

## Democrat Domina approaches Senate starting line

By DON WALTON  
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Dave Domina on Saturday stepped to the threshold of a potential 2014 Senate bid, weighing some big issues he would lay before Nebraskans if he enters the race.

In broad strokes, they include:

- \* A federal government that has become so divided and contentious that it was closed down by partisan and ideological warfare last October.
- \* The impact of that kind of dysfunction in terms of international respect and the resulting challenges to national security.
- \* A tax system that has become so "fundamentally unfair" that it is damaging the economy and job creation.
- \* Defense funding challenges that have become so daunting that they may require consideration of fundamental military reform.

Domina, an Omaha attorney, is viewed as likely to ultimately decide to seek the Democratic nomination for the seat being vacated by Republican Sen. Mike Johanns at the end of the year. But he is not yet ready to cross that line.

"It's an enormous decision," Domina said during a Lincoln interview.

"The barriers to entry include putting my clients first and the sacrifice of privacy," he said. Domina built a successful national law practice after moving from Norfolk to Omaha in 1989 and has represented clients in more than 40 states.

If Domina jumps into the race, his entrance would assure Democrats will field a substantial Senate candidate, eliminating earlier fears that the party might not seriously contend for an open seat this year. Four major candidates are competing for the Republican nomination.

Although Domina sought the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 1986 — the year that former Lincoln Mayor Helen Boosalis won the primary nod — he has been a registered independent for a couple of decades. He registered as a Democrat once again last October when he began to consider a Senate bid.

In his law practice, he said, he has believed he could be "involved in the best issues if he was seen as independent politically without sensitive relationships" that could get in the way.



"People are looking for a lawyer who is the best choice for them regardless of who we are," Domina said. "I like to think that's what voters would do in choosing a U.S. senator."

Domina acknowledged that he recently has been urged to consider a bid for the House seat held by Republican Rep. Lee Terry of Omaha rather than entering what is regarded as a far more challenging Senate contest.

"The conventional wisdom is that the House seat is winnable whereas the Senate race is daunting, if not impossible," he said.

"I think the incumbent (Terry) is very vulnerable to a quality opponent, but that does not need to be me."

Domina said his "collection of experiences" stretches from being born in Cedar County and growing up on a farm to earning a law degree at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to practicing law in Norfolk and moving to Omaha to accommodate the travel requirements of a national practice.

And that, he said, would fit a statewide race no matter the challenge.

"The Congress of the United States needs to refocus on the simple notion that complex problems have lots of different solutions that would work," Domina said. "And in a democracy, not everyone will always get everything they want."

The income tax system needs to be more progressive, Domina said, with a higher rate on the wealthiest Americans that could help produce revenue that can stimulate the economy.

Policies that favor large corporations over small businesses lead to shrinking competition that results in increased unemployment and reduced consumer options, he said.

If he enters the Senate race, Domina said, he does not expect to self-fund his campaign.

"I have not been promised, nor do I expect, commitments of funding from any group or organization, including the Democratic Party," he said.

"I believe the people of Nebraska need a strong voice, a voice that understands Nebraska, not a voice that every Nebraskan needs to agree with."

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