

Committee tries to cut Women's Center budget

By Heidi White
Staff Reporter

Major concerns were voiced about the budget for the Women's Center at the ASUN Committee for Fees Allocation meeting Thursday.

Junior Brendan Bussmann, vice chairman of CFA, proposed an amendment to cut \$18,322 from the budget of \$51,655, effectively eliminating the Women's Center.

He said services such as support and discussion groups were duplicated between the center and other organizations funded by student fees.

Under the amendment, remaining Women's Center funds would only pay for the position of Director Judith Kriss. CFA cannot cut salary positions.

Daryl Swanson, director of the Nebraska Unions, said, "This is the kind of action I would appeal at all levels: CFA, ASUN, and Vice Chancellor (for student affairs James) Griesen."

The amendment was voted down by the committee eight to two, but two more amendments were proposed on the issue.

The second amendment to the Women's Center budget, proposed by

senior Ryan Pichler, a greek living unit representative, would have cut \$8,880.

After failing by a vote of eight to two, another amendment was proposed by Bussmann to cut \$7,000. It also failed by a vote of eight to two, leaving the center's budget intact.

Marilyn Bugenhagen, director of Student Involvement, said she encouraged CFA members to speak with her about individual concerns about the center's operations.

"I see some concerns, but the specifics aren't there," she said.

Swanson said he tried to listen to the message from the committee and also wanted to address their concerns.

"There's some misinformation that concerns me," he said. "We're proud of the Women's Center and I think they provide a very valuable service to women and men."

The Nebraska Union budget was approved at \$1,845,350 million.

Cuts were made in creation of positions for a graduate assistant to coordinate the Involvement Team and for a student position to publish the Newsbreak newsletter for East Campus students. The original budget was \$1,850,945.

Abortion

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wanted to keep the focus of the testimony on medical scientific facts and keep religious beliefs out of the issue. But that request seemed to go unheard, as many supporters and opponents had ties to the church.

Doug Patton, executive director of the Nebraska Christian Coalition, was one of the first to testify.

"America's realization of the truth about abortion will come only when we challenge ourselves to be honest about the tragedy of 35 million aborted children," he said.

Patton continued by citing Sandra Day O'Connor's comment more than 10 years ago that "Roe v. Wade is on a collision course with itself."

"Justice O'Connor was right," Patton said. "Roe v. Wade is on a collision course with itself. Let the collision begin here."

Jim Cunningham, executive director of the Nebraska Catholic Conference, said the state needed to pass the bill because it would "reduce the killing."

"It is new and creative in the area of abortion legislation," he said.

Julie Schmit-Albin, executive director of Nebraska Right to Life, talked about her own experience in relation to the bill.

Schmit-Albin, who is 30 weeks pregnant, said to look no further than

the ultrasound she had earlier in the day, or the one she had last November, or even her first one back in September.

"But going back to nine weeks gestation would not begin to tell the whole story," she said. "For this baby's heart was beating 18 to 21 days after fertilization, and her brain waves were measurable at around six weeks."

Schmit-Albin stayed away from the religious facets of the issue and argued that scientific fact would eventually lead the way.

"Time, technology and the truth will eventually catch up with those who are intellectually dishonest enough to deny that which is scientific fact."

"We view LB1380 as a step in the right direction in forcing a re-examination of what the Supreme Court ignored for 23 years."

Throughout the hearing, Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha asked one particular question to those who testified.

"Who, other than the mother, has the right to make the decision?"

Susan Hale, lobbyist for Planned Parenthood, was the only person from either side to directly answer Chambers.

"No one," she said.

Opponents said the basic wording of the bill trivialized women in general — by leaving the word "women" out of the legislation.

The unconstitutionality of the bill also weighed heavily on the minds of

opponents.

Erin Hansbrough, president of UNL's Students for Choice, was one of the last to testify opposing the bill, and one of only two students to do so.

"Knowing that this will be struck down in a court of law, it seems that it is a waste of the Legislator's time and the taxpayer's money to even discuss it."

"It seems that with LB1380 there has been a discrepancy not only in recognizing the basic rights of women, but in the use of basic logic."

Hansbrough, a freshman journalism and women's studies major, said she did not buy the medical research stance.

"It seems to me that blurring medical facts is an irresponsible way to get a bill passed."

She ended her testimony by telling the committee there was no evidence of respect for women in the bill.

"It is insulting and infuriating to be told that, as a woman, my rights can be signed away without consideration, that I, too, am a living person."

Amy Turner, president of Nebraska Wesleyan's Students for Choice, was the other student on hand to testify and also called the bill irresponsible.

"I feel the introduction of this bill is irresponsible, disrespectful and unconstitutional," she said.

"I believe those who support this bill are, by doing so, disrespecting me and are not willing to recognize my differing views."

Williams

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but it was insufficient to warrant a new trial.

County Attorney Gary Lacey said Merritt made the right decision.

"My interpretation of the order is that this was a bogus attempt by his lawyers to delay the imposition of the (death) sentence, even beyond the 17 years that have already elapsed," Lacey said.

"This enormous record of this case has been reviewed by judges, time and again, and no other evidence has been found that Mr. Williams got anything but a fair trial."

Williams' lawyer can appeal Merritt's rulings to the state Supreme Court.

Boyce testified in a hearing last August that she examined maps and other materials during the trial to decide if the complicated route Williams took as he fled Lincoln could have been taken if he was mentally incompetent.

She said her research led her to reject Williams' insanity plea, and she shared her findings with other jurors.

Scott Wesely, coordinator for Nebraskans Against the Death Penalty, said Boyce's actions would lead to a change in Williams' sentence.

"It's a very clear and fundamental issue," he said.

Wesely said he thought Williams' lawyer would appeal Merritt's decision and the state Supreme Court would ask him to reconsider his ruling.

Instead of holding another trial, Wesely said the county attorney would probably settle for a life sentence, which would be a just punishment for Williams.

"I think he's a clear example of someone who's repentant and wouldn't harm anyone," Wesely said. "I don't think anyone has anything to gain by executing him."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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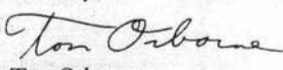
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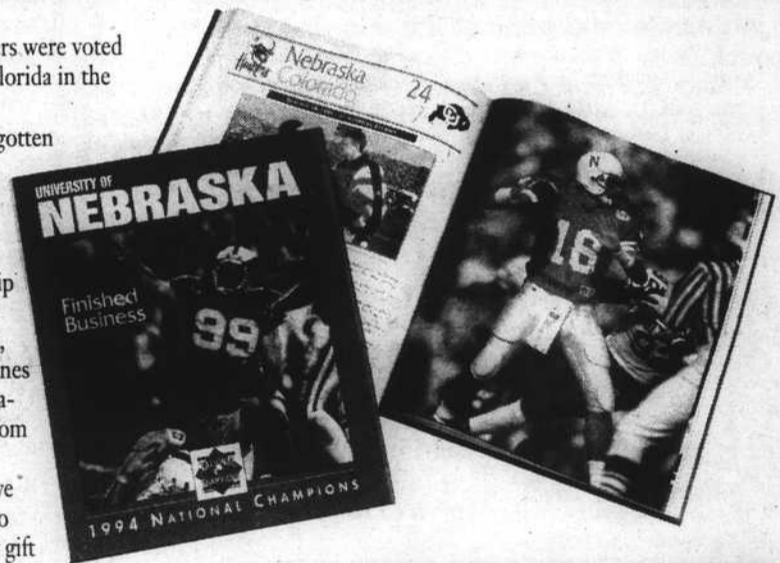
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