

# Daily Nebraskan

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DECEMBER 6, 1994

## Officials stand silent in arraignment

### Court enters not guilty pleas in three indictments

By Brian Sharp  
Senior Reporter

Flanked by lawyers, Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady stood silent before a packed courtroom Monday when asked to answer charges of official misconduct.

A grand jury indicted Casady Thursday for mishandling and hindering a grand jury investigation. The inquiry looked into the death of Francisco Renteria, who died Oct. 1 following a struggle with police.

The court entered a plea of not guilty on Casady's behalf. His lawyers said they planned to file additional preliminary motions.

Casady was the last of three public officials to be arraigned before District Court Judge Donald Endacott. Both Officer Luke Wilke and Lincoln Fire Capt. Danny Wright also stood silent when asked how they would plea.

Casady and Wright were released on \$2,500 personal recognizance bonds. Wilke was released on a \$5,000 bond.

Officer Stephen Schellpeper, also indicted, is out of state on vacation and will be arraigned Dec. 13.

The arraignment, scheduled for 9 a.m., drew about 250 people, mostly police officers. The courtroom began to fill shortly after 8 a.m. It quickly became standing-room only as the crowd spilled into the hall outside the courtroom.

A conference in Endacott's chambers before the arraignment to determine the timeline for filing additional motions delayed the start of proceedings until 9:25 a.m.

During the delay, Casady sat quietly in the front aisle with his wife and son, surrounded by family and friends.

At the end of the arraignment, Casady left the courtroom, shaking hands with officers and receiving pats on the back.

After the hearings, Special Prosecutor Robert Bartle said Jan. 17 would be the earliest date for a possible trial.

Bartle, anticipating motions to quash the indictments among other actions, said he thought lawyers

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Lincoln police chief Tom Casady shakes supporter's hands after his Monday arraignment.

Travis Hoying/DN

## Inter-cultural Coalition leaders call for unity

By Matthew Waite  
Senior Reporter

Fallout from the death of Francisco Renteria continued Monday evening as community members again expressed outrage and doubt about the handling of the case.

More than 60 people packed an upstairs room of the Hispanic Community Center for more than two hours to try to form a plan for the fledgling Lincoln Inter-cultural Coalition.

Planning took up about 30 minutes of the two-hour meeting, however, as members instead talked about what was on their minds in light of misdemeanor grand jury indictments connected with the Oct. 1 death of Francisco Renteria.

Harvey Garza, a member of the coalition, said misdemeanor indict-

ments ranging from official misconduct to assault were not even a slap on the wrist.

"They seem to be diminishing life and bringing it down to a misdemeanor," he said. "Is this an issue of race — them being white and we being of color? That is what I'm seeing."

If the letter of law had been followed, Garza said, Renteria be alive today.

"Why did a man die?" he asked. "There are so many things that need to be answered, and I'm not hearing it."

Others attending the meeting expressed a lack of confidence in Mayor Mike Johanns' actions in response to Thursday's indictments of Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady, Lincoln fire Capt. Danny Wright and Lincoln Police officer

Luke Wilke and Stephen Schellpeper.

Lincoln resident Leroy Casados said Johanns would have asked for resignations of any public official cited for drunken driving.

For the mayor to re-establish credibility, Casados said, he needed to remove those indicted.

Members of the coalition circulated a petition that attempted to change the charges for Wilke and Schellpeper to manslaughter.

Joel Gajardo, director of the Hispanic Community Center, said many were appalled by the charges, some good would emerge from the indictments.

Gajardo said the coalition needed to strengthen itself and prepare for tension among members, which he said was natural. The coalition

needed to stay together and hold elected officials accountable.

"Unity makes us strong," Gajardo said.

Randy Thomas of Lincoln expressed anger at representatives of those indicted for saying their clients were sacrificial lambs.

"What do we call Mr. Renteria?" he asked.

Wes Brown of Lincoln raised the issue of University Police involvement. He said University Police officer Charlotte Veskrna, who was the first to contact Renteria, should have been indicted also.

"She started the whole thing," he said to cheers from those in attendance. "You don't want to put guilt on someone who was innocent, (but) she was out of line."

"We want their resignation. We want their resignation now."

## Accusations fly in engineering college debate

### Lincoln professor claims administration unresponsive to UNO

By Brian Sharp  
Senior Reporter

University officials have broken down the engineering debate and college in-fighting to a question of money.

But now, the question is engulfing the entire program, said William Kelly, chairman of the civil engineering department.

Accusations that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has placed a strangle-hold on the growth of a research center in Omaha, and that UNL administration has been unresponsive

to the needs of UNO, exemplify this problem, he said.

Maher Tadros, a UNL professor and director for the Center for Infrastructure Research in Omaha, made the accusations in an area newspaper over the weekend.

The complaint, however, is not a one time occurrence, Tadros said in an interview Monday.

"It's a general statement that the civil engineering program in Omaha is not receiving much support or cooperation (from UNL)," Tadros said. "It has been a continuous struggle ... and it has intensified."

The research center serves both Lincoln and Omaha faculty, Tadros said. Because the civil engineering program has outpaced other programs, the center has long outgrown its budget, he said.

Repeated request to administrators to re-allocate money to the center have fallen upon deaf ears, he said.

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### Smith to announce recommendations on new Omaha program

From Staff Reports

NU President Dennis Smith will publicly announce his recommendations on engineering education in Nebraska sometime this week, NU spokesman Joe Rowson said Monday.

Rowson said Smith was forming his recommendations on whether to form an independent college of engineering at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

The NU Board of Regents will begin two

days of debate on the issue Friday at 1 p.m. with an open forum, Rowson said.

He said the board would hear from people wishing to express opinions on the issue that began in August 1993 and Smith's recommendation.

Rowson said the board could act upon Smith's recommendation should it decide to vote.

"It is an item on the agenda," he said. The debate over the college came to a head last week with the release of a task force report.

Smith charged the committee to study engineering education in the state.

The report put the price tag of a separate college at \$29 million. If other factors were added, such as improvements to scholarship programs and other services throughout the college, the price jumps to \$33 million.

**ENGINEERING  
DEBATE**