

Rove spends day in Reno touting future GOP success

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

RENO – Former Sparks resident and George W. Bush presidential adviser Karl Rove predicted Thursday that both houses of Congress will go Republican in the November general election, but said the presidential election is up in the air even with President Obama's low approval ratings.

Rove, speaking at the Reno-Sparks Chamber of Commerce event Directions 2012, predicted the Senate will see Republican control with a minimum of 52 seats, but possibly as many as 54.

Republicans could lose a handful of House seats but will maintain control, he said.

No president has won re-election with poll numbers as low as Obama has now, but he is a tough competitor with \$1 billion to spend, Rove said.

"It's going to be difficult," he said, predicting that the U.S. will see "the nastiest, ugliest general election campaign we've seen in our lifetime."

The Obama campaign team will put the Republican candidate on trial and prosecute tough and hard, and with \$1 billion in the bank, as often as they can, Rove said.

Winning 51 Senate seats is important if Republicans win the White House as well, because it will mean the immediate repeal of the federal health care law, he said. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act passed in the Senate using a process called reconciliation, which requires only 51 votes to reverse, Rove said.

In his comments to several hundred attendees at the event, Rove noted that the federal Health Care Law is the only major piece of social legislation since polling began in the 1930s that is less popular after it was passed.

“Why?” Rove asked. “Because every single promise made about it is turning out not to be true.”

He declined to pick a winner of the Republican presidential nomination, although he said, “(Mitt) Romney looks like he could be the guy.”

“You have a big role to play in that,” Rove said of Nevada GOP voters.

Nevada’s Republican presidential caucus, the first in the West, is Saturday. The four remaining contenders for the nomination are visiting Nevada to make their case with GOP voters. Romney is the favorite to win.

Rove, who lived in Sparks from age 9 to 15, served as senior adviser to Bush from 2000-07 and deputy chief of staff from 2004-07. Now he writes a weekly op-ed for the *Wall Street Journal*.