

Daily Nebraskan

Thursday

WEATHER

Today, partly cloudy and warmer, brisk southwest wind 15-25 miles per hour, high near 50. Tonight, partly cloudy and not as cold, low 25-30. Friday, partly cloudy, high near 50.

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Shaun Sartin/Daily Nebraskan

With absentee ballots still left to be counted, Gov. Kay Orr says she is not willing to concede defeat to challenger Ben Nelson.

Nelson, Orr race nears end

Both gubernatorial candidates avoid concession of win, loss

By Kris Karnopp
Staff Reporter

Although the race for governor of Nebraska is slowly drawing to a close, neither candidate will concede to a victory or a defeat.

Democratic candidate Ben Nelson said he feels he is "on the edge" of becoming governor.

"The numbers look good at this point," Nelson said at a press conference in Omaha on Wednesday afternoon. Nelson was 4,658 votes ahead of Orr on Wednesday.

However, Republican Gov. Kay Orr said the "campaign picture is

not clear enough yet."

A somber Orr said she feels "entitled to wait for the absentee ballot count," even though a victory for Nelson appears likely. About 10,000 absentee ballots are out and will be counted beginning today.

"I talked to Nelson earlier and he understands the situation based on his experience in the primary," Orr said during a Wednesday afternoon press conference at the State Capitol.

Nelson won his party's nomination for governor by a narrow margin of 42 votes.

"I know how to win a close election, but I don't want to repeat

what happened in the primary," Nelson said.

But once the results are known, both candidates said they would accept the outcome of the election.

"If the numbers don't change, Nelson has my full cooperation in making a smooth transition as governor," Orr said.

Although Nelson doesn't want to act "too hastily," he said, he is beginning to look at forming a team to ease his transition into the governor's office.

Nelson said he has contacted a number of individuals to get background information on forming a transition team.

Education commission draws mixed reactions from regents, officials

By Adeana Leftin
Staff Reporter

The amendment to strengthen the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education scored a victory Tuesday night, but some members of the NU Board of Regents weren't celebrating.

"It's just adding another layer of bureaucracy to something that was already being done," Regent Don Fricke of Lincoln said Wednesday. "They (the commission members) still don't have the power. They're still making recommendations to the Legislature."

Regent John Payne of Kearney agreed and said the success of the commission would depend on the 11 people who would be appointed by the governor.

"It's going to be extremely important that the appointed 11 men understand higher education," he said.

The coordinating commission, which currently is only an advisory board, will have the power of budget submission and program review for public higher education in Nebraska.

The Nebraska Legislature will develop implementing legislation to specify the commission's duties.

Other regents said that although the amendment is not perfect, they will strive to make it work.

Regent Rosemary Skrupa of Omaha said she thought the commission would be an "interesting thing."

"I'll be glad to work with whoever the governor appoints," Skrupa said. "Let's hope for the best. It could be a very beneficial thing for the state."

Regent Margaret Robinson of Norfolk agreed.

"That's (the coordinating commission) what the people want, and we're going to do our best to make it work," she said.

Phil Gosch, president of the Asso-

ciation of Students of the University of Nebraska, said that although ASUN had some reservations about the commission, student leaders will try to influence the definition of the commission's duties in the best interests of students.

"It's something we'll work with," he said.

Some officials saw potential in the commission.

James Griesen, vice chancellor for student affairs, said a greater degree of coordination was needed.

"I believe that if the Legislature

It's going to be extremely important that the appointed 11 men understand higher education.

Payne
NU regent

subsequently passes legislation to put this commission into effect... there is the potential for a great deal of good for higher education in Nebraska," he said.

Eric Seacrest, chairman of the Nebraska Coordinating Committee for Postsecondary Education, said he thought the new commission could work well.

"It (the commission) has the potential to improve cost efficiency and the quality of higher education in Nebraska," he said.

Bruce Stahl, the committee's executive director, agreed.

"There are ways it can be very positive... but of course, there are other agendas," he said.

"It should begin by focusing on the students, not just today, but 10 years from now," Stahl said.

"Whatever the commission becomes, it should become the state's advocate for students," he said.

Incumbents stay, despite competitive issues

By Stacey McKenzie
Staff Reporter

Most legislative incumbents retained their offices in Tuesday's election despite competitive races involving key legislative issues, said Bob Sittig, a political science professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

In Nebraska, nine of 11 incumbents seeking re-election to the state Legislature were returned to office and one race still was undecided.

Nationally, 96 percent of incumbents in the House of Representatives were returned to office. In the Senate, 31 of 32 members seeking re-election will return to Washington.

But the trend didn't overlap to executive offices.

Kansans voted out incumbent Republican

Gov. Mike Hayden and elected Democrat Joan Finney to office.

In Nebraska, by an unofficial margin of 4,658 votes, Democratic candidate Ben Nelson appears to have unseated Republican Gov. Kay Orr. Nebraska's incumbent state treasurer and auditor also were unseated.

Dawn Rockey defeated incumbent Frank Marsh 62 percent to 32 percent for state treasurer and John Breslow unseated Ray A.C. Johnson 68 percent to 32 percent for state auditor.

Sittig said that in these two races the incumbents were affected by charges of legal misconduct.

Marsh faces charges in Lancaster County Court for alleged misuse of the state telephone system and his state credit card. He has pleaded not guilty.

When the allegations against Marsh arose,

Breslow accused Johnson of looking the other way and not auditing Marsh's telephone records.

Sittig said ballot issues made the governor's race close.

Voters were concerned about the video lottery, the 2 percent lid and LB1059, the school refinancing bill, he said. These issues made the race tougher for the candidates because they couldn't skirt around the issues.

"The governor's race attracts more competition and opposition because of the decisions they make affecting taxation and the environment," he said. "The governor's chair is a political hot seat."

But legislative incumbents can hold their seats longer because they are less visible than governors to voters and receive less criticism,

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O'Brien: Diverse campaigns create close race

By Anita Parker
Staff Reporter

Nancy O'Brien, candidate for the District 2 seat on the NU Board of Regents, was "cautiously optimistic" Wednesday as a pre-absentee vote count put her 294 votes ahead of her opponent, Lee Sapp.

"Although the election is pretty up in the air, I feel the voting trends will continue," O'Brien said.

O'Brien has 35,796 votes, while Sapp has 35,502.

The candidates' different campaign ap-

proaches contributed to the close race, O'Brien said.

"Sapp ran a name recognition race," O'Brien said. "He spent a lot of money to gain high visibility."

The Omaha businessman spent about \$50,000, O'Brien said, to her \$10,000.

"I didn't have as much money, so I spent my time trying to get my qualifications out to people," she said. "I used the grass-roots approach."

The Douglas County Election Commission will continue to receive absentee ballots until 10 a.m. today, office manager Margaret Co-

niglio said. About 3,000 absentee ballots could be received, she said.

The ballots will be counted and the winner of the race will be determined by about 4 p.m., but an official winner will not be declared until canvassing is complete, she said.

The canvassing board will start checking to make sure the number of ballots cast matches the number of people who signed the books at 1 p.m., Coniglio said. The board has 10 days to complete canvassing.

Lee Sapp could not be reached for comment Wednesday afternoon.

ASUN senator takes her place after long battle

By Jennifer O'Ciłka
Senior Reporter

A Division of Continuing Studies student took her place on the student senate Wednesday after a long battle to get there.

Sandra Haughton took her oath of office to serve on the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska following her appointment and senate approval.

Last spring, Haughton was elected to the seat, but could not serve because she did not carry enough credit hours. Students voted this fall to allow continuing studies students to carry only three credit hours to be eligible to serve on ASUN. Other senators must carry 12 hours.

Haughton said she is glad the fight is over.

"It's going to be a lot easier to work with it now," she said.

In other action, senators approved ASUN election rules. Last week, ASUN defeated rules changes submitted by the Electoral Commission. The commission again looked at the rules and resubmitted its changes to the senate.

Bart Vitek, Electoral Commission director, said he thinks the commission

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