Ken Selzer discusses the race for the Kansas Insurance Commissioner with Republican leaders in Liberal Saturday at Spencer Browne's. The Republican primary is 14 months away, but several candidates have already jumped in to the commissioner's race. L&T photo/Earl Watt

By EARL WATT

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The Kansas Republican 2014 primary is 14 months away, but that hasn't stopped those seeking the insurance commissioner's job from reaching across the state.

Current Commissioner Sandy Praeger, long considered out of step with the Republican Party, will not seek re-election, and that has created an opening that has attracted a number of candidates.

One of those candidates, Ken Selzer, made a stop in Liberal Saturday and shared why he

believed he was the candidate of choice.

“I worked 30 years in the insurance business,” Selzer said. “I know it broadly and deeply across all kinds of lines. We hear all about health care, but there are many lines of insurance the commissioner is responsible for.”

In addition to his experience with insurance, Selzer is a certified public accountant, and he believes that experience will be a difference maker in the race for insurance commissioner.

“The difference between me and them is the CPA credential,” Selzer said.

While other candidates may have insurance experience in a certain field, Selzer said his “depth and breadth” of experience will help him in all aspects of the job.

“I have seen all of the insurance industry, and I know what it means to regulate companies,” he said. “I’ve seen companies that needed to be closed down because of their financial condition. I have seen others acquire companies. I understand that process, I believe, far better than the other candidates.”

As is common in Republican primary races, the candidates are touting their conservative records, and Selzer also shared his commitment to the core values of the Republican Party.

“I am a critic of Obamacare and actively oppose it,” Selzer said. “I am not in favor of expanding Medicaid in the state. I believe that is in line with the Legislature. We are in tune. I am pro life, I support Second Amendment rights and smaller government.”

To support his claims, Selzer shared that he has adopted two daughters from mothers who could have had abortions instead.

“That has strengthened my beliefs,” he said.

He also shared that he is an avid hunter and that he wants to combine services in the insurance commissioner’s office that will help reduce the cost of operation.”

Selzer said he would have a broader focus on issues facing insurance issues in Kansas beyond health care, and area where current Commissioner Praeger has spent most of her time.

“Did you know Kansas auto liability rates are among the lowest in the nation?” Selzer asked. “And did you know homeowners rates are among the highest in the nation? Part of that is because the weather we have here. All lines of business — life insurance, the question of annuities and life and how that pays together — all of that needs to be watched and monitored. I have credentials in the life industry, health industry, and people readily recognize that this will be an asset.”

Specifically, Selzer said mandates have been harmful to those seeking insurance.

“As you are seeing through Obamacare and all the taxes, mandates and preliminary rates and exchanges, rates will go up, and that is an example of what mandates can do in terms of raising costs for everybody,” he said. “I am very much against mandates and additional burdens to business that raise costs to consumers.”

As more information has been shared about the costs associated with Obamacare, support for the plan continues to dwindle. The most recent Real Clear Politics average had 51.5 percent opposing the measure with 41.8 percent supporting it.

“There is a decreasing number of people in this country supporting Obamacare,” Selzer said. “And it is rapidly decreasing. They see the employer mandate, that the Administration won’t verify income — fraud will be rampant.”

While others may have broadened the view of the role of the insurance commissioner in the past, Selzer said he planned to function within statutory limits.

“We want to stay focused on what is required and do that broadly across all lines instead of just one or two,” Selzer said. “It is pretty simple — do it efficiently, productively and be motivational with employees. It all works. In business, every day we have to think about being more productive and more efficient. I want to bring that attitude to this job.”