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Regent won't back down

Allen ignores controversies to reach goals

By **Rainbow Rowell**
Senior Editor

HASTINGS—Maverick. In 1971, Robert Allen infuriated the Hastings school board with his demands to change the district's scheduling policy.

Troublemaker. In 1976, Allen, then the mayor, waged war with the Hastings City Council trying to realize his vision of a better, more modern Hastings.

Loose cannon. As a regent, Allen has harshly criticized three university presidents, his fellow regents and the UNL football coach. He's said the current UNL chancellor should be fired. He's made some of the most powerful people in Nebraska very, very angry.

Regent Robert Allen of Hastings has been called many things since he's entered the political world. But those who know him say those labels are just too simple.

Robert Allen is a complicated man, they say, a man who knows what he wants and is determined to get it. Robert Allen is an intelligent, intimidating, tenacious man of the people, some say. And though they may criticize his style, few fault his vision.

It is this complex man who con-

ducts both his university and retail business from an office above his Hastings shopping center.

Files line the room and fill his desk in thoughtful, if not neat, stacks. Throughout the interview, he wheels his chair around the room, searching for one document or another to prove his point. Usually, he finds them. Sometimes the conversation changes too soon, and he's wheeling in the opposite direction seeking a second copy before he's found the first.

He seems to have collected every newspaper story written about him, every political cartoon and editorial. He also saves articles about subjects that interest him. There are files for his business, files for education and a

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Jeff Haller/DN

Regent Robert Allen, right, has an impromptu chat about university issues with his attorney, Douglas Pauley, Saturday in Allen's Hastings shopping center.



Travis Heying/DN

Gov. Ben Nelson lectures to a Mass Media and Government class Monday evening in the Walter Scott Engineering Building. The class was broadcast via satellite across Nebraska.

'Professor' Nelson moves into new forum

Governor lectures on technology, communication

By **Julie Sobczyk**
Staff Reporter

For an hour and a half Monday night, Gov. Ben Nelson moved from the head of the Nebraska government to the head of the class.

Nelson was the guest professor of Journalism 954, Mass Media and the Government. The class, which is normally taught by broadcasting Professor Larry Walklin, features guest professors regularly.

Walklin said he invited the governor to speak because of the influence he had on public policy.

"The class deals with public policy

issues and government policies," he said. "I invited Nelson to speak about state issues that deal with the mass media."

Nelson said he not only wanted to teach the class, but wanted to learn, too.

"When professor Walklin asked me to do this we talked about what it would involve," Nelson said. "I said 'yes' because I wanted to tell folks about mass media and politics. I jumped at the chance."

In his lecture, Nelson talked about the importance of communication and technology for the future.

"One thing we've accomplished in this administration is to tie ourselves closer to communication," Nelson said.

The key to effective communication in Nebraska was realizing the geographic distances across the state,

he said.

"We need to see the state come together in telecommunications," Nelson said. "Telecommunication bridges the gap because of geography."

One way the gap has been bridged is through public television and the Internet, he said.

"There are 122 schools connected to the Internet and it will be over 200 by September," Nelson said.

Although communication is needed, Nelson said he wanted to keep costs at a minimum.

"We stress low cost," he said. "Technology does cost a lot, but we've felt it was worth it."

Nelson said Nebraskans needed to keep looking to the future, in terms of communication.

"We are at the beginning," he said. "The faster we go, the more

there will be around us. We all want to get on the bandwagon."

For communication and technology to be efficient in the future, Nebraskans needed to prepare for change.

"We need to catch up where we need to," he said. "We need to position ourselves for changes."

After Nelson lectured, the class, which is broadcast via satellite to several cities throughout Nebraska, had an opportunity to ask him questions.

Nelson said lecturing was not as difficult as answering questions.

The most challenging question came from a student who asked him how the electronic and technological changes of today would affect his position as governor, Nelson said.

"That question made me go back and think about all the change and growth in technology," he said.

Expanded gambling debated

By **Matthew Waite**
Senior Reporter

In the middle of talking about slot machines and video lottery terminals, the Legislature's General Affairs Committee took on a more Vegas-like atmosphere than most expected.



LEGISLATURE

The hearing, which lasted more than 5 1/2 hours, took on the trappings of a prize fight, and more than 140 people from across the state turned out for the brawl.

In one corner was Tim Hall, a senator from Omaha whose district is bordered by Council Bluffs, Iowa, which is set to open four casinos next month.

In the other, the mayors of Nebraska's two largest cities.

The fight was over LB765 and LB851, two bills that would expand gambling in Nebraska.

LB765, proposed by committee chairman Stan Schellpeper, would allow gambling in the form of slot machines at horse racing tracks and video lottery machines in bars and restaurants.

LB851, proposed by Hall, would give cities the option to vote whether to allow gambling.

Round One. Mayor Hal Daub of Omaha begins testimony against the bills, saying that adding slot machines and video lottery games to Omaha would put an added burden of social services, police and crime on the city's budget.

With casinos, Daub said, crime went up while high school graduation rates went down. He said dropouts then took the only jobs casinos provided: minimum wage jobs.

During questioning, Hall challenged Daub on several points. He said that with casinos in Iowa, Omaha would still see increases in crime, social services and high school dropout rates.

Hall also questioned why a high school dropout would take a minimum wage job in a casino. Daub insisted it was the glamour of the

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