

Ballot initiatives 411, 412 sent to 'resounding defeat' by voters

By ERIN GIBSON
Staff Reporter

Nebraska voters overwhelmingly rejected ballot initiatives 411 and 412 Tuesday, proposed amendments to the state constitution.

Voters handed the proposed amendments a "resounding defeat" said Phillip Young, campaign manager for the Coalition to Prevent Tax Increases, which opposed the initiatives.

"Nebraskans made a well-informed decision," Young said.

Young said the initiatives would have issued a \$539 million shock to Nebraska's current system of taxation. Legislative Bill 1114, which is set to provide property tax relief next year, is a better alternative, he said, because it does not mandate spending.

Randy Moody, campaign manager of Citizens for 411 and 412, said Nebraskans were confused about the initiatives — and that spelled defeat.

The initiatives would have meant radical changes for how Nebraska funds public schools, Moody said.

"This is a major change, and

people just weren't ready for the change," he said.

Initiative 411 would have made providing a quality education to Nebraska youth the "paramount duty of the state."

Initiative 412 would have cut Nebraska's property taxes in 1998.

Moody said LB 1114 will still provide property tax relief next year, but could leave public schools at a \$250 million loss for revenue previously raised by property taxes.

School districts will have to show the Legislature ways they have worked to become efficient to receive replacement revenue.

Citizens for 411 and 412 will now focus its attention on the Legislature, he said, where group members will lobby for the return of funding to school districts.

"We certainly want to protect schools," Moody said. "We're committed to that."

John Clark, communications director of the Nebraska State Department of Education, said the department opposed the initiatives because of the permanence of a constitutional amendment.

"The last time an amendment was rescinded was the prohibition," Clark said.

Ballot Issues	
60% of precincts reporting	
Amendment 411	
For	22%
★ Against	78%
Amendment 412	
For	26%
★ Against	74%
Amendment 1	
For	38%
★ Against	62%
Amendment 3	
For	33%
★ Against	67%
Initiative 409	
★ For	58%
Against	42%
Initiative 410	
For	42%
★ Against	58%

Two amendments pass in state

By ERIN GIBSON
Staff Reporter

Voters defeated all but two proposed amendments to the Nebraska constitution Tuesday night.

Only proposed amendment 2, which would provide for the consolidation of local and county governments, and measure 409, which supports term limits, will be added to the state constitution.

Amendment 1

By voting down proposed amendment 1, voters chose to retain the current law that requires all gambling on horse races to be conducted within licensed racetracks.

Pat Loontjer, Gambling with the Good Life executive director, said the group was thrilled by the outcome.

"Nebraskans said 'enough is enough,'" Loontjer said. "We have enough gambling. We don't need it on every street corner."

Proponents said the amendment could have bolstered the popularity of racetracks in South Sioux City, Grand Island, Columbus and Lincoln and could have saved the

\$250 million industry in Nebraska from a possible future collapse.

Initiative 410

Because initiative 410 failed, the number of signatures on a petition required by law to get an initiative or referendum on the ballot will not change.

The initiative had proposed the number of signatures be changed to 10 percent of those voting in the race for governor during the preceding general election.

Proponents of the initiative had argued the number of signatures currently required makes it impossible for volunteer petition drives to get a measure on the ballot without hiring professionals to help.

Amendment 3

Voters rejected this proposed amendment to the state constitution that would have allowed state senators to obtain the same health and life insurance and retirement benefits offered to other state employees.

These benefits are currently offered to all state elected officials except senators.

Initiative 409

Nebraskans overwhelmingly supported initiative 409, which amends the state constitution to instruct Nebraska's congressional representatives to support the passage of term limits.

Those term limits include:
— U.S. representatives limited to three 2-year terms.
— U.S. senators limited to two 6-year terms.

Under the amendment, if Nebraska's representatives did not vote for term limits in the future, that would be noted on election ballots in the following election.

Amendment 2

Voters approved amendment 2, which authorizes the Legislature to pass legislation to consolidate certain local and county governments.

Phillip Young, campaign director for the Coalition to Prevent Tax Increases, said the amendment will help local and county governments become more efficient.

Efficient government means lower taxes, Young said.

"Nebraskans want government reduced," he said.

Legislative incumbents dominate vote

OMAHA (AP) — Three incumbents in the nation's only one-house, non-partisan Legislature were defeated Tuesday and a fourth held on in a close battle for his seat.

Sens. Mike Avery of Gretna, Lee Klein of Battle Creek and Dan Fisher of Grand Island failed to win re-election.

Sen. Bob Wickersham of Harrison closely defeated Cash Ostrander, a rancher and distant relative of author Mari Sandoz, for District 49 in the Panhandle.

Business consultant Jon Bruning of Omaha defeated Avery 59 percent to 41 percent in District 3. In northeast Nebraska's District 19, retired Norfolk businessman Gene Tyson defeated Klein 58 percent to 42 percent. Klein had been appointed to fill the unexpired term of Sen. Connie Day of Norfolk who resigned for health reasons.

Grand Island businesswoman Chris Peterson defeated Fisher in

District 35. Both are Republicans, share anti-abortion views, are pro-business, live in the same neighborhood and attend the same church.

In west-central Nebraska's District 42, Don Pederson won the seat to which he had been appointed. Pederson defeated Dale Margritz 53 percent to 47 percent. Gov. Ben Nelson had appointed Pederson in August when Sen. David Bernard-Stevens resigned.

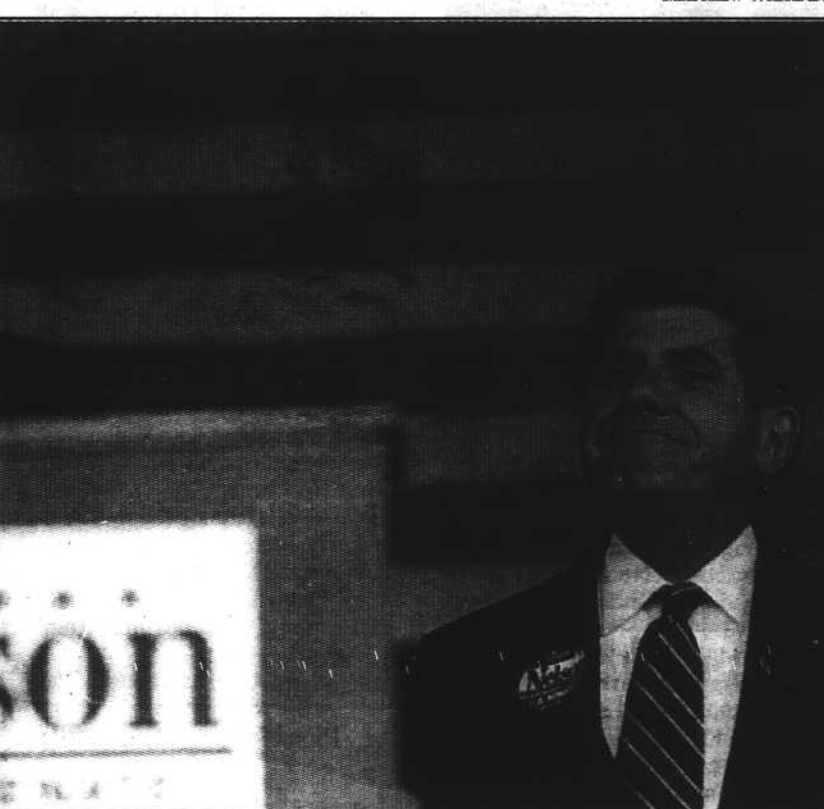
In the Lincoln-area District 25, Sen. Jerome Warner of Waverly easily won his 10th term with 75 percent of the vote in his race with Hal Stephens Dumas III. Warner has served in the Legislature since 1962, longer than any other senator.

Elections were held in 25 odd-numbered districts and one even-numbered district (District 42), where the resignation of the incumbent forced an election to fill a two-year vacancy.

Legislature	
District	Winner
1	David D. Voth
3	Jon Bruning
5	Don Pederson
7	John Hilgart
9	Shelley Kiel
11	Ernie Chambers
13	Dan Lynch
15	Ray Janssen
17	L. Patrick Engel
19	Gene Tyson
21	Carol L. Hopkins
23	Curt Bromin
25	Jerome Warner
27	DIAnna R. Schimek
29	LaVon Crosby
31	Kate Wink
33	Andrea Bohlske
35	Chris Peterson
37	Doug Kristensen
39	Dwight Pedersen
41	Jerry Schmitt
43	Donald W. Pederson
45	James E. Jones
47	D. Paul Hartnett
49	Gerald E. Matzka
49	Bob Wickersham



MATTHEW WAITE/DN



JAY CALDERON/DN

Gov. Kim Robak addresses a crowd of Democratic supporters after Nelson was

“
I'm going to be on the right side of the gun tomorrow.”
GOV. BEN NELSON

Even though the claims that Nelson raised property taxes were false, Wesely said, Nebraskans should have recognized that property tax wasn't even relative in a senatorial campaign.

During Nelson's one-hour commute from Lincoln to Omaha, the race was decided.

Before making his concession speech, Nelson phoned Hagel to congratulate him and wish him luck.

After the speech, during an Omaha rally at the Holiday Inn on 72nd and Grover streets, reporters asked Nelson what campaign trail he would take next.

Nelson said he hadn't decided anything yet, but noted that Democratic Sen. Bob Kerrey could leave an empty seat in 2000 by retiring or running for president.

As for the near future, Nelson said he would be busy catching up on gubernatorial business, but only after a few hours of recreation.

With dark circles under his eyes, the governor said he would spend this morning hunting pheasants.

"I'm going to be on the right side of the gun tomorrow."