

Legislature fails to advance marijuana penalties bill

By Tam Lee

The Nebraska Legislature Wednesday failed by five votes to advance a bill which would make possession of small amounts of marijuana a civil, rather than a criminal offense.

LB187, sponsored by Sen. John DeCamp of Neligh, also would classify use of tobacco by minors, public intoxication and minors in possession of alcohol as civil offenses, or "infractions" of the law.

A drug or alcohol education program would be required on a first infraction by minors and a second infraction by adults. The bill was defeated on a 20-20 vote.

DeCamp said the courts and law enforcement agencies would save considerable time and money under this system because violators would not have to appear in court. Police also would have more time to concentrate on felonies and "hard drug users," argued Sen. Roland Luedtke of Lincoln.

DeCamp said he probably will bring the bill back next week with amendments to require a set fine for marijuana possession. The bill now carries a fine of up to \$100 for

the first offense, up to \$200 for the second offense and up to \$300 for the third offense.

Citations similar to those issued for minor traffic violations would be issued for all infractions. Violators would not have to appear in court unless they wanted to appeal the citation, DeCamp said.

An infraction system would penalize more offenders than the present system, he said. Currently, only a few of those caught are convicted to save the court's money, DeCamp said.

Sen. Patrick Venditte of Omaha, a long-time opponent of lowering marijuana possession penalties, said the bill was hastily drawn up and should be sent back to the Judiciary Committee for a public hearing.

When the bill first was heard in the committee, it did not contain provisions to decriminalize public drunkenness, minors in possession, or minors using tobacco.

"This bill waters down the marijuana law to the point of condoning drug use," Venditte said.

DeCamp said the current marijuana laws are "a joke" and are not enforced.

"Let's either can the laws or put some meaning into them," DeCamp said.

Unpaid tuition leads to class cancellation

Students who have not paid their second semester tuition may find their registrations canceled.

Robert Clark, UNL director of student accounts, said students who did not pay their tuition by Feb. 15 were assessed a \$10 late payment penalty and those who have not paid after Feb. 22 may be subject to cancellation.

Clark said that the Registrations and Records Office is authorized to cancel the registration of delinquent tuition payments and students are not being reinstated for second semester classes once their tuition is paid.

According to Clark, students still must pay their tuition costs, whether their registration is canceled or not.

He said that many accounts are turned over to collection agencies.

"If students don't have the money, they need to go somewhere and borrow money to meet the tuition deadline," Clark said.

"Tuition and fees are not a means by which students can receive financial assistance," he added. "Students should seek loans from financial institutions or families to secure enough money for their tuition payments."

Clark said tuition payments actually are due and payable on the first day of classes, however the university extends the deadline to the middle of the fifth week of classes of each semester.



Photo by Ted Kirk

Sen. John DeCamp sponsored a bill lowering the penalties for possession of small amounts of marijuana which failed to advance in the Legislature Wednesday.

No fee for pass-fail

The Daily Nebraskan incorrectly reported that a \$5 fee is charged to change a course to or from pass-fail. No fee is assessed. The deadline to change spring semester classes is Friday. Forms are available in Administration 207.

Research dollars finance myriad of UNL projects

By Gail Stork

Some of last year's \$9.8 million in research money provided by agencies outside the university is being used by UNL researchers to fight cancer. Some of it is channeled toward investigation of solar energy and some is being used to study the evolutionary gene differentiation in chickens.

Research titles like "Piezomodulation spectroscopy of molecular crystals" or "Investigations of Foliar Fungal Pathogens of Juniperus SPP" in process at UNL tell the average person nothing, according to Robert Rutford, vice chancellor for research and graduate studies.

Although Rutford admitted some of the research titles seem far-fetched, he said proposals would not be financed in the nationwide competition for research money if they were not sound.

Almost all money for research comes from federal and state governmental agencies and departments, industries and foundations, Rutford said.

However, the university is required to

make a contribution, he said. The amount usually is less than 5 percent of the research cost, he said, and consists primarily of secretarial or student help for the researcher.

Rutford said research proposals must be cleared by the respective department, the college dean's office and the research administration office before it is sent to compete for agency funds.

The research administration office then checks the proposal's procedural aspects, making sure the budget is complete and all possibilities are included.

Rutford said more than 900 UNL research proposals have made it through this assembly line and now are being financed.

At \$500,000 a year, the Ross Ice Shelf is one of the most expensive. The project attempted to drill a hole in an Antarctic ice shelf to examine the ice core for historical data.

Rutford said people also are doing research on \$500 awarded by a foundation and pointed to a thick computer list of research projects of various amounts.

The list includes research on firemen, weed control, alcohol programs, irrigation, hog house design, housing and pocket gopher control. Rutford said the funding agencies for these projects audit researchers often to prevent any misuse of the money.

Rutford said the number of proposals from UNL faculty members has doubled in the past two years, which partly account for the yearly increase in research funds awarded to UNL.

"The faculty is the most important key in the whole business of obtaining outstate funds," Rutford said. "The effort has to come from the faculty. I can't write them [proposals]."

Rutford said it is his job to encourage research and match people with ideas to people with money.

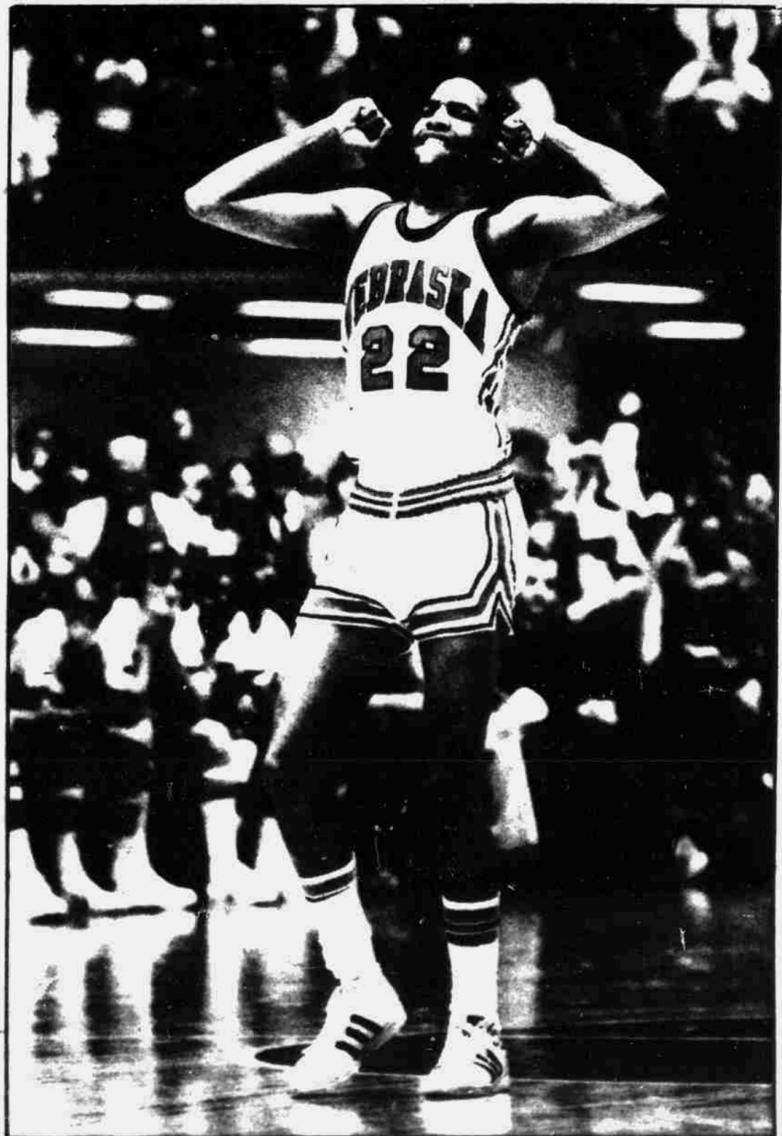


Photo by Ted Kirk

Guess who won?

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thursday

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Pervasive Borehood: the social disease that is not fun to catch... page 12.

Wounding the "dumb jock" stereotype: Ursula Walsh, academic counselor for athletes tells about athletic tutoring... page 15.