

Ricketts embarks on re-election campaign, promises tax relief every year

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Gov. Pete Ricketts kicked off his 2018 re-election campaign Sunday with a promise to seek "tax relief every single year I am governor."

"The only way we can have sustainable tax relief is to control spending," Ricketts said, pledging he would continue to apply the brakes to growth in state government.

During his first three years in office, the governor said, state spending growth has been reduced by 90 percent, a figure dramatically impacted by approval this year of an austere 2017-2019 state budget in response to sharp reductions in anticipated state revenue.

Ricketts was given a warm send-off by a gathering of supporters crowded into Republican state headquarters in downtown Lincoln on a 90-degree early afternoon.



Gov. Pete Ricketts and Lt. Gov. Mike Foley announce their campaign for re-election on Sunday at the Nebraska Republican Party headquarters. Amber Baesler, Journal



A member of Betsy Riot protests Gov. Pete Ricketts and Lt. Gov. Mike Foley's re-election campaign announcement on Sunday outside of the Nebraska Republican Party headquarters. Amber Baesler, Journal Star

"We are getting the job done," Ricketts said as he reviewed a series of recent announcements by national business firms that are investing in expansion in the state.

"What this is about is growing Nebraska," he said.

"We have delivered on our promises," the governor added.

Lt. Gov. Mike Foley, who will remain on the GOP ticket as the governor's running mate, praised Ricketts as "smart, ethical, rooted in values" and a dependable supporter of "life and religious liberty."

Former Gov. Kay Orr said that in his first term Ricketts has "helped (Nebraska) grow significantly" through wise economic policies, trade missions and reduced state spending.

Ricketts saluted this year's freshman class of conservative members of the Legislature as "a tremendous group (who) really helped make this a successful legislative session."

On hand for the announcement were freshmen Sens. Suzanne Geist of Lincoln and Tom Brewer of Gordon, two conservative Republicans who assumed office in January.

Ricketts said he would continue to focus on delivering "more effective, efficient and customer-focused" government services while controlling costs.

And next year, he said, he will renew his effort to enact a package of income and property tax reductions. That bill stalled in the Legislature this year, but Ricketts has said he's open to negotiations to amend the proposal in a fashion that could gain its enactment.

Many of the participants at Sunday's event were families with children along with a lineup of state and local officeholders.

Outside, a small gathering of anti-Ricketts protestors stood across the street holding a variety of signs while two demonstrators dressed in black paced the sidewalk in front of the building carrying obscene signs containing a four-letter word directed at the governor.