

Garrison Keillor's brother runs for Minnesota Senate

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ASKOV, Minn. — It could be Lake Wobegon: The campaign headquarters shares a small building with the Swirlcurl Beauty Salon on the block-long main street, and the candidate's name is Keillor.

Steve Keillor, brother of public radio's "A Prairie Home Companion" host Garrison Keillor, is running for the Minnesota Senate.

But the brothers are far apart ideologically.

Garrison Keillor has donated money to President Clinton and other Democrats and he pokes fun at Christian fundamentalists in his weekly radio show.

Steve Keillor has no party affiliation, although he chose the words Independent Christian Pro-Life to appear beside his name on the ballot.

"Many people are sort of pigeonholing me as a right-wing conservative Christian Coalition sort of person, although that is not the case," he said. "I am somewhat middle-of-the-road as far as tax and spending issues."

Steve Keillor, 48, lives in this rural town two hours north of St. Paul, from where the show is broadcast. The town is straight from his brother's folksy show, with street names in Danish and English. He is a self-published author and part-time college instructor.

His famous brother has not helped him campaign, and the candidate does not emphasize the connection.

"It would seem that my ideas should be able to stand on their own," he said.

Garrison Keillor, 54, did not immediately return calls for comment.

Steve Keillor, who opposes abortion and wants to cut the state Senate by half, is a quiet, serious man who has written detailed papers on his key issues.

He believes Hollywood contributes to the moral decay of society. He would like to phase out gambling and teach "positive moral education" in public schools. He also proposes tying property tax to income so those who earn less would pay less.

If Steve Keillor wins, it will be an upset. His north-central Minnesota district is heavily Democratic and former state Rep. Becky Lourey is expected to win easily.