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WEATHER:

Today - Mostly sunny & cold. Southeast wind 10 to 20 mph.

Tonight - Partly cloudy, low around 20.

March 26, 1996



Sen. David Maurstad of Beatrice discusses property taxes with Bill Lock Monday morning at the Nebraska Legislature. Lawmakers spent seven hours debating property taxes Monday, advancing three measures.

Scott Bruhn/DN

Money marathon

Lawmakers advance property tax bills after long debate

By Erin Schulte
Staff Reporter

Seven hours of a non-stop property tax marathon in the Nebraska Legislature ended with three bills edging toward law Monday.

The bills, all dealing with property tax reduction, were advanced after debate on several amendments. Bills passed were:

- LB299, passed unanimously, which would curb local government overspending before levy limits are



imposed.

- LB1177, which would provide state

aid to more sparsely-populated counties affected by property tax reduction.

- LB1114, which passed by a 25-2 vote, which would limit property tax levies.

An hour of debate was spent on an amendment that was withdrawn. The amendment dealt with school consolidation and ways to absorb property tax reductions.

Schools receive two-thirds of all property tax collected in Nebraska, Sen. Don Wesely of Lincoln, who proposed the amendment, said.

Since lawmakers advanced a bill limiting property tax rates Monday morning, the next step was to think about how to help schools keep functioning without that money, Wesely said.

Suggestions in proposed amendments included encouraging small schools to consolidate and reducing school administration

staff.

Nebraska's school districts are unorganized and overstuffed, Wesely said.

"We have too much staff and too much expense in administration," Wesely said.

Nebraska has the third highest number of school districts in the country and needs to reorganize them to reduce the number of administrators, Wesely said. Those reductions would cut expenses, he said.

Teacher to student ratios in Nebraska are sixth best in the nation, Wesely said, so teaching staff could also be reduced.

There are problems with these suggestions, Wesely said, because rural schools resist consolidation and administrators make the decision on where to take budget cuts. Administrators most likely wouldn't elimi-

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Abel Hall residents mourn teens

By Chad Lorenz
Senior Reporter

The 12th floor of Abel Residence Hall was quiet Monday afternoon.

The normally noisy floor had students creeping down the halls, peering into each other's rooms. One student sat in the hall and cried as she talked on her cordless phone.

That day, 20 people from Abel Hall returned from the Columbus funerals of fellow UNL students Christina Dyer and Jacob Behlen.

Dyer and Behlen were among four Columbus teen-agers, all 19, who drowned in a Columbus lake last week.

Ryan Gragert and Eric Kudron also were killed in the accident.

A preliminary autopsy report showed the four were legally intoxicated at the time of the accident. Family members have said police are still investigating a possible blowout on the car.

More than 600 people attended the four funerals held in separate churches, even though snow closed schools.

Kim Brehm, Dyer's roommate in Abel Hall, said Dyer's funeral showed a lot about her personality.

The crowd of friends at her funeral showed how many people cared about her, Brehm said, especially when the Michael W. Smith song, "Friends are Friends Forever," was played.

"At that point I think everyone cried," Brehm said.

Brehm said she and Dyer, both freshmen, met when they moved into their 12th-floor room together.

She said they instantly got along and did a lot together during the first few weeks of school. "No matter what, she was always smiling," Brehm said. "She had a little hop in her step."

Dyer, called Tina by her friends, was a psychology major, but was considering a switch to nursing. Brehm said Dyer volunteered at Lincoln General Hospital and the Red Cross once a week.

Other residents of the 12th floor came to Brehm's room to offer hugs and support.

Kellie Feurt, a freshman pre-physical therapy

"No matter what, she (Christina Dyer) was always smiling. She had a little hop in her step."

KIM BREHM
roommate

See FUNERALS on 2

NU presidential home up for bids after fire

From Staff Reports

The University Foundation is taking bids on the property where the fire-ravaged remains of the NU presidential residence now stand.

Theresa Klein, director of public relations and publications, said the foundation decided to sell the property because University of Nebraska President Dennis Smith and his wife already owned a house in Lincoln.

After looking at appraisals from three insurance companies, the foundation decided to sell the property without repairs, Klein said. The building's foundation and some outer walls were still intact, but the interior and roof were damaged severely.

The buyer of the property will decide whether to rebuild on the remains or tear down the ruins and build over

them, she said.

Klein said the University Foundation had mailed bidding notices to Lincoln realtors, builders and other prospective buyers. Bids will be taken until April 8.

Smith will receive a \$1,000 monthly housing allowance from the foundation to compensate for the use of his own house for university functions, Klein said.

Chancellors of each of the four campuses receive that allowance, she said, because the university no longer provides their housing.

The foundation is trying to sell the property as soon as possible because the remains of the house have been an eyesore since the January fire, Klein said.

"We want to get it cleaned up and out of the way for the neighbors."

Work could make people sick

UNL reports few instances of illnesses

By Joshua Gillin
Staff Reporter

People who say their jobs make them sick just might be onto something.

Environmental illnesses are becoming increasingly more common in the American workplace, according to Neblin, a monthly health awareness publication distributed by the Lincoln-Lancaster Health Department.

Often the possibility of such ailments can be dismissed by both employers and workers because the afflicted individuals are usually isolated cases.

Conditions include carpal tunnel syndrome, an ailment affecting the ligaments of the hands because of repetitive motion, and multiple chemical sensitivity, where exposure to various workplace chemicals makes the employee sick.

But these maladies do exist, an environmental official said, and they can be a part of every working environment, including the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Ron Phillips, an environmental health specialist with UNL's Department of Environmental Health and Safety, said a few cases of environmental illnesses had been reported on the NU campuses over the years.

"There have been cases of carpal tunnel, but nothing that's caused too big of a problem," he said. "Most of those are ergonomic problems or the result of repetitive mo-

tion."

Mike Holmquist, a health educator with the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, said the danger of work-related illnesses always existed, even though the illnesses were not always recognized immediately.

He said typical environmental illnesses were usually considered by the victims to be colds or the flu, or the result of unrelated action, such as muscle pulls or strains.

The possibilities of such conditions existing in the workplace are very high, Holmquist said.

Phillips said his biggest concern had been the control of air quality. Often environmental illnesses turn out to be nothing more than a reaction to an agent in the workplace.

"A lot of times there's a mold or

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