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KU Student From Liberal To Make Run For 10th District Seat

Nick VanWyhe, a junior at KU, from Liberal, is campaigning for the 10th District in the Kansas House of Representatives. VanWyhe joined the Kansas National Guard in 2009 and toured in Africa in 2011.

University junior Nick VanWyhe registered on April 23 to run as a Republican candidate to represent the 10th District in the House of Representatives. He's currently the only Republican candidate registered to run in the upcoming election, and as of now will be running against Democratic representative John Wilson.

Among his main reasons for running for a seat in the House, VanWyhe said he's concerned about the condition of the economy — both at state and federal levels — as well as the dwindling funds for public education in primary and secondary schools, public universities and technical institutions.

“I recognize that the children are the future of the country,” VanWyhe said. “And if you have educated individuals, they're going to be better off for their future, and it's also going to take a burden off of the economy as well. The way I look at it, they go hand-in-hand basically.”

Aside from his concerns for the economy and the funding for educational institutions, VanWyhe said he's also opposed to the government impeding on individual liberties and rights.

Nick's decision to run for a position in public service isn't the first decision he's made to serve his country and state. In 2009, he joined the Kansas National Guard and was later deployed to Africa in 2011 on a combat tour that lasted just over 13 months.

“As far as I could remember, I wanted to join the military for the simple fact to serve, and I did that, so that's kind of what got me into public interest,” he said. “I want to serve. I want to give back to my country, to the state, to my community.”

Bill VanWyhe, Nick's adoptive father since he was one year old, said Nick's been interested in politics since he was a child, describing him as level-headed and a strong debater.

“I don't think he'll have any problems holding his own,” Bill said.

Nick's older sister, Eva VanWyhe, said that for Nick to be registered for candidacy at a young age is a good way for him to begin and further his career in public service.

“I just think that he knows what he wants, and he's dedicated and determined,” Eva said. “So either way, if he doesn't get it now I know he will keep trying.”

When asked to describe his political orientation, Nick said that he's fiscally conservative, but is socially moderate because he wants to balance and integrate individual liberties into current social issues. Running for a seat in the House of Representatives, he said, could potentially delay his schooling an extra semester if he were to be elected, but said he's more than willing to delay it to serve.

“Everybody asked me, ‘Are you sure you’re going to be able to do that?’ and I said, ‘Yeah, I’m sure I can do that,’” Nick said. “I had to put off school once for my deployment to go and serve, and I’m willing to do the same thing again.”

While running against an incumbent Democratic representative in Lawrence might pose a challenge to Nick, he hopes people will listen to him on the individual issues, and not just look at the “R” next to his name.

“I’m not your typical Republican,” he said. “That’s basically what I’m relying on, is hopefully the people will actually listen to me on the issues rather than casting judgment first.”

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