

New senators find Legislature runs at frantic pace

By Connie Casari

In the words of one freshman Lincoln senator, the Legislature "is an experience I've had nothing to compare with."

"Tell your readers that finals week ain't nothin' compared to this," said Don Wesley, 24, a 1977 UNL graduate.

Wesley is the youngest of the three freshmen senators from Lincoln. Chris Beutler, 34, Dave Landis, 30, and Wesley were elected last November.

The three senators, who comprise half of the Lincoln contingent, are all registered Democrats and all have similar feelings about the first hectic weeks of their terms.

The fast pace of the Unicameral creates a time problem, said Beutler.

"The chance for error is increased by the relatively short period of time we have to consider such a large number of bills," said Beutler.

As of Wednesday, the last day individual senators could introduce bills, 535 bills had been introduced. There are now only 82 days left in the session.

Awesome responsibility

The responsibility is awesome, Wesley said, but he expected difficulty in adjusting because so many motions, bills and activities happen at a fast and furious pace.

"I like to be well informed and sometimes it's hard to feel good about my votes," Wesley said.

Beutler said he will try to change the bill introduction system. Currently, a senator can introduce only ten bills, but committees can introduce an unlimited number of bills.

There is no point to limiting individual senators if committees are not limited, Beutler said.

"If a senator has another bill he wants introduced, he just goes to his buddy who's the chairman of the committee," he said.

"The calm before the storm" is the

phrase Landis used to describe his first three weeks.

Clash of interests

He said the genuine clash of interests has not begun yet and at this point, Landis said, his head is still above water.

Landis, whose district includes the university, introduced eight bills.

Landis said he is trying to protect an individual's privacy with the introduction of LB394.

Section I of the bill says, "It is the intention of the Legislature to protect any person from unreasonable intrusions into his or her private life, and to give up any person a legal remedy in the event of such intrusion."

Landis said the bill does not interfere with the First Amendment freedom of the press. He pointed out a line in Section VII of the bill which says, "the statutory rights of privacy shall be qualified by federal statutory and constitutional privileges and defenses."

He said this indicates that all state statutes must follow already existing federal laws.

Renovation bill

Landis also introduced, with Sen. Frank Lewis of Bellevue, a bill creating funds for renovations and addition to UNL's Temple Theater Building.

A bill to provide students receiving financial aid with immediate money for books was introduced by Beutler.

He said LB248 asks that students receive money from UNL's cash fund in the first week of school. This allows students to pay for their books, when they might otherwise have to wait for their aid check. The student would reimburse UNL upon receiving his aid check.

Also introduced by Beutler was LB117, which would raise the jurisdictional amount in small claims court from \$500 to \$2,000.

This bill, Beutler said, would allow more claims to be settled in small claims court

and would facilitate the settling of these claims.

Wesley is co-sponsoring, with Sen. Loran Schmit of Bellwood, a bill to provide tax incentives to those promoting development of alternate energy systems in Nebraska.

Solar energy

Wesley said he hopes this bill will make Nebraska a leader in solar energy.

"I anticipate much support," Wesley said. "The federal government had stumbled around for five years. Now the states must take the lead."

All three men expressed genuine likings

for their job and Wesley said, "We aren't partiers. We take our job very seriously and put it first. The pace is just incredible."

While it is still early in the session, Lincoln Sen. Steve Fowler said he hears feedback that the three new senators are proceeding quietly and thoroughly. Fowler, 28, was elected in 1972 and re-elected in 1976.

"Some freshmen push too hard and too quick and they (Wesley, Beutler and Landis) haven't made that mistake," Fowler said. "The biggest problem is that you're always trying to catch up, but the longer you're around the easier it is to adjust."



Photo by Ted Kirk

Freshmen state Sens. Don Wesley (left) and Dave Landis, both of Lincoln, enjoy a light moment during a long tedious morning in the Legislature.

Lincoln victims less hesitant to report offenses—officers

By Val Swinton

A study released Monday by the UNL Department of Sociology indicates less than half of the people who were victims of crimes reported those crimes to police. However, two area police officers feel the percentage of reported crimes may be higher locally.

The study, the 1978 Nebraska Annual Social Indicators

Survey (NASIS), differs from normal sources of crime statistics in that it is not based on offenses reported to police, but on the victims.

Nearly a quarter of the 1,940 persons interviewed in the state said they were victims of crimes last year. But only 43 percent reported the crimes to police.

The reasons most commonly cited for not reporting a crime include: it is useless to report, the crime was not

important enough to report or the person who committed the crime was a friend.

Lincoln reports higher

Lt. Paul Merritt, a Lincoln detective, said he thought the percentage of victims in Lincoln who report crimes is much larger.

"I think we get a line on anything of consequence," he said. "People in this area report crimes they see."

Merritt said part of the reason is efforts by police to get citizens involved.

"We try to encourage the community to get involved," he pointed out, referring to the community team concept. "They'll call in any kind of thing that's not right."

Investigator Robert Fey of the UNL Police Department said he did not have statistics to support his feelings, but he too felt the percentage of crimes reported were higher than the survey indicated.

However, Fey said the survey may not be that much different than the percentage on campus. "We go to a building to check on a reported offense and we find that similar offenses occurred in the area that went unreported."

Swamped departments

Both Merritt and Fey say their departments would be swamped if every crime was reported.

But Fey said he would prefer it that way. "I would rather have everybody report crimes," he said, because many of them may be tied together.

The two officers disagree as to why people are hesitant to report crimes.

Merritt said he feels at least part of the reason may lie

Continued on page 6



Photo by Bob Pearson

Right to Life advocates silently protest 1973 Supreme Court abortion decision in a march to the state capitol. See page 7 for story.

inside monday

Eastern travels: Winterim adventures remembered . page 6
Superman's new look: Man of steel has heart of gold page 8
Respectable finish: The NU women's basketball team placed third in the weekend Big Eight Tournament page 10