

# daily nebraskan

## After drinking age hearing, committee appears split

By Randy Essex

About half of the state's senators heard at least part of the testimony offered at a public hearing Thursday on Grand Island Sen. Ralph Kelly's bill to raise the legal drinking age to 21.

A packed house of citizens, off-duty pages, researchers and reporters listened to four hours of testimony on LB221, given to the eight members of the Nebraska Legislature's Miscellaneous Subjects Committee. At least 17 other senators dropped by the chamber, and heard parts of the testimony.

Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers testified in support of the bill, saying the Legislature has a responsibility to help shape the norms of society.

Industry is allowed to make millions of dollars at the expense of youth when the legal age is 19, Chambers said. He said it was probably a mistake to legalize alcohol in the first place in America, but nothing could be done about that now.

### Country drinking problem

However, Chambers said he had mixed emotions about supporting the bill, because society holds a double standard in all issues of morality.

"It is difficult to tell young people not to drink when they know the senators voting on the bill may have drinking problems themselves," Chambers said.

He said the issue goes to the moral roots and the foundation of this society, and few countries have problems with alcohol as the United States does.

Other supporters of Kelly's bill told of personal experiences and observations in an attempt to prove that teenage drinking problems have been worsened by the lowered drinking age.

Opponents of the bill charged supporters with emotionalism, and offered

statistics and arguments in an attempt to disprove Kelly's statistics that 19 and 20-year-olds are supplying minors with alcohol.

### Forbidden fruit

The opposition's lead-off witness was James Rooney from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

Rooney said results of a six-state study showed higher drinking ages create the "forbidden fruit syndrome," and that peer

groups, rather than drinking age laws, determine the drinking habits of youth.

He showed figures indicating alcohol consumption and use among young people is 5-10 percent higher in states with drinking ages of 21 than in states with ages of 18.

He said the reason for this seems to be that alcohol is used by adolescents in their quest for maturity, and that the higher age makes drinking a more salient symbol of maturity.

But Kelly questioned why the director of Boy's Town, Father Robert Hupp, supported LB221 when Rooney's study was financed by Boy's Town.

### High school professionals

Among those supporting the bill was John Bartels, a guidance counselor at Beatrice Junior High School. Drinking among junior high students has increased at an alarming rate since the drinking age was lowered, Bartels said.

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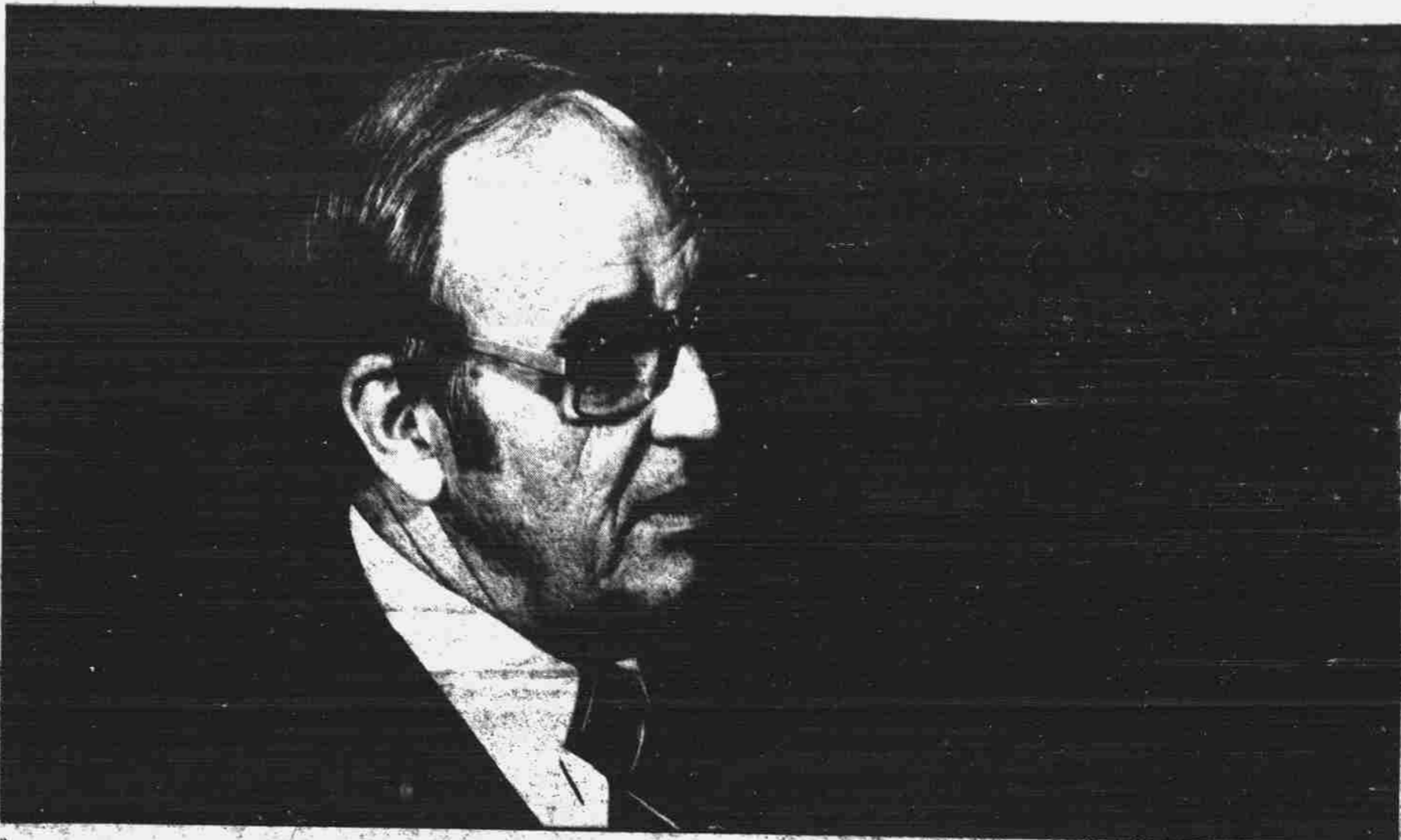


Photo by Mark Billingsley

State Senator Ralph Kelly testified in favor of LB 221. Related stories and pictures on page 6.

## ASUN campaigns grow 'frantic' as election date nears

By Shelley Smith

In most elections, the nearness of voting day increases tension among the candidates. The ASUN election scheduled Wednesday is no exception.

This year, for the first time in history, five parties have officially entered the senate race. ASUN president Ken Marienau said the number of people seeking office usually shows the interest in the organization.

However, this year's "large interest" can also be viewed in a different light, according to Electoral Commission director Susan Ugai.

"It's great that there are so many candidates," she said, "but it does add a lot of extra work for the electoral commission."

"Frantic" is how ASUN Second Vice President and electoral commission member Scott Ballentine described the atmosphere.

### 'Going nuts'

"Everyone is working frantically on their campaigns, and we are going nuts trying to get everything organized," he said.

Ugai said numerous complaints have been filed with the commission on alleged foul play during the past week.

She said candidates primarily complained that their posters were being torn down and replaced with other parties' posters.

"It's amazing how many have complained. But what can you do?" she asked.

The five presidential candidates and their parties are: Denny Wurtz, Organized Students for Independents (OSI), Bud Cuca, Students of the University of Ne-

braska (SUN), Joe Nigro, Students Organized for Active Representation (SOAR), Henry (Bob) Winkler, SINK (they have no official party name), and Scott Brittenham, Students Advocating Innovative Leadership (SAIL).

Last week, each candidate was given the opportunity to participate in a quiz given by the UNL Innocents society, ASUN President Ken Marienau, and the *Daily Nebraskan*.

### Quiz quip

However, SAIL presidential candidate Scott Brittenham refused to take the quiz because he said he failed to "find precedence for a test of this nature in any national, state or local election where 'Adults' participate."

SINK presidential candidate Henry (Bob) Winkler also refused to take the quiz and issued a statement that read: "The SINK party has found that this type of test is all too common in national, state, and local elections where 'Adults' participate. Therefore it is totally inappropriate for this election, and SINK will not participate."

Nigro, Cuca and Wurtz participated in the quiz which questioned the candidates on university government and respectively scored 88.5 percent, 69.2 percent, and 33.5 percent.

The test was also given to about 20 student leaders in order to establish a control group score. Their average was 70 percent, with scores ranging from 34 to 93 percent.

### University knowledge indicator

Innocents member Bill Skoneki emphasized that the quiz was not an indication of student government leadership ability. It's simply a way of seeing what each person knows about the university, he said.

The three candidates were also given a chance to answer several essay questions about their views and party platforms.

All three said they questioned the fairness each party was giving the others. Cuca said he felt there were more games being played than he or any of the other candidates might believe.

Nigro said his role with the NU Board of Regents would be to gain support for the student regent as a regent rather than just a student. He said he would like to work with the regents on a personal level to gain respect, and with this respect he could be an effective member of the board.

### Regents respect

Wurtz agreed that respect from the regents is essential in providing effective student representation, and he said he would stand firm with students views.

Cuca also agreed that earning the regents' respect is vital, and said he would attempt to show the regents that students are well prepared, rational and mature individuals.

Nigro and Wurtz both said they feel that ASUN is not "a joke", however Cuca said it could be considered a "pun."

He said he felt that ASUN lacks respect from the student body because of its "ineptness in interacting with students who aren't student senators."

However, Nigro argued that the ASUN senators "try to do the best job possible of representing their constituents."

Wurtz added that ASUN needs to reach "out itself to get student involvement" to gain credibility with students on campus.

### Student budget control

Nigro said he would like to see the students regain the budgeting of student fees.

Because students established the method to tax themselves, Nigro said they should be able to say how the money is spent.

The SOAR party is the only party running Committee on Fees Allocation candidates. However, Cuca said the SUN party feels that CFA needs to have non-party members.

"In order for CFA and ASUN to get accurate, unbiased information on needs for fees, we feel CFA members should be elected on a non-party basis," he said.

Wurtz said he felt ASUN's role with CFA "should be one of finding out exactly what appropriations are necessary for specific organizational requests."

He added that this year ASUN found out how important the committee is, and commended the senate for requiring CFA members to be elected.

All three said they felt ASUN should be subject to the Nebraska Open Meetings Laws which specifically state the reasons why the senate could close its meetings.

## inside friday

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