

Survey: Most Nebraskans say abortion private decision

About two-thirds of Nebraskans responding to a survey said abortion is a private decision that the government should not regulate, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln office said Monday.

The survey of 1,199 Nebraskans was taken before last summer's U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the Webster case, which has been interpreted to mean states may impose more restrictions on abortion.

David Johnson, chairman of the UNL sociology department, said the 1988 survey results were released Monday because the topic has become timely in light of the Webster decision and because the Legislature will consider the issue when it convenes in January.

The UNL Bureau of Sociological Research said 66.3 percent of the 1,209 people repoding to the survey said abortion is a private decision.

The question was one of many asked on the 1988 Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey, conducted by mail and by telephone in October through December 1988.

Another survey would be needed to determine whether the Nebraska political climate on abortion has changed since the Webster decision, Johnson said.

In the survey, people were asked "whether to have an abortion is a strictly private decision, which the government should not regulate in one way or another."

Slightly more than 66 percent said they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement; 25.3

percent disagreed or strongly disagreed; 8.4 percent said they were neutral or didn't know. The margin of error was 2.9 percent.

Similar results were obtained when the same question was asked in 1982. Seventy-one percent agreed or strongly agreed; 24.3 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed; and 4.9 percent were neutral. There were 1,892 respondents in that survey.

"That question is framed to get a pro-abortion response," said Julie Lostroh, a Nebraska Coalition for Life spokeswoman.

She said it would better reflect the attitude of Nebraskans to ask whether they favor or oppose legalized abortion "the way it's practiced now."

Johnson said the question was worded to relate to issues raised in the Webster case, which has to do with governmental regulation of abortion, not to get a response in favor of abortion.

The survey showed political affiliation appeared to be related to abortion views much less than one might expect, Johnson said. Except for people who are strong Republicans, most groups did not vary in a consistent way on the question, he said.

Among those who consider themselves strong Republicans there was the highest percentage of those who strongly disagreed that abortion is a private decision and the lowest percentage of those who strongly agreed. But even among strong Republicans, a majority said they believed abortion was a private decision.

200,000 Czechs protest

PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia -- More than 200,000 people filled the streets of Prague on Monday, demanding free elections and the resignation of the hard-line leader in the largest protest ever in this Communist nation.

For the first time in decades, major protests involving tens of thousands of citizens also broke out in other cities, state-run Czechoslovak TV said.

The protests posed the greatest threat to date to the rigid model of Communist government that has pre-

vailed here since a Soviet-led invasion crushed the "Prague Spring" reform movement in 1968.

Czechoslovak TV said at least 200,000 people took part in the march in the capital. It also reported 20,000 protesters in the city of Brno, 10,000 in Bratislava and 5,000 in Liberec.

Party leader Milos Jakes responded to the protests by warning the demonstrators not to go too far.

"Any attempts to disrupt social and political stability . . . can only seriously threaten the implementation of necessary change and bring

the society into a crisis with unforeseeable consequences," the 67-year-old leader said on television.

Some of the protesters carried banners reading "Red murderers to court" -- a reference to the alleged death of mathematics student Martin Smid. Dissidents say Smid was killed Friday by police, but the government called reports of the death "an unfounded rumor."

The demonstrators also supported a general strike called by students and artists for Nov. 27.

Bush vetoes D.C. abortion funding

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE -- President George Bush on Monday vetoed the bill appropriating money for the District of Columbia because it would allow funds from local taxes to be spent on abortion.

It was the second time Bush vetoed the D.C. appropriations bill over the abortion issue. His earlier veto was in October.

The president, who was returning to Washington from a campaign trip to Rhode Island, sent a message to the House saying the bill was "unacceptable."

Bush said the bill "would permit congressionally appropriated local funds to be used for abortion on demand with no restriction whatsoever. As a matter of law the use of local funds in the District of Columbia must be approved by the Congress and the president."

White House Chief of Staff John Sununu spoke with House Speaker Thomas Foley, D-Wash., earlier Monday, and Foley asked for quick action on the bill so Congress would

have a chance to act again before leaving for the holidays, according to presidential spokesman Marlin Fitzwater.

The bill would have restricted use

of Medicaid funds for abortions only to save the life of the mother. But Bush objected to what he called "abortion on demand" paid for with other funds derived from local taxes but also appropriated by Congress.

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