

# NOTES FROM THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Eugene Weekly's arts editor and theater critic  
file for office to save Kansas



RICK LEVIN AND BOB KEEFER

PHOTO BY CARRIE MIZEJEWSKI

I love the United States, the only country in the entire world where any little boy or girl can grow up to be governor of Kansas — even if they haven't actually grown up yet or don't, strictly speaking, happen to live there.

Six enterprising high school students, I read earlier this month, discovered that Kansas law doesn't set any age limit on running for governor. The half-dozen kids, ages 16 and 17, promptly took out papers to oppose Republican Gov. Jeff Colyer in the Nov. 6 election.

On checking a little deeper, I discovered that Kansas law also doesn't require gubernatorial candidates to reside in or anywhere near the state. You could live on Mars and commute by Tesla.

In fact, Kansas has even fewer restrictions on who can run for governor than it does on owning guns.

*Really?* I thought. I've always *sooooo* wanted to be a politician.

So, on Feb. 14, I officially filed my candidacy to become governor of the — what is it? —

Sunflower State (thank you Google), also known as The Wheat State and The Free State. I am throwing my hat into the ring as an independent write-in candidate for the highest office in the flattest land, along with the six high school students and one convicted violent felon named JoeLarry Hunter, who has also apparently studied Kansas election law in detail.

Am I serious? Absolutely. Under the magical-thinking tax policy of now-former Gov. Sam Brownback, Kansas has legislated itself into fiscal chaos. What happens when you give massive tax cuts to the rich, as it turns out, is the rich get richer, and the government collapses.

Brownback got out of Dodge on Feb. 1 by becoming Donald Trump's ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom, leaving the statehouse, which is in Topeka (yes, I had to look that up, too), to be run by Colyer — a prominent birther who had been his lieutenant governor.

Kansas clearly needs adult help. I'm here to provide it.

My campaign motto is "We're not in Kansas anymore." Much as Trump rode into Washington on an outside-the-Beltway, drain-the-swamp campaign, the fact that I know virtually nothing about Kansas only lends my candidacy more credibility.

Being a boring old white guy, I'll fit right in with the current state administration. I mean, check out the photos of top state officials on the state of Kansas website. They look like the male cast of *The Brady Bunch*, now retired.

I even promise to buy myself a red necktie so I won't be arrested when I show up for work in the governor's office next January.

My first executive challenge turned out to be recruiting a running mate for lieutenant governor, just in case I might ever be unable to execute the duties of the office of governor. (Like, say, being bought off by the Koch brothers, whose corporate headquarters are in Topeka. I'm available, guys ...)

Several writers have already pointed out that, in addition to having no age limits or residency requirements for governor, Kansas law also doesn't specify that the governor or lieutenant governor have to be human beings.

So, in a nod to the important animal-rights vote, I was ready to draft my cat, Bernstein, who is named after one of the *Washington Post* reporters whose investigative journalism forced Richard Nixon out of office. Bernstein is young, smart and good looking, and would be an asset to any political ticket.

But then came the startling news that the Kansas secretary of state had rejected the candidacy — they do have standards! — of a 3-year-old Kansas dog named Angus P. Woolley, who was running on an anti-squirrel agenda. Apparently the state's law and constitution mention the word "person" prominently in connection with the governor's office.

In place of Bernstein, I called on my *Eugene Weekly* colleague Rick Levin to step up for the office of lieutenant governor. Rick's brilliant work as a theater critic perfectly qualifies him for a leading role in the tragicomedy that is Kansas state government, and he is ready for any sacrifice that leadership entails.

Our officially notarized Affidavit of Write-In Candidacy for Governor and Lieutenant Governor went out by Priority Mail on Valentine's Day.

Next step: Find 5,000 Kansas voters naive enough to sign a petition to allow us to have our names actually printed on the Nov. 6 ballot. Hey, they voted for Brownback. ■

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