

Nelson seeks higher tax credit

By John Fulwider
Staff Reporter

Gov. Ben Nelson announced Monday two separate plans related to children in an effort to make child care more affordable and reduce state costs.

Nelson proposed to quadruple the state child-care tax credit for some Nebraska taxpayers and to reduce delinquent child support payments.

He said in a conference call that the goal of the increased credit was to spur people to find jobs. Nelson said the cost of child care was a barrier for parents getting off welfare.

Currently, on state income taxes, Nebraskans can receive a tax credit equal to 25 percent of the credit offered federally. The credit is non-refundable.

With the proposed change, which Nelson estimated would cost the state \$5 million annually, families with a yearly adjusted gross income of less than \$25,000 would receive a refundable state credit equal to the federal tax credit.

Previously, those taxpayers would have received, on average, a non-refundable credit of \$84, said Phil Richmond, special assistant to the state tax commissioner.

Under Nelson's plan, those same

people would receive a refundable credit of \$422, on average.

"The people at the lower incomes really need the help," Richmond said.

Those with yearly adjusted gross incomes of more than \$25,000 would still receive the 25 percent non-refundable credit on their state taxes.

In a refundable credit, Richmond said, if taxpayers owe less than the government gives them in credit, the state will pay taxpayers the difference. With a non-refundable credit, the difference is not refunded.

Adjusted gross income is a person's total income — wages, salary and tips — minus personal exemptions, standard deductions and itemizations.

In addition to increased tax credits, Nelson called for more efforts to be made to decrease delinquent child support payments.

"The state is faced with growing costs because people aren't paying child support," he said.

According to the Nebraska Department of Social Service statistics, he said, Nebraska has 115,000 child support cases. He said only \$75 million in child support is collected annually, while an additional \$268 million is delinquent.

Nelson said parents had both a moral and legal responsibility to make

child care payments. He said four initiatives to combat delinquency had been proposed by a child-care committee:

- suspending or revoking delinquent parents' driver's and professional licenses.

- placing liens on bank savings and/or brokerage accounts of delinquent parents.

- speeding resolutions of custody problems for non-custodial parents.

- limiting the time during which legal continuances could be filed.

Nelson said Maine had a program that revoked licenses, and from January to November 1994, that state collected an additional \$18.3 million.

But, Nelson said, delinquent parents would have the chance to get their licenses reinstated.

"These are not ruthless suspensions or revocations... (we're) giving them every opportunity to appeal it," Nelson said.

He said speeding resolution of custody problems for non-custodial parents was important because non-custodial parents often stopped paying child support if they couldn't visit their children.

The \$5 million cost of Nelson's new plan will be included in the state budget, which will be released Wednesday.

Bill gives schools loan responsibility

By Matthew Waite
Senior Reporter

A bill designed to move responsibility for defaulted student loans from the state to the individual schools was put before the Legislature Jan. 5 by State Sen. Jerome Warner.

LB29, which was introduced at the request of Gov. Ben Nelson, shifts that responsibility one step further. Under a new federal statute, the states are now responsible for the defaulted loans.

Under the bill, only Nebraska colleges and universities that are involved in federal student loan programs would be affected.

Each university would be responsible for its defaulted loans and would be required to pay into a fund controlled by the Coordinating Commission for Post Secondary Education.

The funds taken in by the coordi-

nating commission would then pay the federal government. The bill provides that, if admissible by federal law, as much as 10 percent of the money taken in by the fund could be used to pay for administrative costs of the coordinating commission.

Warner, of Waverly, said Monday that the bill was designed so that the money for the loan defaults would not come from the state's general fund.

"I suspect the rationale is that the state has little to do with the issuance of the student loans," he said. "I don't know if this affects students directly, but it may make those who issue them (the loans) a little more careful."

Warner said nationally students had a high rate of default. Administrative problems in the U.S. Department of Education, the federal agency that records student loans, created

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JEROME WARNER
state senator

part of that rate.

Also, Warner said he had read that many private schools had amassed a vast amount of defaulted student loans "that had not been appropriately granted in the first place."

Liberty joins Transcript

From Staff Reports

Stan Liberty, former dean of the College of Engineering and Technology, will serve as director of advanced research and planning in his venture with Transcript International.

Liberty agreed to take a position, which is part-time, with the company located at Technology Park following his December dismissal as dean. Liberty's position will be part time, and he will assume his role in addition to fundraising for the engineering college.

Liberty will help Transcript compete for grants and contracts,

as well as plan research and development programs. Transcript employs 24 research and development engineers and is one of the largest employers of engineers in the state. The company produces information security, mobile data and specialized radio products.

After serving 13 years, Liberty was asked to step down as dean following a five-year review for college deans. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln is searching for his permanent replacement.

Technology Park is a joint venture between the University of Nebraska and the city of Lincoln, and is located at the Highlands in Lincoln.

Phillips to be arraigned on misdemeanor charges

From Daily Nebraskan and Associated Press Reports

Nebraska running back Lawrence Phillips is scheduled to be arraigned Thursday in Lancaster County Court on four misdemeanor charges stemming from an incident in March.

The charges include misdemeanor assault, disturbing the peace and two counts of vandalism, said City Prosecutor Norm Langemach.

Phillips was cited by police but formal charges weren't filed because he entered a pretrial diversion program, Langemach said. Phillips led the Cornhuskers in rushing this season, and was named to the All-Big Eight team.

Attorney Hal Anderson of Lincoln is representing Phillips.

Phillips failed to complete the requirements and was charged with the misdemeanors on Nov. 18. He missed a Dec. 23 arraignment, which was on

the day the football team left Nebraska for the Orange Bowl.

Phillips, a sophomore business major, is from West Covina, Calif. He also is charged with failure to appear in court, Langemach said, which also is a misdemeanor.

The charges stem from an alleged March 11 confrontation in Lincoln, Langemach said.

A Doane College student told police that he and several friends drove up to an intersection that was blocked. When they got out of their vehicles, they were threatened and damage was done to two of their vehicles, Lincoln Police Sgt. Ann Heermann said.

John Livingston, 21, a Nebraska receiver, also was cited for disturbing the peace and vandalism in the incident, but charges weren't filed because he completed a pretrial diversion program, Langemach said.

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