

DeCamp proposes rules, bullets for police chases

By Patti Gallagher

Termed either a deterrent to the "Dukes of Hazzard syndrome" or a "Clint Eastwood weaponry" bill, legislation addressing the problem of high-speed police chases was introduced Friday in the Nebraska Legislature.

Bill sponsor Sen. John DeCamp of Neligh said Monday that LB76 has four major points. They include:

- changing the offense of fleeing from police from a misdemeanor to a felony. DeCamp said court records indicate a "Dukes of Hazzard" type of attitude prevails among the youth of Nebraska, and many are involved in chases. He also said that evidence shows punishment is minimal when they are caught.

-two additional techniques to aid police in a chase include installation of a computer system to make vehicle identification immediately available to police. DeCamp also suggested equipping police with armor-piercing steel bullets which can penetrate the engine block of a fleeing automobile.

Armor-piercing bullets

The armor-piercing bullets could be used in existing weapons, and would render the fleeing automobile inoperable, without risking injury to the driver, according to DeCamp.

-allowing the court to seize a vehicle used in fleeing the police, and to sell the vehicle at a public auction. DeCamp said this technique has been successful in other

areas of the law and would be an effective deterrent to young would-be fleers who have bought their own cars.

-requiring an educational program whereby all drivers would be informed before obtaining a drivers license of the consequences of attempting to flee police. Passage of the bill would make some kind of program mandatory when testing for a license.

DeCamp also said his bill proposes that police have a specific and uniform procedure for chase situations. He said if the bill passes, formal rules would be set to determine when a chase would be initiated and concluded.

The bill is the "exact opposite" of a bill to be introduced by Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers, according to DeCamp. Chambers' approach to the high-speed chase problem is to let anybody flee or runaway from the police and then allow the police to do nothing, he said. His approach is to give the police all the tools necessary to make it unprofitable to flee from police, he said.

Chambers Monday said the DeCamp bill is very unrealistic. He termed the suggestion of using armor-piercing bullets as "Clint Eastwood weaponry," and said "one miss of a bullet could kill everybody in the

town." Chambers is currently working on a bill to counter DeCamp's. He said it will be finished within a few days, and introduced shortly thereafter.

The content of Chambers' bill includes guidelines for pursuits, the kinds of actions prohibited by law officers in the course of a chase, and a plan for compensating any third parties injured.

Two prohibitions specified by Chambers include not allowing a pursued car to be chased off the road or be blocked in by a third vehicle.

Chambers said that although he has offered legislation on the police chase issue since he was elected in 1970, this year's bill has been prompted in part by two high-speed chases in Nebraska, one of which resulted in a death.

According to an aide, DeCamp is considering deleting the proposal for the armor-piercing bullets. The aide said DeCamp thinks the bill would have a better chance of passing without the bullet proposal.

The aide also said DeCamp has not yet specified what kind of educational program would be required to obtain a drivers license. He said DeCamp will propose a program before the final draft of the bill.

Rec Center ...

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Becky Stingley, chairperson of the ASUN Commission on Student Fees, confirmed that Steller's office had not yet received copies of the report.

She said her commission had been doing a great deal of work in looking for student support for the proposed center.

Dr. Richard Armstrong, vice chancellor for student affairs, "has told Mr. Steller that he can't proceed with the rec center plans unless and until there is student support for the project," Stingley said.

"The commission has been looking into this to see if there is support," she said. The survey would show that there is support among the students, Stingley said.

"We think the survey results can be used to remove the catch-22 Dr. Armstrong has placed on Mr. Steller so he can proceed with his plans."

Stingley added that during semester break she had checked into various sources of funding for the center, including outside foundations such as the Ford foundation.

Flood harms residence halls

Almost \$1,000 in personal property was reported damaged in Pound Hall after someone flooded Cather and Pound residence halls by turning on utility faucets in two bathrooms Monday morning.

Ron Lundy of the UNL Police Department said reports of damage have not been completed, but damage to UNL property would run "well over \$1,000."

Bob Fey of the UNL Police Department

said the fourth through 11th floors in Pound Hall were damaged after a faucet in an 11th-floor restroom was left running.

A third-floor bathroom in Cather Hall was flooded, as were parts of the first and second floors, he said.

Lundy said that any students wishing to report personal property damage as a result of the flood should contact the UNL police.



Photo by Mark Billingsley

Making time

Steve Mackie hurries to his first class Monday, as second semester begins at UNL.

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