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Bills contend for acceptance

MARRIAGE from page 1

discriminatory.

"It is not about denying civil rights or equal protection under the law to an immutable or inherent characteristic or an accident of birth," Jensen said. "It is not about discrimination on the basis of gender."

"And it is certainly not about hatred, animosity, prejudice or intolerance."

The bill, he said, simply defends traditional marriage.

"It is about whether society will give recognition and approval to a morally controversial choice by joining it to the time-honored institution of marriage," he said.

Sacred institution

Both gay-rights groups and Christian groups are bracing for a standoff.

Doug Patton, executive director of the Nebraska Christian Coalition, said the coalition planned to testify against Chambers' bill and in support of Jensen's bill.

"Sen. Jensen is a real friend of the family on legislation that he's proposed," Patton said. "We're very appreciative of his efforts."

Last year, Patton said, the Christian Coalition testified against a similar bill also drafted by Chambers.

Gay and lesbian couples have no reason to try to obtain legal marriages, Patton said.

"The legal protections are already there," Patton said. "They are able to have their partner in a will, give them

"We certainly don't need to redefine marriage to accommodate homosexual couples."

DOUG PATTON

executive director of the Nebraska Christian Coalition

the power of attorney, that sort of thing.

"We certainly don't need to redefine marriage to accommodate homosexual couples."

Failing to keep marriage a heterosexual institution could even lead to a societal downfall, said Guyla Mills, executive director of the Nebraska Family Council.

"There's absolutely no historical precedent for homosexual marriage," Mills said. "Every culture that has ever embraced homosexuality as a lifestyle or any kind of sexual immorality has fallen."

"We would be naive to think that our culture would not pay a tremendous price at this juncture in history as well."

Post no bills

Lincoln groups like Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), also vowed to voice their opinions on both bills, said Barbara Kimberly, PFLAG chairwoman.

"Our organization will be involved very extensively in testifying and lobbying, maybe even protests," Kimberly

said. "We'll just work on both of them, because Ernie will keep bringing it back again and again."

Some members of PFLAG are going to even more extreme measures to encourage political action among members of the gay community.

Janyss Ballard, a member of PFLAG, said she and the woman she considers her wife are starting a new organization called Lincoln Pride Network that would encourage communication between gays, lesbians and their organizations.

"We'll be becoming more politically active," Ballard said. "We will be there."

Ballard said she didn't think the group would focus more on one bill than the other. Bill or no bill, gays and lesbians are still having wedding ceremonies, even if there's no official marriage license.

"By making it illegal, they're not stopping us," Ballard said. "What they are doing is preventing our children from having insurance — those are the kind of things they prevent."

UNL senior feels confident about beauty pageant

PAGEANT from page 1

beauty pageants didn't begin until she was 17 years old. On a dare from her Butte High School friends, she entered the Miss Nebraska Teen competition and finished as first runner-up.

"I came away with an incredible support system and a forum to tell my story," she said.

Weir said her life hadn't always been so glamorous.

She spent her childhood traveling between foster homes, she said, after her mother abandoned her and two older brothers when Weir was only 18 months old.

It wasn't until last semester, at age 21, Weir made Miss USA her goal.

Now she considers herself a child advocate, she said. She has used her position as Miss Nebraska to visit schools and talk to children about making positive decisions, she said.

Weir hopes to continue her motivational speaking as Miss USA, she said. It's an incredible opportunity because she can represent the country and work on a national scale, Weir said.

Weir left for Shreveport on Tuesday to spend two weeks rehearsing the pageant's production numbers, attending parties with Louisiana dignitaries and interviewing with celebrity judges.

Weir isn't worried about all of the classwork she's missing, though.

"I don't expect to come back," she said. "I think I'm going to win. Someone has to."

She said she wasn't even nervous about the competition, which, according to Trump Pageants, L.P., producers of the competition, has an expected audience of 600 million people around the world. The pageant will air on CBS from 9 to 11 p.m. on Feb. 5.

"I'm ready to go," she said. "If I had to leave right now, I'd go and represent myself to my maximum potential."

It's time. The tapes are getting old.

Law & Order

A look at crime on campus and in the community

Assault

An incident involving frozen lizards from Florida left a Lincoln man's face burning Monday.

Lincoln police were called to 200 S. 29th St. at 1:26 p.m. Monday where Raymond Tripp III, 29, said he had been assaulted.

He said two men arrived at his door demanding payment for 25 lizards he bought in Florida.

Lincoln Police Sgt. Ann Heermann gave the following account:

Tripp had gone to a lizard show in Florida in September where he got 25 lizards with an agreement that he would sell them in Lincoln and pay his creditors back.

Since September, 19 of 25 lizards have died. Tripp said he had returned some of the money, but two men showed up at his door Monday afternoon demanding the entire payment.

Tripp reported being threatened by the men, and let them in his home to show them the 19 dead lizards — which he had frozen in his freezer.

After showing the lizards to the men, one man reached in his jacket, pulled out an aerosol can and sprayed Tripp's face, causing burns.

Heermann said the two suspects were not from Lincoln. Tripp had identified one of the men as a creditor from Florida.

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