

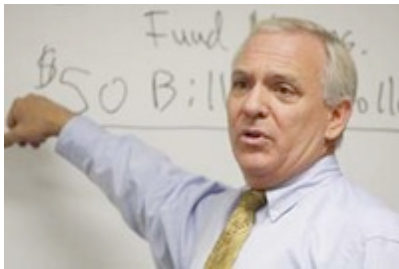
## Lack of passion, outrage bothers Senate candidate

Seth Tupper The Daily Republic - 05/28/2008

With less than a week until Tuesday's election, Sam Kephart is wondering where all the outrage is.

The candidate for the Republican Party's nomination to one of South Dakota's U.S. Senate seats said Tuesday at Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell that he's deeply concerned about "a hidden erosion of our financial values."

He blames the erosion on Wall Street and K Street — the respective centers of power for financiers and lobbyists — and he's perplexed about the lack of concern he sees from elected officials, the media and the public.



"It has really been a major disappointment for me to see the lack of passion and outrage about the corruption — literally, the acid coming from these two places — eating under our financial and family values in this state," Kephart said during a fiery speech to an audience of about 15.

Kephart, a Spearfish businessman, cited the recent Bear Stearns bailout as evidence of a broken financial system that he thinks "could be shades of '29 all over again." In March, the global investment bank and securities trading and brokerage firm received an emergency 28-day loan from JPMorgan Chase and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York to prevent the market crash that might have resulted from Bear Stearns' insolvency.

"The liquidity crisis could have tripped a switch," Kephart said, "and literally the following morning ranchers and farmers in South Dakota, when they went to do their spring borrowing, which most of them have to do, wouldn't have had the money to borrow."

Kephart said the financial situation, paired with inaction by elected officials, is a "moral problem" that the country must solve.

"I am asking the voters to pay attention here and to consider electing me, not because I have brilliant solutions to all this, but at least I'm willing to come and tell you the truth about it," Kephart said. "Starting with saying what's so is the first step to getting a solution to something, because then you're in an honest dialogue."

Kephart admitted that, as an outspoken native Philadelphian, he's not the kind of politician that South Dakotans typically elect. But he said the problems currently facing the country demand a different kind of leader.

“It may be time to have somebody who’s a firebrand and is willing to go out and stir the pot,” Kephart said. “And if you want the pot stirrer, I’m the right guy.”

Kephart is executive producer and CEO for Virtual Acumen Corp., an independent media production and digital marketing firm. He will face state Rep. Joel Dykstra, of Canton, and Charles Gonyo, of Trent, in Tuesday’s Republican primary. The winner will challenge Democratic Sen. Tim Johnson in November.

In other statements Tuesday at DWU’s McGovern Library, Kephart:

- Said he considers his inexperience in politics a “badge of honor.”

“I have a fresh set of eyes, and obviously sending experienced politicians to Washington the last 15 to 20 years hasn’t really worked, has it? Or we wouldn’t be in the mess we’re in.”

- Criticized the federal government for taking the country to war in Iraq under false pretenses.

“I absolutely promise you the U.S. government has lied to you about the reason we’re in Iraq,” Kephart said. “We are there for the oil.”

As evidence, he cited the Iraqi constitution, which states that Islam is the country’s official religion. That contradicts claims that the United States is helping to create a democracy in Iraq, Kephart said, because he considers a government with an official religion to be a theocracy.

Kephart said he does not favor a systematic withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. He instead thinks the United States should “put our troops around the oil producing fields, the pipelines, the port facilities, the borders and the key infrastructure, and literally put a red line around it — if you cross the red line, you’re dead — and let the Iraqis figure out what they’re going to do internally, because we are never going to be able to solve this religious problem for them.”

- Once again pledged, as he has in the past, to produce an online television show once a month to inform his constituents, if elected.
- Suggested the creation of a new Senate subcommittee to handle “earmarks” — spending provisions that lawmakers insert into bills, often to carry favor with voters back home.

Kephart said the earmarks should be called “special projects funding” and should be submitted as applications to the subcommittee, which would then rank the applications and fund them with money from a preordained budget.