



Herbie Husker flags fly from a clothesline at Kenneth Kramer's outdoor sunglasses stand in Omaha. The stand is the national headquarters of the Save Herbie Foundation.

Travis Heying/DN

Herbie

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Herbie. Sign petition at the front desk."

Because there are so many people involved in the effort, Kramer said he wouldn't even try to count all the signatures. But Saturday at the stand, he had a clipboard with petitions and faxes from concerned Herbie fans stacked about two inches thick.

As Kramer talked about his efforts, drivers passing by honked their horns, waved and shouted in support of Herbie. In 15 minutes, more than 10 people stopped to sign the petition and, in a few cases, to purchase sunglasses.

Chad Wachholtz—son of Larry Wachholtz, a 1966 Nebraska All-American defensive back—stopped to sign. The 1992 UNL graduate summed up the feelings of many signers.

"He's the staple of Nebraska football," he said. "If we lose Herbie, we just lose a part of it."

"And besides, that corn cob in his pocket looks pretty cool."

To grab the most attention pos-

"He's the staple of Nebraska football. If we lose Herbie, we just lose a part of it."

CHAD WACHOLTZ

1992 UNL graduate

sible, Kramer appealed to Nebraska's highest power: Gov. Ben Nelson. A request for a "stay of execution" arrived on Nelson's desk Saturday.

The letter reads in part, "We all will anxiously await your decision to intervene and stop this senseless execution... Please don't let Herbie die."

Dara Troutman, Nelson's press secretary, said Nelson had not made a decision about a stay of execution. She said he would like to just stay out of the controversy.

Troutman said Nelson had joked, "I'll take stances on tough issues like abortion and the death penalty, but I know better than to get involved with Herbie Husker."

Nelson turns down call for special session

By Jeff Zeleny
Senior Reporter

Four days after Gov. Ben Nelson and Attorney General Don Stenberg sat through the emotional funeral of a gunned-down Omaha police officer, they traded political jabs about fighting crime in the state.



LEGISLATURE

Nelson rejected Stenberg's request Monday to call a special session of the Legislature next week to deal with crime issues. The governor also criticized the attorney general for capitalizing on a tragedy.

"I am astonished, shocked and sad-

dened that he would take the opportunity that he did to politicize last week's tragedy in Omaha," Nelson said.

Stenberg fired back:

"In fact, it is the governor who is being political when it comes to crime," he said. "The issue here today is not politics."

"The issue here today is whether we are going to take action to fight crime or whether we are just going to study and talk about it."

Nelson and Stenberg have argued about state policy for years. Now, Stenberg is a Republican candidate for U.S. Sen. Jim Exon's seat. And Nelson has been suggested as a candidate for the Democratic Party nomination for that seat, but he has not announced his candidacy.

In calling for a special session, Stenberg said the following legisla-

tion should be passed:

- Try, convict and incarcerate violent juveniles.
- Punish any gang-related crime by one higher level penalty than is already recommended.
- Make the murder of a police officer one of the aggravating circumstances to be considered for the death penalty.
- Reduce delays and limit appeals in state capital punishment cases.
- Adopt prison boot camps that would be run as "places no one ever wants to go back to, not as soft social programs."
- Re-enact the 1995 crime bill and toughen the "watered-down penalties."
- Amend parole laws to require

violent criminals to serve at least 85 percent of their full sentence.

● Reform parole laws to require mandatory drug testing of inmates and parolees.

● Revise Nebraska laws to allow persons on parole and probation to be used as undercover agents to fight gang-related crime.

Only three of Stenberg's proposals offer new suggestions to the Legislature.

Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha said Stenberg's proposal was politically motivated.

"He is using it as a campaign ploy for the U.S. Senate," Chambers said. "Nothing he says shocks me because he is such a highly political being."

Last week, Gov. Ben Nelson said he would propose to the Legislature in January that the death penalty be automatic for anyone convicted of killing a police officer in the line of duty.

In rejecting Stenberg's call to reconvene the Legislature, Nelson said: "I think people will be angered by this call to a special session. I hope the editorial writers will blister him along the way."

Chambers said both men were putting their desire for a Senate seat in the forefront as they debated how to abolish crime.

"They have milked this issue for all the political gain," Chambers said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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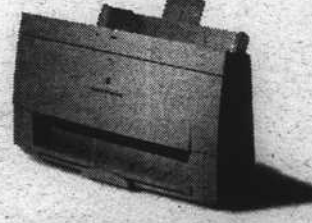
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