SEN. DEB FISCHER

Partisanship reveals polarization of America

Nebraska's newest U.S. senator left partisanship politics on Capitol Hill last week and headed home to the family ranch near Valentine for Easter.

But not before Sen. Deb Fischer stopped to see constitutents along the way.

Fischer visited briefly with business people at a local bank Thursday in Gothenburg.

She said she's enjoyed the past three months in Washington D.C.

"I've been busy with committee work and constituent issues," Fischer said.

The senator and her husband, Bruce, rented an apartment close to the U.S. Capitol which is in the same building as Third District Rep. Adrian Smith.

Her days are usually long, from 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., and she and Bruce don't do much socializing —unlike her days as a Nebraska state senator where evening receptions are common.

Fischer has also been exposed to bitter bickering between Republicans and Democrats, a much different atmosphere than the collegiality she enjoyed with former Unicameral colleagues.

Nebraska's state senators are not elected on party affiliation, at least not on the ballot.

"I think the partisanship here (in Washington D.C) reflects the polarization of the country," she said.

However Fischer, a Republican, said she's working on establishing relationships with Democrats who sit across the aisle.

Recently, Fischer successfully co-sponsored a budget resolution with Democratic Sen. Al Franken of Minnesota that promotes broadband infrastructure in rural areas.

"There are issues that we can work on across the aisle," she said.

Since she started her new job on Capitol Hill, Fischer said the amount of information senators try to absorb is overwhelming.

"Becoming knowledgeable about all of the issues and finding the time to get all of the background is challenging," she said.

Fischer pointed to her work on the Armed Services Committee.

"I love it but it's a whole new vocabulary dealing with the military and the Department of Defense," she said.

Other committee assignments include Commerce, Science and Transportation; Environment and Public Works; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and Indian Affairs.

On a personal level, dealing with congested traffic in Washington D.C. traffic has been an eye opener.

“It’s amazing,” Fischer said. “A little snow snarls traffic. It’s truly bizarre.”

Bruce drives his wife to and from work and then goes exploring, she said.

Although Fischer hasn’t had much time to enjoy the city and surrounding area, she’s anxious for the opportunity.

“There’s so much history here,” she said, noting that she also appreciates when Nebraskans travel to Washington D.C. like State Sen. Beau McCoy did recently.

Fischer, a Sandhills rancher thinks ag producers must share their message with the rest of the nation.

“We need to explain that we raise healthy, safe and quality products and that we are stewards of the land,” she said.

Each year, Fischer said that becomes more difficult because Americans are so distanced from rural areas and agriculture.

“We also need to have better messages,” she said.

The senator knows about ranching firsthand as she’s helped move cattle, worked corrals, given shots, artificially inseminated cattle and more.

What does she miss most about home?

“My new granddaughter,” Fischer said about Rachael Fischer who was born in December.

Her birth means a third generation has joined the family ranch that is operated by the Fischer’s three sons.

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