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Bill's effect on Internet challenged

By John Fulwider
Staff Reporter

At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the un1.general newsgroup has been flooded with discussion about the Communications Decency Act of 1995, sponsored by Sen. James Exon, D-Neb.

The bill, which cleared the Senate Commerce Committee last week, would punish people who distribute obscene material on computer networks with up to two years in jail and \$100,000 in fines.

Exon has said children should be protected from pornographic material on the Internet. He said his bill would act as a deterrent to those who use the Internet to spread obscene material or harass others.

UNL faculty and students have been posting messages in the newsgroup, talking about the pros and cons of the bill and even circulating electronic petitions to get it stopped.

Steven Reichenbach, an assistant professor of computer science and engineering and president of Internet Nebraska, said he was concerned with the original language of the amendment. It made access providers like his company responsible for messages and images passed through their networks.

Concerns had been raised that the growth of the Internet would stop if access providers had to screen messages to avoid liability.

Reichenbach found all that tough to swallow.

"You don't hold the postman responsible if he delivers pornographic material to you," he said.

But Exon worked on the language of the bill, which now makes clear that the sender and not the carrier of objectionable information is liable.

Other language in the bill still troubles Reichenbach. The bill makes illegal communication that is deemed "obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy or indecent."

Reichenbach said those words, which are not defined in the bill, are questionable because their meanings have been the subject of numerous court battles.

He said establishing standards for every community connected by the Internet would be impractical. Each community sets its own standards in determining what is obscene.

"In a national network of communities, there's no way you can fully control where information flows," he said. "One community can establish standards that another may not subscribe to."

In addition to being president of an Internet access provider, Reichenbach is also the father

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Money matters



Jay Calderon/DN

Sen. Chris Beutler of Lincoln (right) and another senator talk on the sidelines Monday during the morning session of the Legislature. Senators spent most of the morning debating LB548, sponsored by Beutler. The bill, which failed to advance from first round debate, was intended to put a tax on campaign contributions.

Amendments help defeat campaign reform legislation

By Matthew Waite
Senior Reporter

An experiment in campaign finance reform for legislative races failed Monday to advance after senators removed and amended most of the bill.

LB548, sponsored by Sen. Chris Beutler of Lincoln, originally tried to tax certain kinds of campaign contributions to help with public funding of campaigns.

After the bill failed to get the 20 votes needed to advance, Beutler said he would

talk with senators to find more support for the bill.

"It was a very confused situation," he said. Beutler said too many senators disagreed on different points.

Beutler said a number of senators did not want to see campaign finance reform, he said. Other senators wanted to see how the campaigns would be publicly funded, he said.

During debate, Beutler offered an amendment written by Sen. Tim Hall of Omaha that would have stripped all the tax language and given \$50,000 each year to legislative races.

Sen. Don Wesely of Lincoln said the power of the dollar in politics needed to be diminished.

"It's clear to me that economic strength translates into political strength," he said. Anymore, Wesely said, only those with access to money could participate in the elec-

toral process.

Answering senators' questions, Beutler said the amendment would simply fund the legislative races for the next two years. He said senators could come back to the bill and make a decision on the experiment.

"At least this would allow the experiment to go forward in a fair fashion," he said.

The amendment fell 18-10, failing to receive the 20 votes needed to pass.

Another amendment limited the amount of money candidates could spend on primaries. It also stripped the bill of the original tax language.

Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha said he would not try to kill LB548, but would vote against it every time it came up.

Chambers said politics was too full of money to try to reform it. He said reform

See DEBATE on 6

Church group to protest Lied Center dance performance

By Paula Lavigne
Senior Reporter

A church group from Kansas will protest a dance performance at the Lied Center for Performing Arts tonight to warn people about the dangers of homosexuality, church leaders said.

Pastor Fred W. Phelps said he and members of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan., oppose the Bill T. Jones dance company because it promotes homosexuality.

Jones is a homosexual who has been diagnosed with HIV. His dance company partner, Arnie Zane, died of AIDS last year.

Phelps called Jones the "filthy face of fag evil."

"Fag" is a good Bible word that is a metaphor for sodomy," he said.

Phelps said Satan was taking over "through the bestial conduct of per-

verts." Jones' face appeared in a press release that was on church letterhead and had a triangle with "666" written underneath it.

Homosexuality is not a trait to be admired or emulated, he said.

"This perverted lifestyle is contrary to the laws of God and man," he said. "It is a crime against nature, and will inevitably bring doom to those who practice it."

Jones' performances praise AIDS and homosexuality, Phelps said.

Phelps and his church group confronted Jones at a protest at the University of Kansas' Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lawrence, Kan.

"He (Jones) is a pathetic little guy, only about five feet tall," he said. "His parents believed in the Bible, and he knows it's wrong—sodomy's wrong."

"His only hope is what we're telling him. He's gotten in a big mess listening to the voice of many. All he

needs is some good Bible preaching."

Jones and his company declined comment, but Norah Goebel-George, director of marketing and media relations at Lincoln's Lied Center for Performing Arts, said she expected the protest tonight at 6:30 to be peaceful.

"We grant their wishes to speak their views under the First Amendment rights," she said. "The staff and the dance company are prepared to make the audience feel comfortable once they come into the building."

George said the performance illustrated how people with HIV and AIDS remained positive though their physical conditions were weaker.

The closest thing Lincoln's Lied Center has seen to a protest was when Hillary Clinton spoke there, she said.

Before tonight's protest, the church contacted the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Lincoln Police departments to check city and university

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FRED W. PHELPS

Pastor of Westboro Baptist Church

policies and ordinances.

UNL Police Chief Ken Cauble said the group planned to stay until the performance began. Protestors are barred from blocking the entrances or exits of the building, he said, but police may set aside a space for protestors.

Cauble said he was unaware of previous demonstrations in Nebraska by the church. Cauble received information from the University of Kansas

Police Department and said the protestors had been peaceful in the past.

KU Sgt. Schuyler Bailey said the group staged about 10 peaceful protests on campus in the past year.

No charges had ever been filed against the group, he said. The only reported incident involved a student who threw water on the protestors, he said.

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