



Susie Kiene/DN

Melissa Prochnow, a freshman chemical engineering major at UNL, served as U.S. Senator Jim Exon's intern.

Student goes behind scenes as U.S. Senator Exon's intern

By Doug Kerns
Staff Reporter

Being intimately involved in politics is not impossible for college students.

Just ask freshman Melissa Prochnow.

Prochnow recently served as an intern for U.S. Senator Jim Exon in Washington, D.C. She answered letters and worked on computers, as well as attended a committee hearing.

"I had a great time," Prochnow said. "I learned that every letter gets read, but they really don't have the funds to answer every letter, especially mass mailing, because funds were cut back."

This is the kind of behind-the-scenes look at the political arena that can possibly await interns and volunteers in both state and national gov-

ernment.

Prochnow's interest in politics didn't originate with this particular intern job. It began when she started high school in Lincoln, though she became involved under her own initiative.

"I've done some work for the Lieutenant Governor and for a few state senators. I met all these people and got entangled in the whole web," she explained.

Although her case is unusual, Prochnow felt that anyone can be involved as an intern or volunteer.

"All you have to do is write them a letter and tell them you are interested in interning."

A press release from the office of Exon stated, "The intern program allows young people from across the state to learn more about the U.S. Senate and the nation's capital."

Verdict

Continued from Page 1
braska State Patrol were completed, Bartle said.

Defense attorney Greg Schatz of Omaha, fired back telling members of the jury the only reason Bartle put Renteria's mother on the stand was to get sympathy from them.

Schatz also mentioned that no witness identified that it was Schellpeper with his knee on Renteria's neck.

Schatz tried to get jurors to sympathize with how the charges had taken a toll on the Schellpeper family.

He told them how Schellpeper had been a member of the Lincoln community since he was a boy: he went to high school here and graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln all with the dream of becoming a Lincoln police officer.



Schellpeper

The bottom line is why would Officer Schellpeper risk his career, family, everything he lives for, Schatz asked jurors.

"Officer Schellpeper only did what he was trained to do," Schatz told jurors towards the end of closing statements.

Bartle then told jurors, "This is not a death case. This is a case of third degree misdemeanor."

He also reemphasized that Schellpeper's actions were improper: "The 6 and 1 in this case was not called for."

Bartle told jurors he was not out to get the LPD.

After a little over four hours of deliberation, Schellpeper was found not guilty. He stood emotionless before a courtroom of family, co-workers and the media. The Renteria family was not present.

As the verdict was read, members of the Schellpeper family began to cry and one said in a soft enthusiastic voice, "Yes."

Schellpeper left the courtroom with his wife Linda, but declined comment.

Wilke, who had been present in the courtroom when closing statements were made and the verdict, declined comment.

As members of the jury were es-

corted out of the County City Building by a Sheriff, all declined comment.

As Bartle left the courtroom, he said, "I think we got out all the evidence we could. Obviously we would have preferred to try the two defendants together."

Schatz who had tried to get the charges against his client dropped said, "It's pretty clear that the citizens of this community don't feel there were crimes committed involving the arrest of Mr. Renteria and it's time, I think, to check the records of the special prosecutor with these continued criminal charges that are being pursued."

LPD Union Secretary Jim Spanel said, "We'll probably have a couple of bumps and bruises but we'll get through it."

Future arrests will not be second guessed, Spanel said. Officers will not think twice about an arrest because of charges that may or may not be filed.

Some are not as happy about the verdict as the police are.

Elliot Rivas, assistant director of the Hispanic Center said, "Someone did die and no one is being held accountable. something in the system needs to be changed."

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