

Official: Proposal is insult Foreign students may pay taxes

By Doug Isakson
Staff Reporter

Fewer foreign students would come to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln if a proposal to tax their scholarship money is approved, an official said.

Peter Levitov, director of International Educational Services, said that if the federal tax is passed, it would be an insult to foreign countries and an economic hardship to foreign students, discouraging those who have scholarships from their own countries from studying at American universities.

The current law taxes only U.S. sources, but if the proposal passes, funding from foreign sources would be taxed instead.

The cost of college in the United States for foreign students is already high compared to other countries, Levitov said. The tax would be one more barrier to foreign students, he said.

The loss to UNL would be "terrible," Levitov said, especially since Nebraska ranks low compared to other states in its percentage of foreign students.

"It's also quite offensive," Levitov said. "Already some people are upset about this. It's almost like inter-

fering with the efforts of a foreign country to educate its own citizens.

"It's like taxing the parent of a student from another country," he added. "If a parent gives money to them, do you tax that?"

Bert Harding, a Washington attorney who represents a number of grant-making organizations, said that there would be complaints regardless of what source was taxed.

The current law is beneficial to American universities and some foreign students because foreign students who receive foreign funding can attend U.S. universities without being taxed, Harding said.

But it hurts U.S. foundations who sponsor foreign students who work and study in countries outside the United States because the tax cuts into the amount of the scholarship.

"You can imagine how stupid this seems to be participating foreigners," Harding said. "Germans get a grant (from a U.S. sponsor) to study in Spain, and suddenly the U.S. is asking for this tax. As we speak, that's the state of the law."

According to a report in the Oct. 10 issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education, several U.S. grant-making foundations, including the Ford, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial,

W.K. Kellogg, John D. and Katherine T. MacArthur and Rockefeller foundations, are lobbying for the new tax.

Peter Barnes, deputy international tax counsel at the U.S. Treasury, refused to comment Friday on whether the change was likely to take place.

Levitov said that by reducing the number of foreign students studying at UNL, the tax would lower the quality of education at UNL and hurt the state's economy.

Having foreign students on campus is especially important in a state such as Nebraska, he said, because its location causes it to be insulated from foreign cultures.

"The university is committed to having an international student presence to provide Nebraska students with opportunities to learn by experience from students from other countries," Levitov said.

"All of us in this state are affected by world events. What happens in the world will affect us economically and directly. To lose this education will disadvantage the state as a whole," he said.

Fewer foreign students also would mean an economic loss because they no longer would be bringing money into the state, he said. Each foreign student spends about \$10,000 at the university, not counting the money spent on cars, stereos, and other items.

"That's not the reason we want them here," he said, "But it's just another aspect — part of the exchange process."

Regents

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very upset," Powell said.

Dick Youngscap, a managing partner at Firethorn, said members have the choice whether to sign the form designating guest fees to the Wilson campaign.

"This was not in any circumstance a coercion and our intent was not to siphon off his (Powell's) valuable supporters," Youngscap said.

Youngscap said Powell seems to be "grasping at straws," and the issue does not have anything to do with the regents race.

Wilson said a group of Firethorn members were invited to have guests play at the private club, and guest fees

can be given to the campaign.

"I guess, first of all, it comes Dr. Powell has a hard time getting his facts straight," Wilson said.

Firethorn is a private club and the guests must fill out a form if they want their fees to go toward the campaign, Wilson said.

"It's a totally free choice," he said. "That's what political campaigns and fund raising are all about."

Wilson said artists have donated their works to an auction to support Powell. The profits from the auction went to Powell's campaign.

"I have no problem with that," Wilson said. Fund raising in that way is no different than the Firethorn fund raising campaign, he said.

"It's a perfectly legitimate way to raise funds," he said. "I think he's struggling for some issue."

Search

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standing candidate comes along," Acklie said.

If such a candidate does apply, the committee probably would take the time to interview and check the references of the new applicant, Acklie said.

"The search committee is moving forward," Blank said. "And the time will come soon when, if another name comes forward, it will not be feasible to consider the person. But I don't anticipate another name coming forward."

When asked if any of the seven candidates have indicated the proposed 2 percent lid would have an effect on their decision to take the position, Acklie said he did not know of

any of the seven who have taken a position on the issue.

A constitutional amendment for a 2-percent limit on state and local government spending will be decided in the Nov. 6 election.

"If there was, we would probably hold off," Acklie said. "But so far, no one has said they would not take the position by reason of (the outcome of) the election."

The search committee tentatively has scheduled its next meeting for Nov. 9, providing the results of the reference checks are available.

Blank indicated that the committee would take its final vote on the names to be forwarded to the board in an open meeting, rather than in a closed session.

"Of course, we're going to have to have pretty well reached a consensus," he said, even though no vote will be taken in closed session.




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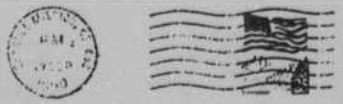
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