

Bill would move cigarettes behind Nebraska's counters

By Erin Schulte
Staff Reporter

Anti-smoking advocates say a bill introduced to the Nebraska Legislature would keep teenagers from illegally obtaining cigarettes from vending machines.

Legislature '96



But a tobacco lobbyist said Monday that the bill was not just aimed at teenagers — it would move cigarettes behind counters everywhere.

Sen. Donald Preister of Omaha, who introduced LB1151, said he hoped it would prevent lifelong ad-

ditions to tobacco.

The bill would prohibit cigarette machines in public areas. Businesses and factories not open to the general public and bars still could have the machines.

Preister said he had introduced the bill four years in a row — every year he'd been in office. The bill has a better chance of passing this year, he said, because it has been reworded in simpler language.

"Even if it doesn't pass, I'll always try to help kids," Preister said.

Teen-agers have told him the easiest way they can get cigarettes is from vending machines, Preister said.

Jamie Fassnacht, southeast area executive director of the American Cancer Society, said enforcing laws that prohibit use of tobacco for those under age 18 would be difficult if ma-

chines were available. "The machine just can't check an ID," Fassnacht said.

Fassnacht said she also thought there should be a ban on all machines, not just ones in public areas.

Several groups, including the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association and American Lung Association, are in full support of the bill, Fassnacht said, and will send lobbyists to talk to legislators about the bill.

Opponents of the bill said the problem involved much more than just vending machines.

Bill Peters, a lobbyist for the Tobacco Institute, said language in the bill made retailing of tobacco products extremely difficult. He said the bill would force stores to remove cigarette displays and products from the aisles and put them all behind the counter.

"Anytime someone wanted to buy cigarettes, they would have to have a clerk hand them to them," Peters said. "This makes retailing very difficult if not impossible. There wouldn't be any storage area for cartons."

That portion of the bill, Peters said, is the main focus of the legislation, not the removal of vending machines. Vending machines already are banned in most public places in Nebraska, he said.

The bill is scheduled to be presented today to the Health and Human Services Committee.

Crime bill

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● The bill would require mandatory drug testing of prison inmates and parolees and require offenders on parole to remain drug free.

● Persons on parole and probation would be allowed to be used as undercover agents to help infiltrate gangs.

Stenberg said he believed Nebraska to be the only state to have such a "ridiculous restriction."

He said the idea of the boot camps also was not meant to be a soft social program.

"These should be run as places no one ever wants to go back to," he said.

The only major difference between this measure and last year's crime bill, said Sheri Apking, Fisher's legislative aide, was the aggravated circumstances provision surrounding the murder of law enforcement officials.

Stenberg said the bill was needed for all Nebraskans.

"LB1182 is a diligent and sincere effort to make substantial and lasting changes in our criminal justice system in order to protect the safety of all Nebraskans," he said.

During his opening remarks, Fisher fielded questions from Omaha Sens. Ernie Chambers and John Lindsay on whether tougher penalties were the answer.

Lindsay told Fisher he did not understand how if the laws have gotten tougher, the crime could continue to go up.

"Maybe we need to get tougher then," Fisher responded.

"Have harsher penalties reduced crime?" Chambers asked. "Statistically speaking, do you know for sure?"

Fisher said no.

But Stenberg cited FBI and Ne-

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DON STENBERG
attorney general

braska Crime Commission statistics that said murders, rapes, robberies and aggravated assaults had increased 70 percent from 1984 to 1993.

Stenberg said that in a recent poll conducted by the National Research Corporation, 23 percent of all Nebraskans feel their communities are more dangerous than a year ago.

Fisher's measure also would repeal a bill that required crime bills to feature a cost estimate and appropriations bill.

Stenberg said that LB507 had put last year's crime bill under a "legal cloud."

Most of the questions from the committee focused on treating juvenile offenders.

Sen. Carol Hudkins of Malcolm said it had become apparent that young people today were getting "worse and worse" and had less respect for their own parents.

"Don't you see our frustration?" she asked Stenberg. "We are trying to write laws and enact laws that people will obey, and they have no respect for anything. What makes you think they are going to obey the laws?"

The committee took no action on the bill.

Students like union plans

By Todd Anderson
Staff Reporter

The plans for the Nebraska Union expansion, displayed in the union's main lounge, caught the eyes of several students Wednesday and Thursday.

Union Expansion



The Nebraska Union offices set up the displays, which show how the plaza will look after renovation.

The plans show the extension of the union to the south, the addition of a convenience store and the placement of the new fountain and stage area.

Completion of the entire project is planned for summer of 1998, said Daryl Swanson, director of the Nebraska Unions.

The displayed plans have been shown to the Architectural Review Board, the Union Board and the Student Affairs Advisory Council.

Overall, students stopping to examine the plans responded positively.

Craig Wellbrock, a junior business major, said he liked the addition of the trees and seating.

"It's a good place for students to sit outside and study," he said.

Diane Wilson, a graduate student who works with Landscape Services, said she liked the placement of the fountain and stage area in the plaza.

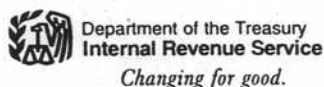
"I think it's an excellent way to extend the union out into the green space and to use our campus for more events," she said.

The architects designing the plaza renovation used input from several organizations, including Landscape Services, the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska and the Union Board.

Currently, the proposed cost of the expansion is \$512,000 more than the approved budget. Planners are looking for a way to cut costs without cutting proposed additions.

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Regents

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sive rights to broadcast Nebraska Cornhusker athletic events.

Great Plains has guaranteed UNL \$8.6 million over a five-year period for the rights to broadcast Husker football, volleyball and men's and women's basketball games.

Blank said he expected the regents to approve Great Plains' proposal.

"It looks like a solid bid," he said. "It was examined thoroughly by the Athletic Department, and the UNL vice chancellor for business went over it with a fine-toothed comb."

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