

Constitutional amendments

School aid dispute to be solved by voters

By Scott Nelson

Referendum 300 is touted by its proponents as the solution to inequitable property taxes, while opponents call it "the old shell game", a ploy to mislead the voters into higher taxes and increased school spending.

The referendum dates back to the summer of 1977 when LB33, a bill passed by the Nebraska Legislature to increase state aid to public schools, was challenged by tax revolter Zeke Brauer and an organization called Citizens for Lower Taxes. They circulated a petition within the state and gained enough signatures to restrain the bill and place it on the November 1978 ballot for voter approval.

Tax shift intended

Proponents of LB33 said their intentions are to shift the \$55 million cost of public education from property taxes to state and sales taxes within three years.

Citizens for Lower Taxes claim the bill is a hoax and LB33 would mean only higher taxes.

Ross Rasmussen, of the State School Boards Association denied charges of sandbagging school dollars.

"It is not extra money at all. It is just a

different way to support the schools through state sales and income taxes as well as property taxes," Rasmussen said.

Current method 'unfair'

He said Nebraska's current method of supporting public schools through property taxes is unfair to people who have invested a lot in property, such as new homeowners, farmers and ranchers.

"Only two states use property taxes to support public schools more than Nebraska," he said.

"There is not equity at all in state taxes that are based on property taxes. It unfairly gouges those who have property, forcing them to carry the whole load."

Rich profit

He said the ones who would profit from the present system most are the rich who bought property years ago and haven't had their land re-evaluated.

"I'm sure it will reduce property taxes and require some increase in the sales and income taxes."

Opponent Brauer said he doubted the bill would mean anything but higher spending and taxes.

"The truth of the matter is that historically state aid, instead of reducing property taxes, has had the opposite effect.



"The state aid bill, if adopted, is going to increase state support of schools by \$60 million and mean an immediate increase in state sales taxes."

Rural schools suffer

Brauer also said under the present guidelines for allocating school funds rural schools suffer while urban school districts get more money.

"Eighty percent of the school districts will share only half of the state aid pot, while 20 percent will share both halves. They will have to pay two dollars in taxes for one dollar of school relief."

Rasmussen agreed that the current guidelines would have to be altered but said that is a separate issue.

"If there isn't a change then the Legislature is to blame."

Nickel charge on bottles questioned by Nebraskans

By L. Kent Wolgamott

The debate over Proposition 301, the bottle bill, is a classic political argument with claims and counterclaims and counterclaims by proponents and opponents promising opposite outcomes if the proposition is passed.

Proponents point to the experience of Oregon is reducing litter by the passage of a bottle bill.

"It proved to be a tremendous success" according to Pat Jerrison of Nebraskans for Returnable Containers, a coalition of 20 groups favoring Proposition 301.

However, opponents claim a litter tax program in the state of Washington has been more successful than Oregon's bottle bill, according to Ted McConnell of Nebraskan's for Freedom of Choice, a group opposing the proposition.

Litter reduced

He said the Oregon program has reduced litter by 10.6 percent while the Washington program has reduced litter 66 percent.

The proposition would require a five cent deposit on any can or bottle containing beer or pop. The deposit would be refunded when the bottle or can was returned.

It was placed on the ballot through an initiative by Nebraskans for Returnable Containers which gathered about 40,000 signatures in favor of the proposal.

Proponents of the bottle bill would create new jobs for persons involved in recycling the bottles and cans, according to Jerrison.

But opponents counter that jobs in the canning industry will be eliminated by passage of the bill and the resulting increase in the use of bottles, McConnell said.

Price problems

Opposite claims on the effect of the proposition on the price of beer and pop also are made.

State Sen. Don Dworak, of Nebraskans for Returnable Containers said that recycling bottles would reduce the price of the drinks because reusing bottles would lower the price.

However, George Basley, a local Coors beer distributor, said increased transportation costs, necessary to transport the bottles back to the bottlers from the distribution centers, would raise the price of the beverages, as well as use more energy.

Jerrison said energy would be conserved if the initiative is passed as less energy would be used in the production of bottles and cans.

Controversy also has been caused by large amounts of money from out of state bottle and canning industries being spent in Nebraska to oppose the proposition.

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Experience

Elected State Senator in 1974, already vice-chairman of two committees.

Selected in first year to attend Eagleton Institute of Politics as one of 50 outstanding legislators in America.

Chairman of Urban Development Committee of 50 state National Conference of State Legislatures.

Doug co-sponsored the bottle bill in both 1977 and 1978 to reduce litter, solid waste, and the wasteful use of energy and natural resources.

Doug sponsored legislation providing funds for classes for students interested in small business.

Doug sponsored a measure to hire additional professors and improve undergraduate instruction at UNL with the express purpose to lower class size.

Honor graduate of the University of Nebraska.

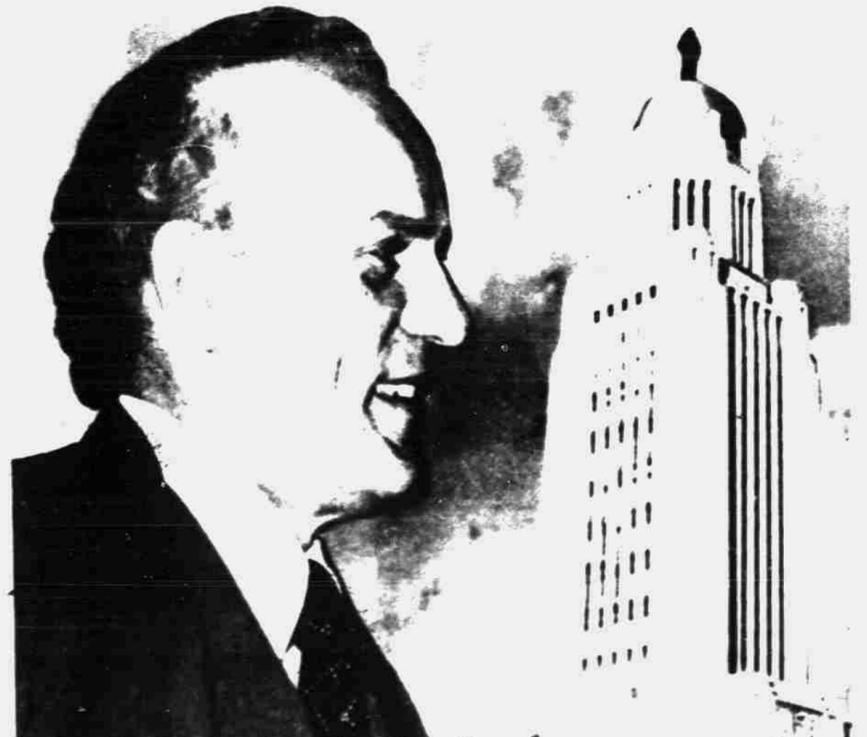
Two graduate degrees in public administration and community development from Harvard University.

Has taught on the University of Nebraska campus.

By Right with Bereuter

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