suzlon, a company directly involved in the new energy economy, he said that Minnesota's skilled and educated workforce should be used to bring about new advancements in energy technology that can be produced locally. The state can spur that development, he said, by providing funding and by enacting policies that encourage new technologies.

"The other role the state government can play is to provide support for families and provide retraining to those individuals to get them back on their feet," he said of those affected by the layoffs.

During a brief speech Tuesday night, Thissen criticized Gov. Pawlenty and said he has been frustrated during his years in the legislature by a governor with a philosophy of "no, no, no," whether it's investing in education, transportation, affordable healthcare or providing retirement security, Thissen said.

"We need a governor who's going to be willing to say yes and who's going to have the imagination and the political will to actually get some of these things, that we know will work, done," he said.

Thissen is in his fourth term representing District 63A, which includes Richfield and Southwest Minneapolis, is a partner at the law firm of Briggs and Morgan, and is the Chair of the Health and Human Services Policy Committee.

As chair of the Health and Human Services Policy Committee, Thissen said his key concerns include healthcare and more specifically, preparing to provide care of the aging population by encouraging people to save for their retirement and offering support to Minnesotans who care for elderly family members in their homes.

For more information visit www.PaulThissen.com.