

Candidate focused on minimum wage increase, more jobs

Candidate for US Senate tours northern Idaho

Anthony Kuipers/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

Democrat Nels Mitchell said he will only serve one six-year term as a U.S. senator for Idaho if elected over his opponent, Sen. Jim Risch.

"In six years, I can accomplish a lot," he told the Daily News during a meeting Wednesday. "I can do a good job, and I won't be worried about running for reelection again."

Mitchell, who is in the middle of an eight-day campaign trip in northern Idaho, said there are too many career politicians in Washington who place too much focus on being reelected rather than the pressing legislative issues at hand. They are also vulnerable to the pressures of special interest groups, which Mitchell believes have too much influence on legislation.

"As a U.S. senator, especially a one-term U.S. senator, I'm not going to be susceptible to those types of influence," he said. "I'll be able to focus on trying to do the right thing and what's in the long-term best interest of not only Idaho but the country."

While campaigning, Mitchell is focusing on raising the minimum wage in Idaho and the nation. Mitchell and U.S. congressional candidates Shirley Ringo and Richard Stallings, both Democrats, have held rallies across the state to "raise the consciousness on this issue," he said.

They support the federal government's proposal to raise the minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to \$10.10 an hour during a three-year period. Mitchell said this would keep the minimum wage consistent with inflation and cost of living increases.

Mitchell said studies show states that have raised their minimum wage saw a boost in local economy and did not lose jobs.

Currently, minimum wage workers make around \$14,000 a year, he said. An increase to \$10.10 an hour would bring their yearly wage to around \$20,000, giving them more money to spend at local businesses and increase their contributions to Social Security and Medicare.

"It's a way of creating a rising tide in our local economies here in Idaho," he said.

He also wants to continue pushing a bill, the Bring Jobs Home Act, that he said was blocked Tuesday in the U.S. Senate. The bill is intended to close tax loopholes that encourage American businesses to send jobs overseas, he said, adding it also contains tax incentives for business to bring offshore jobs back to the U.S.

Idaho isn't immune to this issue. From 2001 to 2011, Idaho lost around 28,000 jobs to China, Mitchell said.

"It is the type of broad policy that we need to be working on a national basis that will benefit Idaho," he said.

Locally, he is concerned about the fate public lands, including the Lochsa lands. He opposes any attempts to sell the land and risk the public's right to hunt, fish and recreate there.

Mitchell said he's not alone.

"Something that is pretty universal when talking to moderate Republicans, independents and Democrats is they don't want to sell our public lands to private interests," he said.

He said he would like to take advantage of reserve funds from offshore drilling to purchase land offered in the exchange.

Mitchell believes his 30-plus years of experience as an attorney have prepared him for working with large egos and bringing together "divergent interests," such as those in a gridlocked Washington, D.C.

He said he is encouraging people to research and understand issues like minimum wage and the Bring Jobs Home Act. If they do, he said, he is confident he can win in a Republican-dominated state.

"If enough people understood the issues ... I think my race and the other Democratic races would have an excellent chance," he said.

More information about Mitchell can be found at nelsmitchellforidaho.com.

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