



Log in / Register

DAILY NEBRASKAN



News Sports Features Multimedia Blogs Opinion Advertising About

Daily Nebraskan > News

Ben Nelson urges Nebraskans to educate themselves with quality sources

Evan Cotten

Published: Sunday, April 19, 2009

Updated: Sunday, April 19, 2009



The University of Nebraska Public Policy Center played host to Nebraska's senior Sen. Ben Nelson on Friday in the Nebraska Union.

Nelson spoke on civic engagement as a group of about 70 UNL students, faculty and alumni listened and asked questions as part of the beginning of UNL's Husker Spiritfest/Alumni Weekend.

The Public Policy Center, celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, also hosted former Nebraska senators Bob Kerrey and Chuck Hagel earlier in the year.

The Policy Center was established by the University of Nebraska Board of Regents in an effort to better inform the public of policy issues throughout the entire NU system, enabling people to become more engaged at their own city halls, something the senator said is important.

"Those who participate (in policy) should educate themselves in the best possible way, and then let the debate begin," Nelson said.

One of the main talking points the senator stressed was validity of the news people are receiving. Though Nelson has appeared on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart," he said Comedy Central isn't where he gets his news.

"Although I do find him entertaining," Nelson said.

Now, more than ever, people are getting their news from digital sources and talking heads like Stewart.

Entertainers "bend news to fit their entertainers' (persona)," Nelson said. But "facts often get in the way of a good rant."

Validity of news and information is one of the Policy Center's main responsibilities.

"We cut the wheat from the chaff," said Alan Tompkins, director of the center. "We get to the good stuff."

Tompkins said the center's goal isn't to directly influence policy in the Capitol but to provide information to the public which otherwise might be tough for "average Jane or Joe to get a hold of."


This information can include financial statements of projects or companies and other types of documentation that would be provided to the actual policymaker.


The center is also responsible for surveying Lincoln-area residents and compiling the input into a large, vague public agenda. This public feedback is sent to the mayor's office and is used to gauge the importance of certain public services and projects.

Tompkins said most of the center's work comes in the area of health and behavior policy, but the system-wide program deals with policy matters of any kind.

"(The center) is working with policymakers as clients," Tompkins said. "We want to identify high quality information they can access."

Such high quality information is delivered to Nelson daily in the form of many newspapers from across the country, digital sources and television news. He even finds time for "The Daily Show" on some occasions.

 **Classifieds**
Find an apartment, job, roommate and more!

 **Get the DN in your inbox each morning**
Sign up for e-mail edition

Most Commented | **Most Popular**

Support state bill to pull investments from Sudan 4 comments

Sex Scrawls: Episode 1 6 comments

"Art Brut" crafts another worthless album 1 comment

UNO student loved Husker football, had many friends

MCLEAY: Nebraska happiest state in U.S. for a reason 3 comments

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries

ENCORE



But in closing, Nelson insisted all audience members “to get their own talk show” and become more educated and involved in their government, even if their news comes from questionable sources.

“Any debate is better than just nothing,” Nelson said. “I’m not going to complain about public participation.”

evancotten@dailynebraskan.com

Related Articles

[Legislature may create Web site to show how money gets spent](#)

[Nebraska senators, representatives outraged by AIG bonuses](#)

[Chance of federal funds sends hospitals searching for donors](#)

[ASUN nudges profs to choose books for class](#)

Comments

Be the first to comment on this article!

[Add comment](#)

I am not posting spam. I understand posting spam or other comments that are unrelated to this article will cause my comment to be flagged for deletion and possibly cause my IP address to be permanently banned from this server.



Enter the characters in the image above:



Advertising: [Submit a Classified](#) | [Advertising Rates](#) | [Contact an Ad Sales Representative](#)

About Us: [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#)

© 2009 Daily Nebraskan

College Publisher powered by mtvU and MTV Networks