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Legislators indicate funding priorities

By Leslie Kendrick

The Nebraska Legislature's first priority is to help state agencies, several state senators said Monday at the final legislative breakfast of the year, at the Nebraska Center for Continuing Education.

The breakfast, attended by Lincoln Sens. Dave Landis, Steve Fowler, Chris Beutler, Don Wesely and Shirley Marsh, and Waverly Sen. Jerome Warner, began "Lincoln Loves the Legislature" week.

Between 80 and 100 citizens and businessmen attended the breakfast and voiced their opinions about bills and issues ranging from the Legislature's commitment to the city, to bills about education, and the New Federalism.

Landis emphasized his commitment to help cities finance their agencies. City government should be freed from excessive state regulation, Landis said. Cities should be free from a sales tax lid, and should be given a chance to choose for themselves how to finance their agencies. In addition, he said, formulas for state aid to cities should be equitable and not favor rural towns, as they do now.

State services first

"However, if it is a question of using our state budget dollars we've raised through taxes, ultimately I think we have to fund state services first, and use those (tax dollars) to accomplish our constitutional obligations," Landis said.

Warner also said the state government should receive tax dollars before any other government level. Warner said he would not support LB591, which would allow the city of Lincoln to increase the city's sales tax. Warner said because the city's tax is tied to the state's tax, an increase in the city's sales tax rate would have an adverse affect on the state's ability to adjust tax rates.

Both Beutler and Landis voiced support for LB628, the educational equity bill. The bill is designed to prohibit discrimination by sex in education and make up for the loss of the federal Title IX program.

Beutler also said he supports LB946, which allows the state to make up for the loss in federal loans for secondary education.

Education right

"It is my feeling that every student, from a janitor's daughter to the daughter of a doctor, has the right and ought to have access to secondary education," Beutler said.

Fowler said quibbling over a 1 percent increase in the state tax rate has left little time for the Appropriations Committee to help state agencies.

"One only has to look over the argument of increasing the tax rate by 1 percent to see how ill-prepared we are to meet the issues facing us," Fowler said.

Fowler said the Legislature ought to look at how the state will be affected by the New Federalism before endorsing it.

Fowler said Nebraskans should ask themselves if they are willing to pay the extra costs in state taxes in order to keep state agencies.

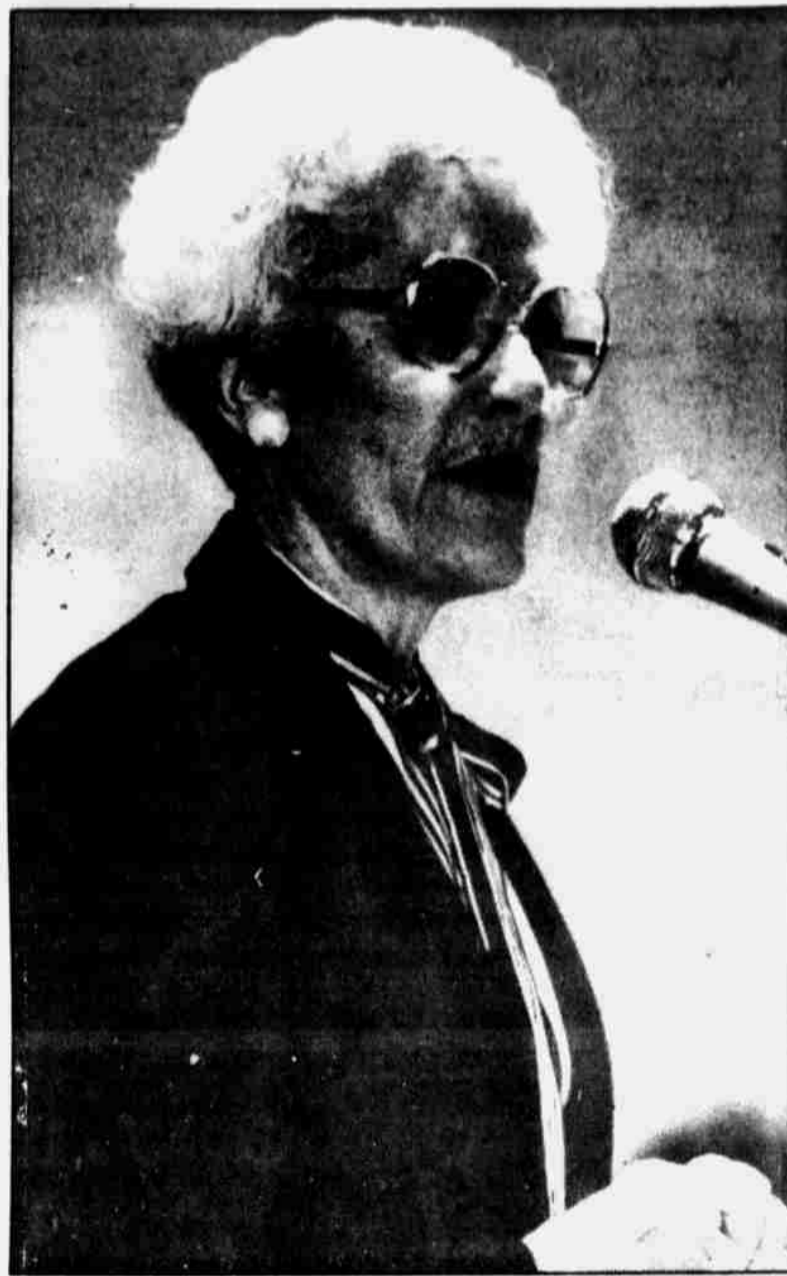


Photo by Dave Bentz

Mayor Helen Boosalis

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The Rodeo Club will meet tonight at 7 p.m. in the East Union. The room will be posted.

The UNL Amateur Radio Club will meet Thursday at 4 p.m. in Bancroft 312. All interested people are welcome.

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Emergencies, lack of funds delay repairs

Because of a lack of funds in the NU budget, "C" priority maintenance work will be back-logged until July 1, the start of the new fiscal year.

"We've had some emergencies come up," said maintenance manager Jerry Delhay. "There have been some things like power outages and steam outages where we have had to call in men to work weekends on overtime."

These emergencies, Delhay said, have put a strain on the budget and caused a management decision to delay all but necessary work.

According to Delhay, "C" priority work is that which is non-essential to the safety and performance of the buildings. He mentioned painting as an example.

Delhay stressed that the "C" priority delay, in effect since Feb. 1, will not cause any work to be left undone that would hinder classes or alter the building environment.

Delhay said the new budget year will allow maintenance workers to start doing the work they've back-logged.