



Jilka stumps in Great Bend  
By SUSAN THACKER  
March 11, 2010 @ 9:31pm

State Treasurer Dennis McKinney and Big First Congressional Candidate Alan Jilka met with voters Thursday evening at Great Bend Coffee, as Democrat Jilka continued his bid for the office being vacated by U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran in November.

McKinney is lending his support to fellow Democrat Jilka in a predominantly Republican state. Whatever their party affiliation, Kansas voters are pretty independent when they go to the polls, he said. McKinney, a Democrat from Greensburg, served as state representative for 16 years, even though 60 percent of the voters in his district are registered Republicans.

“Kansas voters are independent; they’re more practical than political,” McKinney said. To illustrate his point, he named some area Democrats who were elected to state offices in past years, including Jack Wempe from Little River, who was in the audience.

Jilka agreed, saying, “I’m going to be seeking the support of everybody.” And if elected, he promised, he’ll work to reach across party lines in Congress and accomplish what voters want. “Dennis is a role model for me,” Jilka said.

One example is his determination to work to reverse the budget deficit. “There’s no point finger-pointing,” Jilka said of the deficit that has grown during Democratic- and Republican-dominated Congresses. On this issue, Jilka said his experience on the Salina City Council and as a retail businessman would help him take the right approach. “We can’t deficit spend in local government,” he noted.

The candidate shared some of his biography, which can be found on the Internet at [www.jilkaforcongress.com](http://www.jilkaforcongress.com). He has experience working on his grandparent’s farm, and is ready to be a voice for Kansas agriculture producers. Jilka served as a college intern for Republican Sen. Nancy Kassebaum and later worked for Democrat Rep. Dan Glickman. In 1995, Jilka returned to Kansas to join his family’s retail furniture business (started by his grandfather in 1923) and launch his career in local politics.

Last April, Jilka stepped down from the Salina City Commission after 12 years and three terms as mayor, and in October he launched his campaign for Congress.

Many of the issues of the Big First Congressional District — which covers 69 counties and has more hospitals than any other Congressional district in the nation) — are clear-cut, Jilka said. They include creating jobs to reverse the district’s 4.5 percent population decline since the last Census; reforming health care to protect rural Kansas hospitals; supporting education at all levels; dealing with the budget deficit and reducing the nation’s dependence on foreign oil. “It’s going to take more drilling in Barton County, more renewable energy and a concerted policy over time,” he said of the latter.

Also present at Thursday’s campaign reception, hosted by Great Bend Attorney Marty Keenan and Democratic Party Chairman Brock McPherson, was Christina Stein, who will be running against Rep. Bill Wolf for the job as Kansas Representative in the 112th district.

From Great Bend, McKinney was headed home to Greensburg. Today he’ll be attending the dedication for the town’s new hospital, at 1:30 p.m. Greensburg has been without a hospital since the 2007 tornado that destroyed most of the town.