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Critics charge harassment bill too vague

By Patty Pryor

Two measures aimed at tightening law enforcement procedures were heard before the Legislature's Judiciary Committee Tuesday.

LB1091, introduced by Sen. Loran Schmit of Bellwood, would prohibit law enforcement officers from making threats and other harassing or coercive statements toward witnesses, victims, suspects or others involved in any investigation.

Additionally, anyone detained for questioning in an investigation must be made aware that their cooperation is voluntary and that they have a right to have legal counsel present in felony investigations.

LB1095, introduced by Sen. Carol Pirsch of Omaha, reduces the penalties for carrying a concealed wea-

pon, changing the charge from a Class IV felony to a Class I misdemeanor.

In introducing his bill, Schmit said he believed that witnesses and victims often are not afforded the same protection as the accused in criminal investigations.

Several attorneys and police officers, however, found fault with the bill in its lack of clear definition and intent.

"What constitutes a threat or harassment and how that'll eventually be interpreted is going to affect any statement we get from a witness," Douglas County Attorney Sam Cooper said.

The bill may well impede an investigation if asking for an accomplice's cooperation in exchange for immunity is seen as coercion, he said.

Capt. Ron Flansburg of the Lincoln Police Depart-

ment agreed that the bill's intent is clouded by its vague wording.

"On the surface, this bill looks like a protection from over-zealous law enforcement officers," he said. "But it's hard to tell when an investigation becomes harassment or a comment becomes a threat."

In introducing LB1095, Pirsch said that by reducing the charge of carrying a concealed weapon to a misdemeanor, the maximum penalty for such a conviction would be more appropriate.

The measure would reduce the maximum penalty to one-year imprisonment and/or a \$1,000 fine.

Because the current penalties are so severe, Pirsch said, prosecutors are often reluctant to press

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Contributions honored

Two ceremonies will honor six Nebraskans March 1, the 117th anniversary of Nebraska's statehood.

Bob Kerrey will present awards sponsored by the Nebraskaland Foundation at 10 a.m. at the Capitol.

The five Nebraskans honored in the first ceremony include C. Bertrand Schultz, Harold Warp, Samuel Cornelius, Jim Hartung and Nancy Foreman. These people have helped shape the image of Nebraska across the nation and the world, said John Hanlon, executive director of the Nebraskaland Foundation.

Schultz, a UNL geology professor, will receive a Pioneer Award for his work in paleontology. Schultz is a native of Red Cloud and has been executive director of the Nebraska Academy of Sciences since 1975. He has been the research curator of vertebrate paleontology at the UNL State Museum.

A Wagonmaster Award will be given to Warp, known for his development of the Pioneer Village at Minden. Warp now lives in Chicago but makes frequent trips to Minden.

Cornelius, currently special assistant to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, will receive a Trailblazer Award. Currently a resident of Kansas, Cornelius was involved in Nebraska Boys Clubs, YMCA and in 1972 received an outstanding alumni award from his alma mater, Anderson College in Anderson, Ind.

UNL assistant gymnastics Coach Jim Hartung also will receive a Trailblazer Award. Hartung, an Omaha native, was a UNL championship gymnast.

Hanlon said Hartung has brought Nebraska national and international recognition because of his gymnastics achievements.

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UNL announces hiring of new vice chancellor

By Sallie Jo Simmons

Robert R. Furgason was named UNL vice chancellor for academic affairs at a meeting of the NU Board of Regents Saturday.

Furgason is currently the vice president for academic affairs and research at the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho, said Bob Bruce, director of university information at UNL. Bruce said Furgason was recommended by the chancellor's advisory committee established in mid-July.

Furgason is a registered professional engineer, Bruce said. He earned his B.S. and M.S. degree at the University of Idaho and completed his Ph.D. at Northwestern University.

Furgason has held the same position at Idaho for the past five years, Bruce said. He is responsible for all instructional, research and extension activities, Bruce said.

Furgason was a research and design engineer for the Boeing Company, Phillips Petroleum Co., and Martin Marietta Co., before joining the University of Idaho's chemical engineering department in 1961. He was the acting head of the department

in 1964 and the chairman in 1965. Bruce said Furgason became dean of the College of Engineering in 1974, and vice president in 1978.

The former vice chancellor for academic affairs, John Strong, announced his resignation last spring. Bruce said Strong currently is a professor of law at the University of Arizona.

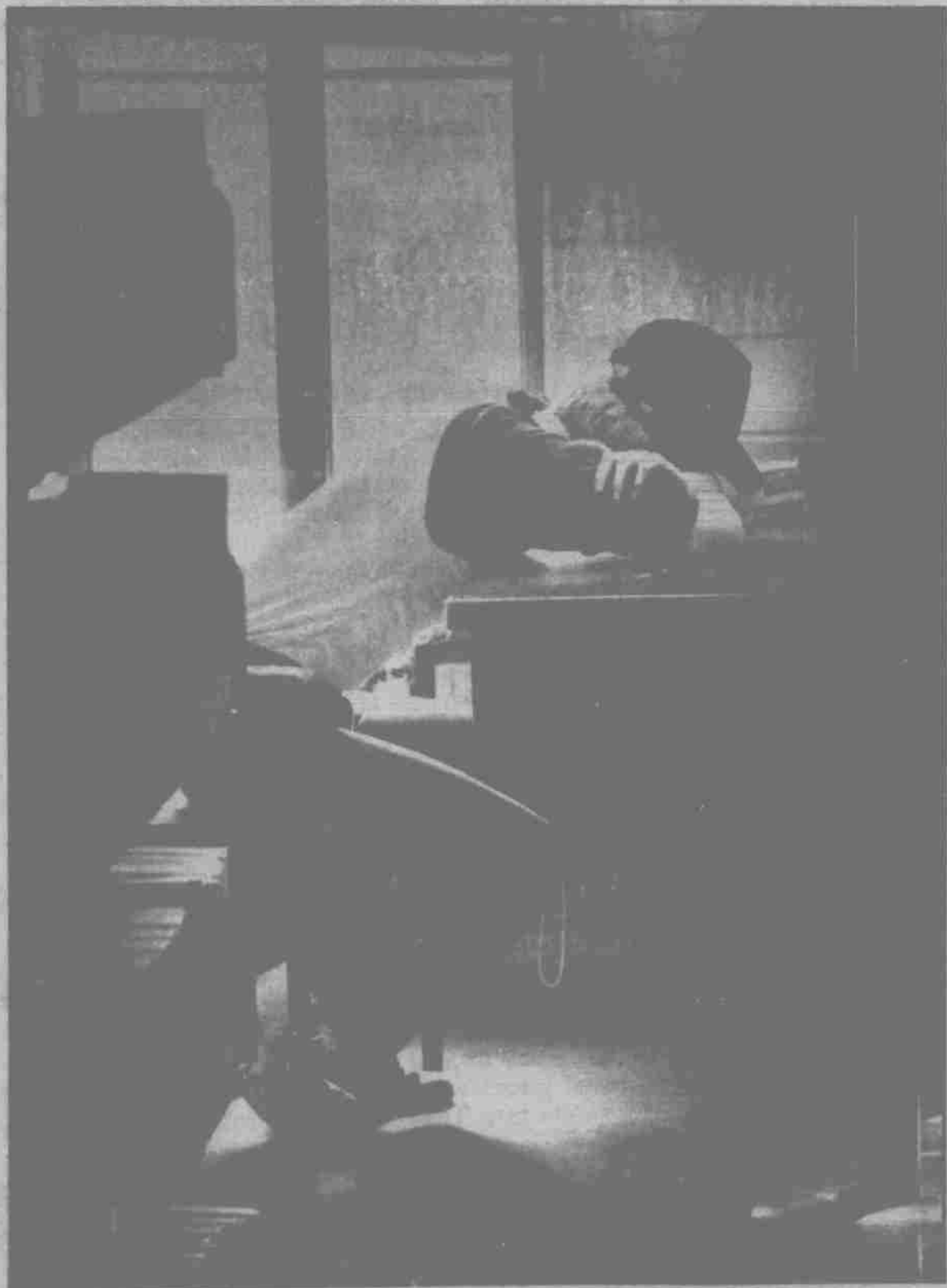
The acting vice chancellor for academic affairs is the assistant to the chancellor, John Yost.

Yost said Furgason was one of 100 nationwide applicants for the job. The advisory committee, with John Schutz as chairman, started looking for a replacement in mid-July, he said.

Four applicants were invited to UNL in late November and early December, Yost said. Only Furgason was asked to return for a second interview in January, he said.

The position Furgason will assume at UNL this spring does not involve the areas of research and agriculture that he currently deals with in Idaho, Furgason said.

"With agriculture such an important part of Nebraska," he said, "it's quite appropriate for UNL to have a separate vice chancellor for that department."



Kevin Adams, a sophomore business-finance major, catches up on his studies Tuesday afternoon at Love Library.

Craig Anderson/Daily Nebraskan

Harris discusses legislative issues

By John Meissner

Commonwealth's failure will hurt the university, said a state senator at Tuesday's Government Liaison Committee breakfast.

Lincoln Sen. Bill Harris reiterated claims he made at a Friday press conference. The state banking department hid the Commonwealth problem for two years, he said, and now the state is responsible.

"The state is obligated to pay back the depositors' money, and that gets above \$60 million very quickly," Harris said. "The university and other programs will suffer, but if you use people and throw them away, you're not going to survive as a state."

Harris explored other topics facing the legislators, including the overburdening amount of legislation introduced each session.

"The biggest problem with the Legislature is the number of bills," Harris said. "There's no way to handle them."

"Something has to be done about it," he said. "But constitutionally, how can you prevent someone from coming up with, say, 100 bills."

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