

Kelly gives drinking bill 'excellent chance' on floor

By Rocky Strunk

According to Sen. Ralph Kelly of Grand Island, it was "Irish Luck" which happened to number his bill to raise the drinking age from 19 to 21, LB221 (to twenty-one).

And as the legislation approaches first-round debate Wednesday, it would appear that the senator, who has introduced the same bill twice before, may have more than "Irish luck" on his side this year.

Results of a poll earlier this month commissioned by the Nebraska Council on Alcohol Education indicate that Nebraskans favor raising the legal drinking age by a 2-to-1 margin.

The poll, conducted for the Lincoln-based organization by pollster Joe B. Williams of Elmwood, showed that 64 percent of those surveyed favor raising the drinking age to 21, while only 32 percent favor the law remaining at 19.

According to James S. Hamilton, the organization's executive director, results of the poll will be used in floor debate Wednesday.

A thousand interviewed
Hamilton said it should be noted the

poll reflects a split 49-49 percent reaction among those 30 and under. Those aged 45 to 59 favored it by 69 percent and those 60 and over favored it by 78 percent.

The poll included 1,040 telephone interviews in a random sample of residents age 18 and older. Interviews were conducted between 4 and 9 p.m., the time working people are most likely to be at home.

It included 521 men and 519 women, 337 in the 1st Congressional District, 350 in the 2nd District and 353 in the 3rd District. The poll's margin of error, he said, is plus or minus 3 percent.

Kelly told an audience at Kearney State College Saturday that LB221 has "an excellent chance to pass." He also said that his measure has "overwhelming statewide support in every precinct."

Amendments ready

Kelly was participating in a Kearney Chamber of Commerce-sponsored legislative forum.

Kelly has six amendments prepared for LB221, although he said that he doesn't expect to have to use them Wednesday. "I plan on 221 making it all the way

across the board without any changes to the way it reads now," Kelly said.

Lying on Kelly's desk Friday was a freshly-stamped opinion of constitutional approval from the Attorney General on his latest amendment.

That amendment would make any liquor offense punishable by automatic revocation of driver's licenses. First offense would be one-month suspension, second offense would be three months, and third offense would mean a year.

Among other amendments Kelly has prepared to fight off opponents are a "dram shop" provision which would place more liability on bar owners and a 10-day close down of all liquor establishments selling to minors.

"Opponents want tougher laws rather than raising the age, so if they want them I'm prepared to give them," Kelley said. He added that he doesn't want to amend his bill because he "doesn't want to further punish the industry or citizens."

Close and hard-fought

Expected to lead floor debate in opposition to LB221 Wednesday is Sen. David

Newell of Omaha, who is scheduled to debate Kelly at a Thursday luncheon meeting of the Omaha Area Council on Alcoholism.

"I see it as very close on Wednesday and it should be a close and hard-fought bill," Newell said. He added that it was important to young people that may be disenfranchised by raising the age to continue to be outspoken on the bill.

Because the bill was late getting out of committee, final reading may extend into May when students will be out of school.

"It will have no effect if students are around for final reading," Kelly said. "The public pressure is over and it's all political from here on in."

According to Patrick O'Donnell, clerk of the Legislature, the soonest LB221 would get to final reading, it gets first-round approval Wednesday, is a week and a half.

"I'd guess that it doesn't move near that fast, but I'd be surprised if it goes into next session," O'Donnell said.

All bills that do not receive final reading are carried into the next legislative session, which will begin in January, 1980.

Student fee hike sparks regents' criticism on programs

By Lucy Bighia

UNL student fees were increased from \$66.50 to \$69 a semester at Saturday's NU Board of Regent's meeting, despite complaints from some of the regents about rising fees.

Regent Robert Prokop, Robert Raun, James Moylan and Kermit Wagner were among those questioning student fees uses.

Wagner said he is getting "hundreds of letters from parents who are against raising student fees." And Parents, not students, are the ones paying the bills, he said.

ASUN should learn how to use student fees more effectively, Wagner said.

Past UNL student regent Ken Marienau and new student regent Bud Cuca spoke in favor of raising fees.

According to Marienau, the 3.8 percent increase will be used to improve student-parent communication. The money will be spent on posters, flyers and the upcoming UNL Parent's Day, he said.

Many posters
Many of the regents questioned

Marienau's explanation. \$4,000 can buy a lot of posters, Raun said.

The regents deferred action on UNO student fees until the May meeting. UNO isn't asking an increase in its \$43 a semester fee, but many on the board said the UNO budget was too liberal.

UNL has "tightened the screws" on its budget, and UNO should do the same, Raun said.

"You haven't had the pressure applied like UNL has," Raun told UNO vice chancellor Ron Beer. "I think some tightening up is in order."

Student newspaper budgets, especially that of the UNO Gateway, were criticized by the regents.

The Gateway is asking for a budget increase of \$8,000—from \$39,000 to \$47,000 to cover rising production costs, Beer said.

Out of line

An \$8,000 increase for the Gateway, which comes out two days a week is "way out of line," Regent Ed Schwartzkopf said.

The UNL Daily Nebraskan comes out four days a week and has a circulation of at

least 4,000 greater than the Gateway's and has to adjust to inflation also, yet it cut its budget request by \$2,100, Schwartzkopf said.

UNL administrators will bring specific breakdowns of student fees expenditures to the May regents meeting.

Despite the criticism of student fees, Cuca said they're a "real bargain." NU students pay less in fees than most other American college students, he said.

Prokop disagreed, he said student fees

pay for a lot of unnecessary services, such as the student newspapers, student governments and entertainment programs.

Schwartzkopf said that things have changed since Prokop was in college. In other action, the regents:

—set the mandatory retirement age at 65. Employees staying on past that age must get a yearly appointment, but NU won't pay its share of retirement benefits past 65. Regents Prokop, Robert Koefoot and Schwartzkopf opposed the motion.

Foundation . . .

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also found that Dobson testified before the Legislature's Banking Committee on Feb. 7, 1977. But Burrows said he did not know if Dobson was paid for his testimony, and said it is questionable if the testimony constitutes lobbying.

Koefoot said Thursday that from his information, Dobson is not a paid consultant now. Koefoot also said he was not sure if Dobson had been a paid consultant in the past.

At Saturday's regents' meeting, Dobson said he did not consider the testimony to be lobbying because he discussed an article he prepared.

Prokop had charged that Dobson was paid for the appearance.

Maresh could not be reached for comment Sunday. The Milligan senator has the information from the NU Foundation, and will make it available to other senators, according to Sieck.

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