

OPINION

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EDITORIAL

Protect passengers *Riding in truck beds unsafe*

There is a new bill being considered that would make it illegal for passengers to ride in the bed of a pickup.

The foremost proponent of this bill, LB284, is Senator Jennie Robak of Columbus, who says this bill is long overdue.

"Adults are required to wear seat belts. Why let teens or younger children ride unrestrained in the back of a truck?" Robak said.

Robak has hit the nail on the head. If traffic safety is such an issue that seatbelt and helmet laws are in effect, there is no reason to allow people to be unchecked in the open space of a truck.

More attention has been given to this bill recently because of the death of Nathan Garcia, a Lincoln Northeast High School student, who died of injuries after being thrown from the bed of a pickup truck last Friday.

It is unfortunate that it takes a tragedy of this magnitude to give this issue the consideration it deserves.

Too many drivers out on the road are not taking their own personal safety or that of their passengers into consideration.

The state shouldn't have to regulate common sense, but certain risk takers feel that it is their God-given right to be reckless in their actions.

Although the number of deaths in Nebraska from people flying out of trucks is not great, there are myriad injuries from just such accidents.

The new bill would prohibit any person operating a truck, semi-trailer truck, trailer or truck-tractor on any highway in the state from having a passenger in an unenclosed or unroofed cargo storage area of the vehicle.

The bill would impose a \$50 fine on the person operating a pickup truck with passengers in the bed.

In certain situations, at low speeds in town, passengers might need to ride in the bed of a truck. But out on the open highway, they'd be hitching for a ride with death.

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Planned Parenthood provides

My faith in democracy and government has been restored, at least on the local level.

The Lincoln City Council has voted to uphold the current budget plans which include \$13,000 in funds to Planned Parenthood. It was this money and its destination which brought out dozens of local residents to testify for or against the proposal.

Fortunately, the council members were wise enough to see that this facility is absolutely necessary in Lincoln. Regardless of individual views, Planned Parenthood must be made available to those who need to use its services. Let's be honest here. Women will get pregnant and many of them will need help. These are facts, not opinion.

If Planned Parenthood, or a similar service, was unavailable, many people would have no safe place to go for abortions. But even worse, there would be no place to educate young people on the possible side effects of sex, including untimely pregnancy and disease.

Some folks would like to think that if the opportunity to have an abortion is taken away, young people (or people of any age for that matter) would no longer engage in premarital (read sinful) sex. This fallacy goes hand in hand with "if we don't talk about it, it won't happen".

Many of these people would like nothing more than to go back to the days of simple 1950's life, where children were molested and uneducated, parents and adults worked diligently to cover up anything not morally pure, and everyone walked around in a false state of blissfulness and security with rosy cheeks and exercised smiles.

One pro-life, anti-Planned Parenthood citizen said that sex education should start in the home, followed by churches, synagogues and other reli-



Michael Justice

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gious institutions.

This came from the mouth of former Governor Kay Orr. Thank the stars for Ben Nelson and elections.

I do agree that parents are primarily responsible for the education of their kids. However, suggesting that organized religion be put in charge of sexual education is like putting fascists in charge of libraries and book publishing.

I'm not interested in putting on the blinders and following sheepishly the path of ignorance.

Not to say I'm against religion. That's not the case. I understand completely the need to believe in something more powerful than simple fate

and coincidence. But the current approach to sex education taken by religious factions is anything but thorough or non-judgmental.

Suppressing sex and sexual thoughts is foolish and virtually impossible. Discussing these thoughts, however, and teaching kids the positive and negative aspects of these thoughts can reach deeper and effectively solve problems rather than delay them until damage has been done.

The hypocrisy in the pro-life camp is disturbing to me.

Many have the attitude that a woman must have a child, that the woman has the moral and ethical obligation to bring it into this world regardless of the circumstances. And that once it is born they have completed their duty as defenders of life and now to the real job of raising the child. The mother that quite possibly has no interest in the child which inevitably leads to the child enduring an existence that is considered a mistake or, at best, accidental.

The only way to effectively treat the epidemic of teen and unwanted pregnancy is through education. Planned Parenthood offers this as a primary function, while abortions are made available to those who feel they have no other choice.

Abortion is an emotional and subjective issue that has two decidedly opposing parties, neither of whom will ever be swayed.

But whether or not abortions are right or wrong is not important here. The fact is we need this facility to help those who are directly effected by untimely pregnancies.

Education and options are the way to improve on our lives, individually and collectively. Luckily, the city council agrees.

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