



**For Release on
May 1, 2006**

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VINEHOUT ANNOUNCES RUN FOR STATE SENATE

ALMA, WI – Kathleen Vinehout, 47, a farmer from Buffalo County who has a background in health care, Monday announced she is running for the State Senate to replace the incumbent senator Ron Brown.

“The time has come to change the way we fund health care,” Vinehout said in announcing her candidacy.

“It is no longer satisfactory to keep a system that makes people plan their lives and careers around securing health insurance.

“Health insurance costs are forcing school districts to cut teachers and classes, and driving businesses into bankruptcy.

“One serious injury or illness can wipe out a family’s savings. Half the bankruptcies in our state are caused by medical bills,” Vinehout said.

“There are a lot of plans we can choose from. Our health care costs are higher than all other industrial countries. Our actual health is poorer. We can do better.

“We need the political will to act. We need the political strength to stand up to the interests that profit from the current system,” Vinehout said.

Vinehout, her husband Douglas, and son Nathan operate a 223 acre farm near Alma.

For ten years, Kathleen was the primary operator of the family’s 50 cow dairy farm. The farm had a rolling herd average of 21,000 pounds of milk, received many quality milk awards and sold registered Holstein cattle. Vinehout was president of the Dairy Herd Improvement Association in Buffalo County for several years and represented the district at statewide meetings.

For the past two years, Vinehout assisted the Wisconsin Farmers Union with policy and legislative work. She was an advocate for farmers at the state capital in Madison, organized farmer lobbying days, and worked to promote health care reform, ethanol and renewable energy, and to keep farmer patron control of cooperatives.

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Before starting their dairy farm Vinehout directed both the graduate and undergraduate programs in health administration at the University of Illinois at Springfield. Her academic work focused on state health policy and health problems facing rural communities.

“The Republicans in the legislature have failed to act,” Vinehout said. “They refused to hold hearings on bills that would begin to make changes. The only solution they talk about is health savings accounts which is a fancy way of telling anyone who is sick to pay the bill themselves.

“I am running to make health care reform a priority. Access to and paying for health care is the number one problem people are facing today. Finding a solution must be our number one priority.

“We need an energetic and passionate state senator who is not just a follower but who will force real change. I can be that kind of senator,” Vinehout said.

“I have experienced our health care system from all sides. My first job was as a nursing assistant in long term care. As a college professor I taught health policy and administration. As a farmer I am now doing without health insurance.

“Health care is not the only problem we face,” Vinehout added. “We need a better way of funding our schools. We need a fair tax system in which the revenue grows with the economy. We need an energy plan that breaks our addiction to fossil fuels. We need better jobs and stronger communities with more local control. We need to protect our precious natural resources.”

Kathleen grew up in Aurora, IL. Both her parents served in the US Air Force. Her father was a member of the Laborer’s Union, her mother a registered nurse.

She is active in the community. She serves on the Buffalo County Agricultural Fair Association Board, and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission. While a member of the Buffalo County Farm Bureau Board she participated in regional agricultural policy planning. She is a member of the Wisconsin Holstein Association and she and her family have shown registered cattle at district shows.

Kathleen has served on the pastoral council of St. Lawrence Catholic Church where she sings in the choir and teaches a weekly bible study course.

Kathleen’s work in community and economic development has been reported in the national Catholic Rural Life Magazine. She has organized community forums, is a member of the Alma Chamber of Commerce and also the Buffalo County Rural Economic Development Corporation. She is chair of the Democratic Party of Buffalo County and was recently honored with the state-wide Eleanor Roosevelt Award for her work in grassroots organizing.

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