

First round bill allows UNL veterinary medicine school

By Randy Essex

The Legislature Monday took an initial step toward establishing a regional veterinary school on East Campus with a 25-12 first-round advancement of LB357.

The bill does not authorize spending to build the school, but allows the NU Board of Regents to enter agreements with other universities to establish the school. The bill requires that before the regents can enter an agreement, federal financing of at least 50 percent of the construction cost must be guaranteed.

The building would cost \$26 million, Anselmo Sen. Howard Lamb said. Nebraska would have to pay about \$6 million of that amount, if the project is realized, he said.

So far, Wyoming, South Dakota and Wisconsin have expressed favorable interest in the school, supporters of the bill said.

Opposition

But the bill was not without its opposition. South Sioux City Sen. J.R. Murphy

said he is afraid that if one more building is put up on the UNL campuses "the soil footings will give and the whole thing will drop out of sight."

"Let's empty a building and put veterinary medicine in there," Murphy said.

Sen. Gerald Koch of Ralston said construction of the school would be "folly" in light of declining high school enrollments. Koch said if quality faculty is to be attracted to the proposed vet school, faculty quality in other schools at the university will suffer.

"There is greater demand for business education than for the vet college," he said. Koch argued that some young veterinarians have been forced to leave the state because there is not a great enough demand for their services. He said service is available to farmers in times of crisis and, therefore, no more vets are needed.

Large animal

But one of the bill's principle supporters, Sen. Loran Schmit of Bellwood, said there are not enough vets to take care of large animals in the state, and that most schools of veterinary medicine emphasize

treatment of small animals.

Schmit added that half of the positions in vet schools outside of Nebraska are reserved for women, who Schmit said could not handle taking care of large animals.

Schmit and other supporters said vet schools that now take NU pre-veterinary medicine graduates are tightening admissions standards, meaning Nebraska graduates may have trouble getting accepted.

But Farnam Sen. Tom Vickers said Iowa State is interested in accepting more students from outstate, and the Legislature should look into that possibility before going ahead with the regional proposal.

But Kearney Sen. Martin Kahle argued that the bill should be passed so the "pieces of the jigsaw puzzle" could be put together, to find out where interest for the vet school is strong.

Agreement conditions

The bill proposes that NU enter into agreements with schools in Montana, Wyo-

ming, North Dakota and South Dakota. The bill could be amended to include other states that express interest, such as Wisconsin. At least two states besides Nebraska would have to prove the idea before the regents could make a firm agreement.

If such an agreement were reached, the matter would have to come back before the Legislature for money.

But Lincoln Sen. Chris Beutler said he cannot see why the school is needed. He said for testimony before the Education Committee determined that there is no actual shortage of vets in the state.

"You can't keep your hands on the purse strings and porkbarrel at the same time," Beutler warned supporters.

Schmit said that Sen. J. James Exon, D-Nebr., has been a longtime supporter of the vet school and would be in a prime position to guarantee federal funds for the project.

Chiller unit . . .

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Warner, who wanted his committee to include the chiller in the capital construction bill, will introduce an amendment to the bill to eliminate renovation of the Temple Theatre Building, the Agriculture Engineering Building and the Eppley library at UNO from the bill.

But following debate Tuesday, Warner said he does not know if he will try to include the chiller in the bill.

According to William Swanson, vice president of governmental relations, there may be several senators who will support an amendment to include the chiller in the capital construction budget.

"We were glad that the chiller wasn't included in the operations budget and are hopeful that it will be included in construction," Swanson said.

No trades

As of Tuesday night, Swanson said he didn't know of any trade-offs for the chiller in the construction budget and added that he hoped the bill won't lose any of its present appropriations.

If the chiller is denied in this year's budget, the university will lose \$35,000 in contract penalties. That amount was scheduled to increase rapidly after April 30 if the contract was not cancelled by this time.

But according to Robert Lovitt, assistant vice chancellor for business and finance, NU received a week extension

without penalty on the contract, and has until Friday to cancel without suffering further penalties.

Company worried

"The company contracted for the chiller have a lot invested and probably have a lot of work already done on the system," Lovitt said. "They don't want to see the contract cancelled."

Lovitt added that he was hopeful that the chiller would be included in the construction budget today.

Two of three other amendments that would have cut the NU budget failed.

Newell's amendment to eliminate financing of the SUN program was the only amendment passed. Newell argued that the program was brought to the Legislature as being self-supportive after the first year, but is not.


He cited a decline in enrollment in the program from 1,134 students the first year to only 242 this year.

Another amendment

An amendment offered by South Sioux City Sen. J.R. Murphy that would have cut \$4 million from the UNL budget failed by just three votes, 22-19.

Defeated 19-21 was another amendment offered by Newell that would have trimmed \$136,602 from the budget that is earmarked for the areas of excellence program.

The bill advanced on a 35-0 vote, following two-and-a-half hours of debate.



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