

Legality of abortion statute may be decided by voters

By Tabitha Hiner
Senior Reporter

Voters would get the freedom to choose how Nebraska's abortion statute would be worded if a resolution introduced in the Legislature Wednesday is passed.

LR15, introduced by Sen. Jerome Warner of Waverly, would place the abortion issue on the November 1992 Nebraska ballot, giving citizens the choice to



decide on its legality.

"It's the kind of decision, that seems to me, on which the citizens would want to make the final decision," Warner said.

Although neither side of the abortion issue probably will lend support to the resolution, Warner said, it could gain approval if the Nebraska Legislature gets "bogged down" with abortion discussions.

Warner said he didn't introduce the resolution last year because he "thought discussion was necessary."

Opponents to the resolution might call it a way to "duck the issue," he said, but he simply wanted to give the

citizens a choice.

He said opponents also might say the resolution should wait until after there is a final decision from the Supreme Court on the abortion issue.

"If Roe vs. Wade is reversed, it could go a couple of ways," he said.

Abortion could be abolished, or the Supreme Court may leave the decision up to the states, Warner said.

If the decision is left up to the states, Warner said, a state vote would give an answer for Nebraska.

The issue would be placed fairly before the public, Warner said, because Nebraska citizens would have

the opportunity to decide on two questions.

"I would be opposed to doing either one alone," Warner said.

The first option would "provide that no law shall interfere with the right of a woman to choose or refuse to terminate her pregnancy" during the first three months.

The second option would "provide that the planned termination of the pregnancy of any woman shall be unlawful except to preserve the life or health of the woman or to increase the probability of the live birth of a fetus."

Another bill introduced Wednesday by Sen. David Landis of Lincoln would place the Roe vs. Wade abortion decision into state law.

Under LB640, the pregnant woman would have the choice to have an abortion during the first three months of pregnancy. Terms such as "unborn child" and "unborn human life" in previous statutes would be redefined as "fetus."

Landis said he doesn't know how the bill will be received by the Legislature, but he said "the judicial committee traditionally has been unsympathetic to the choice position."

NU, Nebraska colleges compete for piece of cigarette tax pie

By Tabitha Hiner
Senior Reporter

A bill introduced Wednesday by state Sen. Gerald Conway of Wayne shows that competing interests exist for funds from a cigarette tax, said Lee Rupp, NU vice president for university relations.

LB779 would give money raised by a cigarette tax in future years to capital construction projects of the Nebraska State Colleges.

Another bill introduced Wednesday, LB647, would set the cigarette tax money aside for scholarships at private Nebraska postsecondary institutions.

One bill introduced last week would earmark the money for capital construction projects at the University of Nebraska. Another bill would finance NU scholarships and cancer research.

Rupp said he didn't blame other schools for pursuing monies that previously had gone to NU.

He said it was a case in which school officials said, "I may not get a big piece from the general fund pie, so I'll try to get a smaller piece from the cigarette tax pie."

Under the bill Conway introduced Wednesday, from 1991-93 \$490,100 would be taken from the State Building Fund for project planning at Wayne State College and Chadron State College.

From 1994-95 through 2007-08, \$361,222 per year would go to the State College Buildings Renovation and Land Acquisition Fund.

From 1996-97 through 2015-16, \$1,857,213 per year would go to the State College Facilities Improvement Fund.

Money from both funds would go to improvements and additions at Chadron State College, Peru State College and Wayne State College.

LB647, introduced by John Lindsay of Omaha, would create the Postsecondary Education Award Program Act to provide scholarships for students at private schools.

It was meant to provide equality between public and private higher education funding, the bill says.

Not enough choices for public higher education exist for Nebraska students, according to the bill. It also states that Nebraska residents who want to go to private colleges or universities don't receive as much government funding.

"Nebraska has become a net exporter of first-time college students because of inadequate financial incentives" for students wanting to attend private colleges or universities, the bill states.

The money to finance the scholarships would be received from 1 1/2 cents per pack of the state cigarette tax beginning July 1, 1994.

Andrews hopeful for 'usual' search

From Staff Reports

Departing UNMC Chancellor Dr. Charles Andrews said he hopes the search for his replacement is "held in the usual manner," unlike the NU presidential search.

Andrews sent a letter to University of Nebraska President Martin Massengale on Tuesday stating he will resign June 30.

He said Wednesday that he hopes the search for the University of Nebraska Medical Center chancellor will follow usual procedures.

When asked to comment about the search for NU president, he said, "It wasn't held in the usual manner."

"A search such as we do in academia is done for two reasons," Andrews said. "One, it gets the best list of candidates possible, and two, the fact that those people have gone through the search empowers them to be a leader."

Andrews said he chose to wait to announce his resignation until the search for the NU president was completed.

"There's no way you could replace the (UNMC) chancellor until they knew who they were going to be working for," he said.

Andrews declined to comment about statements he made to The Omaha World-Herald in Wednesday's paper that Massengale should not be NU president.

New waste plan less costly

By Lisa Donovan
Senior Reporter

Developing a statewide solid waste plan for Nebraska just got less expensive.

The Nebraska Department of Environmental Control and a regional consulting firm struck a deal that would cost a fraction of the allotted \$500,000 for the development of the plan.

During Gov. Ben Nelson's press conference Wednesday at the State Capitol, state Sen. Spence Morrissey of Tecumseh announced that the environmental control department signed a \$334,000 contract with Kansas City-based SCS Engineers to develop a statewide comprehensive solid waste management plan.

"We didn't cheap out on the plan," said Morrissey, vice chairman of the Legislature's Natural Resources Committee. "We went through intensive negotiations with the department, the governor's office and a consultant to make sure that everything that the Legislature intended to be in the plan was included in the plan."

The selection of an engineering firm to consult on setting up the plan means partial

enactment of LB163, a recycling law passed by the Legislature last spring.

Under the provisions of the law, the state would pay \$500,000 for two years on the plan.

Morrissey said that how the leftover \$166,000 will be spent hasn't been discussed, but he said he speculates it will be put toward unexpected problems.

"I would hope that it would be held back in case other things are needed in the plan as we go through the process," he said.

The completion date of the plan was July 9, but Morrissey said he introduced LB325 last week to extend the completion date to Dec. 15.

Morrissey said he wanted the extension to carefully analyze all the legislation being presented on solid waste management and to formulate a comprehensive plan to present to the Legislature next session.

Morrissey said he is looking forward to starting on the plan.

"It's been a long road. It took a little longer than we expected, but now we're ready. I think the consultant is ready to hit the ground running."

Bill would ban sales of Styrofoam

From Staff Reports

Selling certain forms of Styrofoam would become a crime if a bill introduced Wednesday in the Nebraska Legislature passes muster with senators.

Sen. Elroy Hefner of Coleridge introduced the bill, which would make the sale of Styrofoam an offense punishable by three months' imprisonment and a \$500 fine.

The bill would punish the selling of food or

beverages enclosed in Styrofoam containers unless the container is biodegradable, recyclable and composed of at least 50 percent starch.

The bill also proposes that Styrofoam food or beverage containers themselves not be sold if any part of the containers violates the same standards.

The bill, which would make the offenses Class III misdemeanors, would become law on Jan. 1, 1993, if passed.

Governmentally funded loans a possibility, director says

By Alan Phelps
Staff Reporter

A proposal to use government funds rather than bank money for student loans could be feasible, one university official said.

John Beacon, director of the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said that although details of the proposal to use government funds haven't been released, he would favor it with one reservation.

"Current lending is very localized, so if a student has a problem or needs human intervention, it is right here," he said. "If control were centralized in Washington, I would be worried about the speed of service."

The proposal being considered by the Bush Administration would attempt to make the college loan process easier for students and reduce costs by cutting banks out of the equation and using government money as capital.

In a student loan system without banks, the

government would need to put up approximately \$12 billion, which would be loaned out and administered by colleges and universities. Such a proposal could save the millions of dollars the government pays in interest subsidies to banks each year.

Beacon said he is hesitant to believe a lot of money would be saved because the government would have to increase personnel in Washington to handle such a "monumental" change.

Charles B. Saunders Jr., senior vice president of the American Council on Education, said the proposal was difficult to comment on because "we don't have anything specific yet."

The idea is being "kicked around" in Washington, Saunders said, and may be included in the administration's proposal for reauthorizing the Higher Education Act.

"I think there's some pluses about the approach, but they should be carefully thought through. We don't want to collapse existing programs," he said.



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