

Public Service candidates talk pipes, rail and safety

(Editor's note: This is part of an ongoing series interviewing candidates and leading up to the Nov. 4 election.)

"As we look ahead, the 2015 legislative session will be critical and we're eager to work with the state's elected leaders in



JASON SPIESS
For Bakken Breakout
Weekly

Bismarck," Lee Tillman, president and CEO, Marathon Oil said at the Williston Basin Petroleum Conference. "We need the support of the legislature for critical infrastructure projects. State funding to provide Western counties with the hospitals, law enforcement and schools they need is vital."

In addition to addressing the upcoming legislative session, Tillman spoke to the people of North Dakota asking the state to hold industry accountable while working responsibly with each other.

"As an industry, we must be respectful of the communities in which we operate," Tillman said. "We must be responsible corporate neighbors and never lose sight of the fact that we're guests in these communities and that we'll be judged by our individual and collective behaviors."

One elected official that works closely with oil and gas is the North Dakota Public Service Commissioner, which oversees much of the oil and gas distribution. The PSC also oversees the communication infrastructure in the state. As we enter new heights in oil and gas development, coupled with big data and technology increases, the Public Service Commissioner's role is not doubt under the microscope by many as distribution of energy and ideas are vital to the state's future.

For our Energy Policy Special, candidates were provided questions in advanced, limited to three minutes per question and were asked to refrain from using their candidate's name in their response. All interviews were conducted in person.

In the 2014 North Dakota Election will feature a total of four candidates for Public Service Commissioner. There are two positions available with two candidates running for each post. One race features Julie Fedorchak and Tyler Axness. The other race, Brian Kalk and Todd Reisenauer.

1. Tell us why the people of North Dakota should cast their North Dakota Public Service Commissioner vote for you.

Axness: Well Jason, I think in this unprecedented time in North Dakota's history we need to have a balanced approach and I think we need to have that begin with a balanced Public Service Commission. We need a new vision, a new leader on the commission that is going to ask the tough questions. Somebody that is going to plan ahead. So that when we are extracting these resources, be it coal, be it oil or natural gas that we are extracting them safely. Then they are being transported safely as well so our communities are not in harms way and we are doing this development in a way that is going to leave the quality of life that I had in North Dakota for future generations.

Fedorchak: There are really two reasons why I believe North Dakotans should support my candidacy for the Public Service Commission. First, it's experience and ideas. I have 20 years experience working in North Dakota both in the public and private sector. I spent ten years combined working for Governor Ed Schafer and U.S. Senator John Hoeven, then another ten years in the private sector running my own business.

I believe those two positions give me a lot of great experience to use to work on behalf of North Dakota inside this really critical time in our state's history. I have a strong passion for North Dakota. I love North Dakotans, and I want to use this experience to make our state the best it can be, maintain our quality of life and the incredible job opportunities that we can afford to people through our state and throughout our country into the future.

And then I have a lot of great ideas I think that I can bring to play in this role, and I've started to do that both on the pipeline side, the rail safety and moving ahead on using the gas resource that we have in North Dakota to benefit other North Dakota communities.

So I am really excited about the position and I hope that folks will support me and give me another couple of years on the commission.

Kalk: First off Jason, thanks for having me on the show today, I really appreciate the opportunity to talk to some of your listeners and readers. I guess a little background about me. I grew up in Bottineau, graduated high school in the '80s, spent 20 years in the Marine Corps, retired and then taught at North Dakota State. In 2007 actually is when we first started our first chance to run for election for the Public Service Commission.

In 2008 we got elected by the voters of North Dakota and we talked about energy security, how important it is for North Dakota to develop its energy resources wisely. We ran a successful campaign, got elected, been on the job now for almost six years and we are running for re-election.



Kalk

The biggest reason I think voters should work for me is we have the background experience to meet the challenges ahead. I've got a background in energy development. I've got a background in natural resources. The challenges going on in the state right now are great opportunities, but nevertheless you have to have the right people that can make the right decisions and we've been very successful in the Public Service Commission over the past six years whether its coal, oil or natural gas, growing our energy resources, making sure we reclaim the land. Make sure we do our best to keep the cost of electricity down.

I saw some numbers that right now North Dakota has the lowest cost of electricity in the country. So we've been doing a good job, we've got a good team and let's keep it together.

Reisenauer: Well its pretty clear, Jason, what we are seeing here in really the last few years, I think it has gotten to a boiling point where government isn't, necessarily, we really do not have a small government in North Dakota. What we have is a system that applies band-aids to issues. It goes from issue to issue, there is always a new issue and then there is a proposal for that issue rather than a comprehensive strategy. Or a strategic way at looking at problems.

What I will bring to the PSC is not only a new vision or a new direction, but a demeanor and professional attitude that looks to cut off problems before they kind of come to a head.

I'll give you a couple of examples here that happened recently. One is the ongoing battle with easements, right of way to property with pipelines. Simple matter where landowners feel like there has been certain companies, now its not all companies, I don't mean to generalize contractors, but there has been a few companies that had not abided by that easement and also maintenance.

So what that builds up to is that the land owner feels like there is no one to turn to, no one that is going to listen to them, is they are going to take it out or hold that against the contractor. Now that's something I believe the PSC could

step in a mediate before it gets to that level.

We are going to be looking at a tremendous growth and pipeline infrastructure, we need that type of leadership to get involved. It's got to be hands on.

When I listen to our PSC members talks today, it is almost like they are giving a play by play. Like they are outside the PSC. They are describing what they are doing rather than being involved and really being hands on.

The other issue is with the trains recently in Enderlin. There is a prime example where the city felt like they had local control. Didn't even bother to bring it before Bismarck, they felt like they had the authority and they are going to stick up for themselves. So you have these little local issues and I think the reason that's happening is there is no leadership. There is a vacuum coming from Bismarck and people are left to their own, I don't want to say accord, but they feel like Bismarck is not going to listen to us, we need to take it into our own hands, and I think it is really unfortunate because certainly if we were addressing these problems four, five or six years ago we would be seeing some of these issues that we are having today.

Long winded I know, but basically to sum it up, I have the vision. I have the leadership style. I have the personality to resolve a lot of these conflicts happening in the state.

2. Distribution: What are your views, platforms and thoughts on pipelines and the rail in North Dakota?

Axness: Well we need to eliminate the confusion when it comes to pipeline oversight in North Dakota. Right now there are there are at least five different state agencies then the Federal government on top of that that have some form of pipeline oversight in the state.

That has caused confusion for the industry; it's caused concern for the landowners; and it has led to many incidences including spills that could have been prevented had we had a one stop shop or one

place to go for and questions or concerns.

So what I have proposed is what I call the VIP plan — Verification of the Integrity of the Pipeline, which puts the

Continued on next page



Reisenauer



Axness