

# Senators disagree on equal protection clause

By ERIN SCHULTE  
Senior Reporter

## Legislature

Only one senator voted Thursday against advancing a constitutional amendment that would add an equal protection clause to the state constitution.

Sen. Kate Witek of Omaha said the amendment, introduced by Sen. Doug Kristensen of Minden, would be unnecessary because it already exists in the 14th Amendment of the federal constitution, where equal protection under the law is extended to all people.

"There's no other level I think is necessary," she said.

Other senators hotly disagreed. Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha said people still suffer today from the effects of slavery and need special constitutional protection.

"There are insensitive, shallow-minded people who say 'Well, that's in the past, I don't want to talk about that. You have all the rights you need today,'" Chambers said. "They have no understanding."

He said recent stories about the Sigma Chi cross burning, a Jewish National Guard member who said he was harassed by American officers during a visit to a concentration camp,

and Gary Lauck's use of Lincoln as his home base for distribution of anti-Semitic materials prove that racism abounds.

"To Sen. Witek and others who say that we are past the time where we need protections in the constitution, consider this: As the complexion of the country changes, you may find yourself in a minority," Chambers said. "You might then pray that there are protections in the constitution so people will treat you not unfairly."

Perceptions of the state could go downhill if the Legislature rejected the amendment, other senators said.

"I can't imagine a greater condemnation for a state than to say we were not in favor of equal protection," Sen. Jerome Warner of Waverly said.

Chambers also pointed out more practical reason for having a clause not only in the federal, but in the state, constitution.

"Let's say that you always have to go into a federal court to vindicate a right under the U.S. Constitution because a federal right is implicated, and the federal courts are jammed," Chambers said. "Justice delayed is justice denied."

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SEN. KATE WITEK  
Omaha

Witek said adding the clause would not guarantee anything.

"Sen. Chambers makes it sound like if only we have this equal protection clause, violations will never occur in the state of Nebraska — that's ludicrous," she said.

Witek said she was also opposed to the amendment because of its possible effect on same-sex marriages. She said it would be easier for the court to afford legal protection to such arrangements.

Chambers, who supported the same-sex marriage bill, said Witek's reason wasn't valid, and rejecting the amendment would draw rac-

ist attitudes to the state. "We put things into the constitution not because we think it's the abracadabra, magical incantation that will automatically change everything," Chambers said. "It provides the basis for seeking change."

"How difficult would it be to explain to people that ... not only is it not a part of the Nebraska constitution, but the Legislature specifically rejected it?"

"They will remember around the country the burning of the cross and the Confederate clothes by a fraternity from the University of Nebraska — No. 1 in football, number nothing in human understanding."

## Resources available to assist Ph.D. graduates in finding jobs

By JIM GOODWIN  
Staff Reporter

Landing that first job after graduation can seem like a chore.

For doctoral graduates seeking a suitable career, the process can be anything but busywork.

With an increasing number of doctoral graduates and congressional cuts limiting educational and research opportunities, many Ph.D.s seeking that initial career step find themselves frustrated, said assistant professor of physics and recent graduate Dan Claes.

According to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Office of Institutional Research and Planning, 130 science and engineering Ph.D. students graduated from UNL between July 1, 1995 and June 30, 1996.

More than 26 of them could fail to find work appropriate to their educational achievements, according to a 1995 study on science and engineering Ph.D.s co-written by Stanford University's William Massey.

The study, based on conditions in the early 1990s, concluded more than one in five doctoral students could have trouble landing their first significant job.

### Secret to success

Claes considers himself lucky, and he should, according to Massey's study.

After Claes graduated from Northwestern University in 1991 and completed a nearly ubiquitous requirement of post-doctoral research performing high-energy experiments at Fermilab in Chicago, he landed a job last fall in the UNL physics department.

The entire process happened fairly quickly, and some of Claes' classmates weren't so lucky, he said.

"Many ended up leaving the field or at least changing their aspirations from academic to industrial," Claes said.

In the flurry of some 40 applications Claes sent to both large and small universities, he said he included a few for industrial positions. He said he interviewed for some industrial jobs and even considered them.

He didn't prefer one, though. "Those wanting academic positions would be disappointed to settle for one in industry, as I would have been if it had happened to me," Claes said.

Edward Schmidt, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said open assistant professorships, like the college's other available positions, are advertised in professional journals.

Anywhere between 20 and 200 hopefuls apply for about 12 positions available each year in the College of Arts and Sciences, so the competition is difficult, Schmidt said.

"We try to find the best person," he said. "There are cases when a

search goes into the next year until we find a qualified applicant. We'd rather do that than hire someone we felt wasn't the best."

### Help for the hopeful

Janet Ehlers, assistant director of the Career Services Center, said her concern was to assist Ph.D. candidates and graduates in their searches for post-graduate degree positions.

She said many students were unaware of the center's counseling, vital preparation and job search assistance services. She said she felt they made job-hunting more palatable.

Ehlers said those interested in the center's services should stop by or browse its web site, which includes links to search engines listing available positions by field, region and job title.

The site's web address is <http://www.unl.edu/careers>. Career Services is at 230 Nebraska Union.

"We encourage them to come over and explore what we can do for them," Ehlers said. "It lends an air of authenticity to have your university's official seal on your documents. Many people like the convenience and professionalism that comes with that."

## Task force to check NU's gender equity

By ERIN GIBSON  
Senior Reporter

A new task force will examine the University of Nebraska's gender equity goals and recommend revisions, NU President Dennis Smith announced Thursday.

The task force will also "provide advice and counsel regarding the future agenda for the university in the area of gender equity," Smith said.

Original gender-equity goals were set by the NU Board of Regents in 1991, Smith said.

Goals included placing more women in university leadership positions, facilitating the hiring and retention of female faculty and staff members, creating a welcome environment for women at NU and establishing effective channels for

the review of gender-equity issues.

A report released by University of Nebraska-Lincoln Chancellor James Moeser's Joint Commission on the Status of Women in December 1996 said the university still ranked at the bottom of its peer group in gender equity.

Joe Rowson, NU director of public affairs, said the task force was planned previous to the commission's December report and was not a result of the report's poor ranking of NU in gender equity.

The task force, which includes representatives both on and off all NU campuses, will make recommendations on changes needed in the Board of Regents 1991 gender-equity goals and report its findings by July 31, Smith said.

Linda Pratt, a UNL English professor, will serve as chairwoman of the committee, he said.

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