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WEDNESDAY



WEATHER:

Today - Cloudy with a 60% chance of rain. East wind, 10 to 20 mph.
Tonight - Colder with snow. Low 15 to 20.

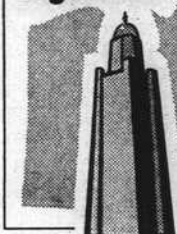
January 17, 1996

Major cuts necessary, senators say

By Matthew Waite
Senior Editor

Not one senator said Tuesday whether he or she opposed property tax relief or advocated raising income and sales taxes in what will most likely be the coolest of property tax debates of the 1996 session.

Legislature



But agreement on a resolution, designed by its sponsors to promote broad debate on property taxes, stopped with a general agreement that a tax shift was not the answer and major cuts in government services were

coming.

The non-binding resolution, introduced by Sen. Jerome Warner of Waverly, was the only issue on the agenda for the morning. The body adjourned before senators could vote on the matter.

Speaker Ron Withem of Papillion said he would not schedule the resolution for today. The issue probably will not come back until after Feb. 1, when the four property tax measures make their way through different committees.

The resolution was a general statement of the Legislature's intent on the property tax issue. Warner said he

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Task force will sponsor violence forums

By Julie Sobczyk
Senior Reporter

A task force created in the wake of the Lawrence Phillips incident has been researching violence and what groups are more likely to be victims, a co-chairman said Tuesday.

"It's a delicate issue, when you get into violence and what causes it," said George Tuck, a UNL news-editorial professor.

The 12-member Task Force on Conduct Standards and Behavioral Expectations was appointed by Interim Chancellor Joan Leitzel in November after Phillips, an NU football player, assaulted his former girlfriend.

The task force primarily has been focusing on campus violence, but other issues such as campus robberies and other crimes were being discussed, said Peg Blake, director of the University Health Center and co-chairwoman of the task force.

The task force also has been working on a survey on violence, gathering statistics and getting ready to sponsor public forums on campus.

Blake said four public forums would be held soon to discuss violence on campus. She said the dates, times and locations of the forums would be released after the task force meets on Friday.

"We have set tentative dates," she said. "We don't want to release them until they are confirmed with the rest of the task force."

Tuck said everyone would be welcome at the forums and that no spe-

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Court rejects Nebraska's protest

By Chad Lorenz
Senior Reporter

The U.S. Supreme Court Tuesday upheld a federal law forcing Nebraska to allow Medicaid funds to be used for abortions in pregnancies resulting from rape or incest.

The court rejected Nebraska's argument that states participating in the federal Medicaid program had to fund abortions only in cases when the mother's life was endangered.

"We're not surprised," said attorney Lawrence I. Batt, who represented the doctor bringing the case against the state. "Every court that has seen this case has agreed with us, and now the Supreme Court has finally put it to bed."

Gov. Ben Nelson said in a state-

ment that he was disappointed by the ruling and that the court misinterpreted the law's intent.

"The bottom line is that we object to the federal government telling us, in this matter and in others, what we as a state must do," Nelson said. "I think most would agree that the federal mandates are not necessarily in the best interests of the states."

Under the 1976 Hyde Amendment, Congress has regulated Medicaid funding of abortions for poor women. From 1981 to 1993, Medicaid paid for abortions only when a woman's life was at risk.

In 1994, Congress required all states to allow Medicaid-funded abortions for victims of rape or incest, but Nebraska refused to pay for those abortions.

Dr. William G. Orr and his

Omaha obstetrics-gynecology practice sued the state in 1994 after officials refused to provide Medicaid for an abortion performed on a woman who had been impregnated from rape.

Julie Schmit-Albin, executive director of Nebraska Right to Life, said the state shouldn't be responsible for abortions.

"We don't think it's the state's duty to pay to kill your child," Schmit-Albin said.

The Hyde Amendment should be limited to saving the lives of mothers, she said. President Clinton included aid for rape and incest victims based on his support for abortion rights, Schmit-Albin said.

"I think the state taxpayers should not be forced to pay this expanded version of abortion coverage."

Susan Hale, a lobbyist for Planned Parenthood of Council Bluffs, Iowa, said the state would be wrong in denying funds under those circumstances.

"It is a tragedy to victimize women who have already been victims of rape or incest," Hale said. "It (Medicaid) needs to be there for those horrendous moments."

Hale said Nelson was being unfair to refuse abortion aid to rape and incest victims while promoting welfare reform in which women didn't get additional aid for having more children.

"This is the height of hypocrisy," Hale said. "It is immoral of a state to place women in a lose-lose situation."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.



Travis Heying/DN

Laura Valenziano, computer services manager for the Legislature, oversees the Unicameral's new site on the World Wide Web.

Cyber Capitol

Legislature's web site helps inform citizens

By Ted Taylor
Senior Reporter

The Nebraska State Capitol is now open 24 hours a day — with the right key.

And everyone with access to the World Wide Web now has it: <http://unicam1.lcs.state.ne.us/>.

Since Jan. 2, the Nebraska Legislature's web site has allowed citizens to monitor the day-to-day activity of state senators.

Thanks to Sen. Don Preister of Omaha, web users can access legislative bills, check the daily agenda and find general information about the Unicameral.

A priority bill for Preister in 1994,

"There were no real added expenses for putting up the web site. We were able to do it because of other projects we had going on."

LAURA VALENZIANO
computer services manager

LB1359 was initially killed in committee, but was amended, passed and signed by Gov. Ben Nelson as LB1243 in April of that year.

When asked why it took two years to finally get up and going, Preister could only speculate.

"Nobody openly admitted it

wouldn't be a good idea," he said. "But it took two years, so there was obvious opposition."

Laura Valenziano, computer services manager for the Legislature and creator of the web site, said the stalemate couldn't have been over cost. "It didn't really cost anything," she

said. "There were no real added expenses for putting up the web site. We were able to do it because of other projects we had going on."

Preister said the time had come for the Unicameral to get in line with other states — such as California — and get on-line.

"It was my priority bill in '94 because I thought it was extremely important," he said. "We had the capacity, capability and resources to make all our legislation available to the public."

Valenziano said the web site would help constituent service.

"I think the main thing is that it provides access to legislative deci-

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