

Editorial

Daily
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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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LB662 is a loser Separate issues or throwout

Its title on Tuesday's general election ballot is Referendum 400, but everyone who has followed the election campaign knows it by another name: LB662. Few proposed state laws have attracted so much ink, controversy and confusion as this 1985 law.

Voters face a terrible dilemma in deciding LB662's fate. So many claims have been made about what the bill would do that no one really knows what they'd get if they voted "yes." Due to that confusion, we feel a "no" vote on Referendum 400 would be wisest.

The 55-page bill boils down to these provisions:

●All elementary-only school districts must merge or affiliate with districts that have high schools by Sept. 1, 1989.

●No more than 45 percent of the total operational costs of Nebraska's schools can come from property taxes.

●The state sales tax will be raised by 1 cent Jan. 1 in order to provide money for increased state aid to schools.

Within those three sentences lie a host of possible meanings. About the only thing voters know for certain is that sales taxes would go up if LB662 is retained. That explains why the law catapulted to prominence in the governor's race, with Republican Kay Orr calling LB662 a tax increase and claiming that Democrat Helen Boosalis's support for the law means she favors raising taxes.

Boosalis responds that LB662 means property-tax relief, which she supports. At that point, however, everyone falls into a quagmire. Does a 45 percent cap on property-tax support for schools — combined with a sales-tax hike — equal property-tax relief? Would the 1-cent sales tax increase be enough to pay for increased state aid? Who would get the extra state aid? No one really knows. LB662 doesn't say.

Broadcast bias Public radio, TV news too slanted

Some of the best programming on the electronic media can be found on public radio and public TV. Some of the most biased news coverage can be found there, too. Both National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting System recently have undergone sustained criticism for biased journalism.

In the Oct. 27 issue of *New Republic*, Fred Barnes grants that some of the best examples of radio journalism can be found on NPR, but "the bad news is that its news coverage is palpably slanted."

This agenda dominates when "NPR goes beyond breaking news" and engages in its many lengthy "background pieces." The NPR broadcasts of "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered" can be heard on KUCV, Lincoln's public radio station.

The picture becomes more chaotic when you turn to school consolidation, which is how LB662 was born. Opponents say small schools will be forced to close; supporters say not. Supporters say educational quality would improve; opponents say not. Opponents claim they'd lose their right to decide how their children would be educated; supporters counter by saying such people actually would have more control. Again, no one really knows.

School consolidation and school financing are complicated and emotional enough as separate issues. But as a result of complicated political horse-trading, both issues ended up in a single bill that almost everyone connected with it, including Gov. Bob Kerrey, has said is flawed.

The two issues were combined to get state senators on both ends of the bill to vote for LB662. But that combination gives many people good reason to oppose it as well. Not only are the bill's effects unclear, but many citizens who support goal A would have to swallow an unacceptable goal B — whatever goals A and B are to a person.

The confusion that has dominated the LB662 debate has detracted from the discussion over how to consolidate schools or change financing, not to mention whether either should be done at all. Far better to repeal the law, keep the two subjects separate next time and debate each on its merits alone.

LB662's proponents say any flaws in the law can be fixed by the next Legislature, but the political difficulties of that suggest that it's better to throw out the entire mess. Because of all the uncertainty and regardless of whether school consolidation and changes in school financing are needed, the Daily Nebraskan recommends repeal of LB662 by voting "no" on Referendum 400.

PBS has had a longer association with charges of bias — both from the right and from the left. The charges typically are broader than simply picking at the news programs (like the superb "McNeil-Lehrer Report") and thus must be more carefully examined. After all, outside the "news" context, opinion and analysis are legitimate media goals.

Nonetheless, after more than 50 congressmen called for a review of PBS programs, the PBS board of directors moved to review their programming.

The autonomy of NPR and PBS from both governmental and commercial control is one source of its high quality, albeit slanted, coverage. NPR and PBS should become more balanced in their presentations because it's right, but not because they were forced by threats of funding cutbacks.

A date with the Grim Reaper

Intoxicating evening turns into tale of Halloween horror

This is the scariest Halloween story I know. Because it is true. It happened to two UNL students, Margaret Millea and Jeff Johnson and their friends a few years ago. And it could happen again to anybody. Even to you.

They went to a Halloween party at a "haunted woods" about 20 miles east of Lincoln. Margaret remembers walking through the wooded acres with a guy that looked like the "Grim Reaper" and seeing the "graveyard" with names of her friends printed on the stones. And then came the man who jumped out of the woods with a screaming chain saw. Everybody likes being scared on Halloween. As long as it isn't real.

Jeff was bored. He spent most of the night drinking by a bonfire with his date. He didn't get scared until later.

It was a college party and people got drunk. Too drunk to drive the 20 miles home, but they did anyway.

Margaret was in a '66 Mustang with her date and another couple. The car didn't have seatbelts. She hunched down, tired and drunk, and fell asleep.

Jeff and his date followed the Mustang for several miles. It kept speeding up and slowing down. Finally Jeff just kept the needle at 55, put in a tape and tried to concentrate on the two-lane strip of highway that would bring him home. The Mustang skipped ahead.

Margaret doesn't remember hitting the car.

"It was real detached. I remember waking up and the car was rolling. I was looking around and no one else was moving. I was really disoriented. . . I realized we were in the ditch."

She yelled at her date, in confused and angry fear.

"I finally realized he was slumped over the wheel and the windshield was gone." She tried to open the door, but the passenger side of car had bowed and she was trapped.

"I'm thinking about Starsky and Hutch episodes — 'the car's going to blow.'" She kicked the door open with both legs and then pulled a girl who was riding in the back out of the car. She couldn't walk, so Margaret dragged her 30 yards and then ran back to the car and lifted her date's bloodstained face. He was unconscious, and she

couldn't stop crying.

Jeff had reached the crest of a hill. "There was all this debris in the road, like pieces of metal and glass and rubber." His date asked him what happened. "God, I don't know," he said.

They pulled over and turned around. By the time they got back, Margaret was standing in the middle of the road, covered with her date's blood and her own. She was screaming, crying and incoherent.

Jeff and his date saw the Mustang at the bottom of a 15-foot ditch. The engine was on fire. They dragged Margaret's date out through the broken windshield and carried him, unconscious, across the highway. They easily lifted out the remaining passenger, who kept insisting he was "OK." He had a double concussion.



Lise Olsen

Another car stopped and then went up the road for help.

But Margaret and Jeff say they waited for what seemed like a really long time before help came.

Jeff found the second car almost by accident. A friend was shining a flashlight down along the ditch and caught something shiny about 20 yards away.

"It was another car. It looked like a Chevy Nova turned into a Toyota Tercel," Jeff remembers.

The driver was wearing a tuxedo, red bow tie and cummerbund. He hung unnaturally out of the windowless auto. He had no pulse.

"There was the smell of death — fresh death. You want to say blood," Jeff remembers.

The passenger in the car was equally dressed up in a rabbit coat; she was still breathing but badly hurt. Jeff learned later that the pair was on its way home from a pre-nuptial dinner. The driver was to have been his brother's best man.

The rescue squad finally arrived.

Margaret remembers being put into an ambulance with her date and the other two passengers. She didn't know that someone had died. She didn't know how badly her date was hurt, and she didn't know he had already been charged with motor vehicle homicide. Later, the charges would be dropped, when police investigators discovered that the other car had crossed the center line and the now-dead driver also had been drunk.

Then Margaret got to the hospital. "They were giving me stitches and I didn't even realize I was cut." After the doctor treated her here she caught her image in a mirror. "I freaked out," she said. Her date had multiple injuries and was in intensive care for weeks. When she went to see him, he looked "like a mummy."

"He had one tube going in and one tube going out. Nutrition and waste. I grabbed his hand and he managed a weak smile. I told him, 'People have tried to get out of kissing me, but this is the best excuse I've ever heard.'"

When Jeff drove home from the hospital that night he put on his seatbelt. He always wears it now.

He didn't sleep much that night.

Margaret didn't sleep much either. "I couldn't stand sleeping with the light off for a week," she said. She didn't drive at night for three weeks, and for months when she rode in a car on a two-lane highway and another car passed, she would shiver uncontrollably.

When she learned about the death, she felt an irrational guilt.

"I did feel sort of responsible in a really bizarre way. There are people that wish that it was me instead of him. Nobody wishes death, but it's just a tragic situation."

But she was angry, too.

"I was victimized by a drunk. If my date had been at fault and he'd been dead, how could he deal with the guilt? It's almost better if the guy who caused it doesn't have to deal with it," she said.

She's angrier still when someone she knows drives home drunk or high.

"Somebody died."

It was Halloween.

Olsen is a senior news-editorial major.

Letters

DN policy 'informal censorship'

The "informal censorship" of the Daily Nebraskan is both shocking and intolerable. The DN advocates itself as a student newspaper — a training ground for future journalists — and a campus newspaper — a forum for diverse opinions that are proper for a university.

In regard to the recent Holocaust controversy, the DN refused advertisement from an individual who was trying to exert his opinion. Running or not running the advertisement would not have affected the Holocaust Confer-

ence. Its sponsors claim the conference is "set." All that could have resulted was a discussion on the reality of the Holocaust — right or wrong.

Furthermore, it appears that our public forum (the Daily Nebraskan) is mixing its editorial and business decision — a definite no-no in this case. It seems hypocritical for the DN not to accept advertisements that in no way represent the viewpoint of the DN, while at the same time complaining about the lack of ad revenue that restricts space for editorials from students.

I am not accusing the DN of having a liberal or conservative bias; I am complaining that its ad policy is simply informal censorship that restricts free expression. Please limit your editorial discretion to the "Letters" page and let the ad department raise some bucks. Maybe more letters like this will make it to print.

Jerry Roemer
senior
ag honors
ASUN senator

Jewish federation lauds DN decision to refuse Holocaust ad

We are writing as members of the Lincoln Jewish Federation to express our appreciation for your appropriate refusal to carry an advertisement submitted by William Curry which questions the occurrence of the Holocaust and the careful and thoughtful process you went through in reaching that decision.

The term "Holocaust" denotes the systematic murder of six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis during World War II. Five million non-Jews also were murdered. The fact of the occurrence of the Holocaust is beyond debate or question. We Jews are particularly sensitive to the occurrence of the Holocaust since our total destruction, the "Final Solution," was a principal objective of Nazi Germany. Two out of every three European Jews were murdered, which constituted one-third of the world Jewish population. There can be no confusion between the occur-

rence of the Holocaust and any other subject, including the existence of Israel.

The fact that the editorial board of the Daily Nebraskan may have hesitated for even a moment over whether to publish a blatant and deliberately anti-Jewish lie about historical facts only underscores the need for our generation and future generations to study and learn about the Holocaust so that the mistakes of the past will not be repeated.

The Holocaust is not just a matter of Jewish concern; it affected, and continues to affect, all of humanity. One of the lessons of the Holocaust is the result which can occur when good people remain silent in the face of bigotry, hatred and evil.

We thank you again. You have done a significant service by responsibly dealing with a difficult matter.

Yale Gotsdiner
Robert L. Nefsky
Lincoln Jewish Welfare Federation Inc.

Letter policy

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others.

Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to

edit all material submitted.

Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned.

Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.