

Burning question

Flag desecration resolution ludicrous

Apparently, some state senators believe the Nebraska Legislature has nothing better to do than dredge up old, pointless arguments.

Yes, the flag burning issue has surfaced again, back from the depths of wherever ludicrous ideas originate.

LR222, a resolution to encourage the U.S. Congress to pass an amendment stating that flag desecration is not sacred under the First Amendment, was introduced by Sen. George Coordsen of Hebron and 23 co-sponsors Thursday.

Several officials from veterans' groups were on hand to lend their support for the measure.

Eugene Schmitz, Nebraska department commander of the American Legion, said polls showed that 77 percent of Americans believed that flag burning should not be protected by the Constitution.

Another veteran said he thought flag burning "destroys the American tradition."

Last we checked, the Bill of Rights reads the same as it did the last time the country went through this inane debate. But, perhaps Coordsen and his 23 co-sponsors thought that the First Amendment, which has provided Americans with freedom for over 200 years, should be changed.

Coordsen apparently thinks that Americans shouldn't have the freedom of expression, unless, of course, what they want to say is stamped "A-OK" by Uncle Sam.

After all, everyone knows that, throughout history, governments have always been right about everything and have never sought undue control over their populations. Why, governments are the most trustworthy institutions around. Just ask the Chinese. Or the Russians. Or the Germans.

At least one senator was awake Thursday.

Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha called measures such as LR222 "a nibbling away by those who say they want to uphold the Constitution, of one of the most important guarantees" provided by it.

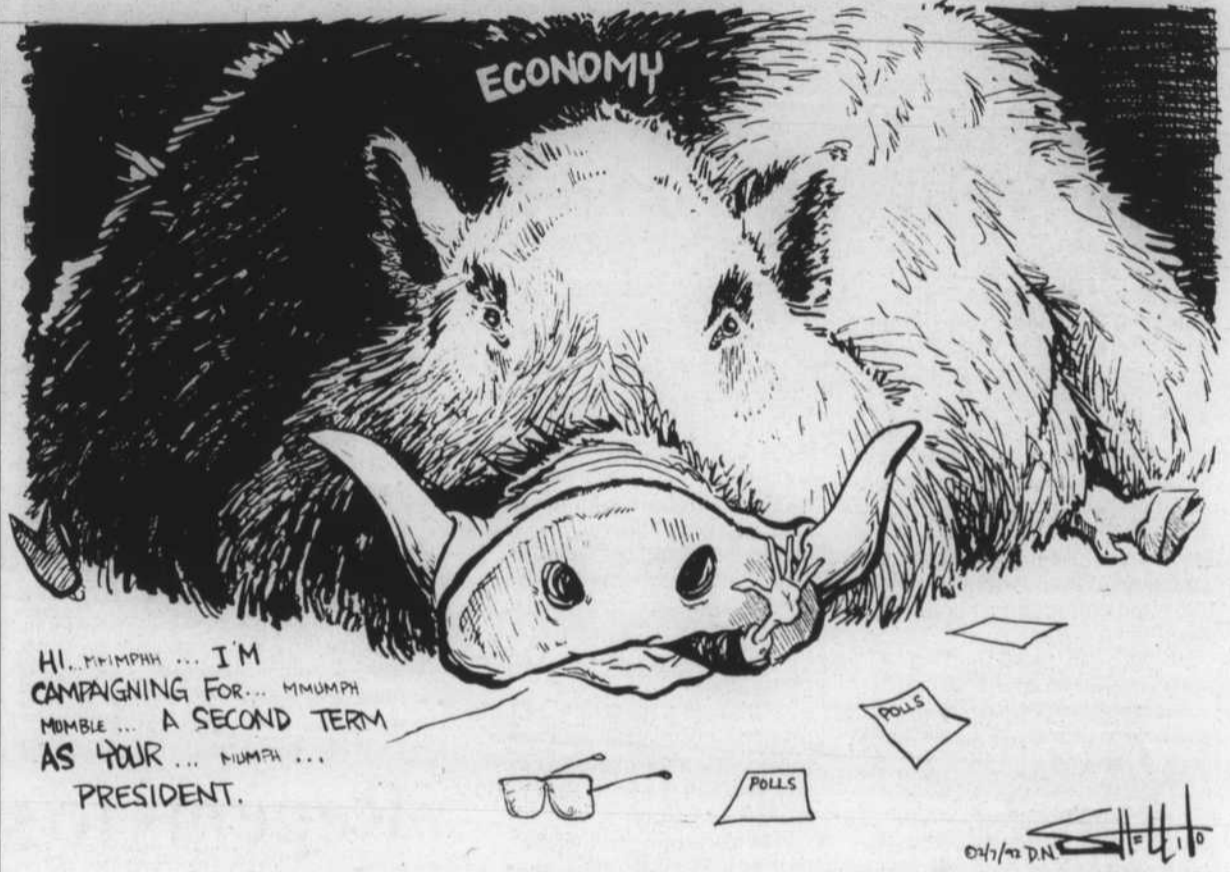
When Chambers asked Joe LaPadula, legislative director of the Disabled American Veterans, whether he considered the U.S. flag or the Constitution more important, he drew grumbles from the hearing hall, packed mostly with LR222 supporters.

But the outspoken senator took the heckling in stride.

"This is America, so let them express themselves," he said.

It sounds as though Coordsen and the 23 other mindless flag-wavers should take some lessons from Chambers on what it really means to understand American ideas of freedom.

Then they can torpedo LR222 back into the red, white and blue depths from whence it came.



MARK FAHLESON Kerrey's luck running out

Over the years, J. Robert Kerrey has been called a number of things: "Rockin' Bob," "Mr. Charisma," "Prairie Populist 2 — The Sequel." I, however, prefer another title.

Bob Kerrey — The Luckiest Man in America.

Sen. Kerrey has been graced with more luck than a four-leaf clover, a rabbit's foot and 10,000 horseshoes combined. Rarely can a public official go through life waffling on issues and reeking of impropriety and yet escape unscathed as Kerrey has.

The junior senator's string of fortuity traces all the way back to his college days at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Kerrey, who in 1965 was a member of the university student council, was discovered to have pocketed \$380 from the council's sale of merchandise discount cards. The incident, long rumored but hardly forgotten, was recently resurrected by Morton Kondracke of The New Republic.

As Kerrey's luck would have it, the student council judiciary committee, by a vote of 4-1, absolved him and let him keep the money and his seat on the student council. Apparently, ambiguities existed in rules governing the disposition of profits.

Onward rolls the luck of Bob Kerrey. The injury that Kerrey sustained during the Vietnam War was, of course, a tragedy. However, the manner in which he has parlayed his injury into instant credibility and patriotism is very fortuitous.

Unlike other wounded war heroes, such as Sen. Robert Dole, Kerrey leaps at every chance he gets to mention his injury. During the December debate between the Democratic presidential hopefuls, Kerrey mentioned his war-hero status so many times that I felt as if I were watching a Navy SEAL recruitment video. In reality, Kerrey is lucky to have his injury, for without it, his political resumé is a null set.

As Nebraska's governor, Kerrey's administration was clouded by controversy, yet luckily, he left office with a high public-approval rating. In 1983, then-Gov. Kerrey created the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, a state agency whose purpose was to provide low-interest loans to a variety of entities, including commercial ventures.

All agencies have a board of direc-



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tors, right? Kerrey happily fulfilled his gubernatorial appointment duties, tapping many of his beloved cronies as board members, including his campaign manager, William L. Wright. From this it should not come as a surprise that one of the NIFA's first acts was to provide a low-interest, \$2.55 million loan for the construction of the Prairie Life Center, owned in part by Gov. Kerrey.

Kerrey admitted to The Omaha World-Herald that, as governor, he did some things he "never should have done." And yet, as Kerrey's luck would have it, he simply forged ahead unharmed.

After deciding to make his move for a career in Washington, D.C., Kerrey challenged appointed Sen. David Karnes. As is a time-honored tradition here in the Cornhusker state, the candidates squared off at a debate at the Nebraska State Fair.

During the Karnes-Kerrey debate, Karnes committed political suicide when he answered a farm-policy question by saying, "We need fewer farmers at this point in time." Regardless of the veracity of Karnes' remark, he was nearly pitchforked to death at the polls by angry farmers and, as luck would have it, Kerrey

began packing for the nation's capital.

Serving on the Senate Agriculture Committee is a dubious honor, especially for a senator representing a state whose backbone is the agriculture industry. Apparently, Kerrey wanted to take an active role in agricultural trade. It was recently revealed that in 1989 Kerrey speculated at least 17 times in cattle futures despite his position in formulating the nation's ag policy. Luckily, Kerrey was able to plead ignorance, and the issue was dropped.

Kerrey is a liberal and has been rated by the National Taxpayers' Union as "the biggest spender" in the Senate. As such, he believes that government should play an active role in American lives, protecting and nurturing us.

While campaigning in New Hampshire, Kerrey frequently has questioned the current administration's failure to protect our jobs, our health and our safety. This would presumably include government's duty to protect us from Bob Kerrey. On Dec. 17, the Department of Labor found Kerrey's restaurants guilty of 106 child labor law violations. Luckily for Kerrey, the enslavement of children is a non-issue in this year's campaign.

Throughout his political career, Kerrey has flip-flopped on many issues. Yet, as the Kerrey luck would have it, no one has held him accountable for his fence-riding.

Originally in favor of a flag-burning amendment, even chiding President Bush for apparently laughing at a miniature flag, Kerrey soon vociferously opposed the amendment. His stance on abortion has "evolved" from one advocating protection of the unborn to one arguing for the codification of Roe v. Wade. Once a registered Republican, Kerrey says he became a Democrat because of John F. Kennedy, although Kerrey didn't register as a Democrat until 1978.

Luck is a finite force, and Kerrey's luck is showing signs of running out. His presidential campaign has been riddled with staff exoduses, plunging polls and bad jokes. Kerrey's presidential aspirations appear to be doomed and he is vulnerable for re-election to his Senate seat in 1994.

Now, we're the lucky ones.

Fahleson is a third year law student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Art students' purpose distorted

By reading your Feb. 5 article ("Art students petition chancellor"), it would be easy to misconstrue the purpose of our meeting. Pieces of the conversation were misquoted, badly paraphrased and taken out of context. I would like to clarify the fact that College of Arts and Sciences Dean John Peters was instantaneously receptive to our need for reliable kilns in the ceramics department last fall; we petitioned Dean Peters in exactly the same way and his response was clearly encouraging. However, with the elimination of many advanced classes, the difficulties associated with the ongoing deterioration of Richards Hall and the scarcity of funds, our purpose in petitioning Chancellor Spanier was to make ourselves and

our concerns known to the new chancellor, when so much gets lost down the tunnels of the administrative network. Dean Peters has heard time and again about Richards Hall; I doubt if Spanier has ever been inside the building — but we invited him to come and see what needs to be done now, before long-range administrative proposals would ever make things happen. We went up there en masse to prove to ourselves that Spanier is as receptive and approachable as we've heard — and he was. I think we proved to him that the vitality of our art department must be actively acknowledged and supported by the rest of the university.

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State should protect gay rights

The Feb. 5 Daily Nebraskan editorial on the Nebraska Civil Rights Act of 1992 ("Constitution, not state, guarantees rights") misses the mark rather badly by arguing that Nebraska should not pass a law barring discrimination against homosexuals because such rights should, instead, be protected by the U.S. Constitution.

It would be encouraging if the U.S. Supreme Court took this view, but it doesn't. In its 1985 decision in Bowers v. Hardwick, the court upheld state sodomy laws — in this case a Georgia law providing a 20-year prison term for consenting relations in private. In so doing, the court ruled that the Constitution did not protect homosexuals.

The vote was 5-4. Then Justice Lewis Powell, who cast the deciding vote, has publicly announced that he

made a mistake. But the decision stands and the court now has more conservatives.

Obviously, protection against discrimination is not going to come from the Supreme Court. However, five states — Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Wisconsin — have passed laws against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. (California recently also passed such a law, but it was vetoed by the Republican governor under pressure from his party.) Unfortunately, legislative action of the sort proposed by the Nebraska Civil Rights Act seems to be the only practicable route for change.

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