

Fast track

The Frank Sevigne Husker Invitational — one of the premier track meets in the nation — will be at the Bob Devaney Sports Center track. PAGE 7



Minneapolis' three sons

The Wonsers, a Minneapolis-based rock trio made up of three brothers, perform at Knickerbockers Saturday night in a 21-and-over show. PAGE 9

February 7, 1997

IN THE CLEAR?

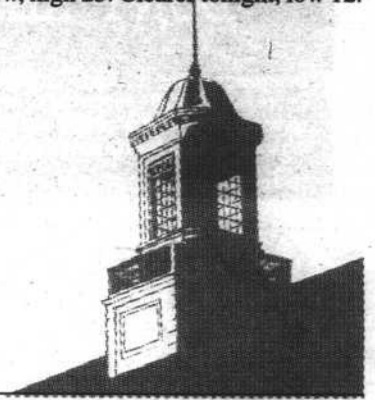
Diminishing snow, high 25. Clearest tonight, low 12.

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Senators argue concealed gun act

By BRIAN CARLSON
Staff Reporter

Allowing law-abiding citizens to carry concealed handguns would reduce violent crime without increasing the number of guns on the street, supporters of LB465 argued Thursday.

But opponents expressed concern about introducing weapons into potentially violent situations and questioned the proposed criteria for obtaining gun concealment permits.

Legislature

The Legislature's Judiciary Committee heard testimony on the Concealed Handgun License Act, sponsored by Sen. Stan Schellpeper of Stanton.

The proposal would allow citizens to obtain permits to carry a concealed weapon following background checks of criminal records and mental health conducted by the state patrol.

Schellpeper said experts had told

him LB465 would be stricter than other states' laws allowing gun concealment.

Bill supporters backed their arguments with the testimony of John Lott of the University of Chicago Law School.

Lott recently completed a nationwide study that found a consistent decrease in violent crime following the passage of laws allowing gun concealment. The study examined the period from 1977 to 1992, and Lott said the size and scope of the study allowed for control of other factors such as demo-

graphics and sentencing policies.

"In most areas we studied, crime rates were generally increasing until the law was passed, then were followed by a leveling off and a decrease," he said.

Lott's findings showed an overall decrease of 6 percent in the incidence of violent crime. Murders dropped by 8 percent, aggravated assault by 6 percent and rape by 5 percent.

The rate of crimes against women

Please see GUNS on 3

Governor recommends cutting taxes

By ERIN GIBSON
Senior Reporter

Congress and the state Legislature should "cut back and give back" to the people of Nebraska, Gov. Ben Nelson said Thursday.

The state treasury has a surplus, he said, and the federal government has been collecting Nebraskans' money in a highway trust fund and not returning it fully to the state.

In both cases, Nebraskans should have money coming back to them from the government, he said.

The state treasury has collected more tax dollars than it needs to run the government, and the surplus should go back to Nebraskans in the form of tax cuts, Nelson said.

This would mean an annual \$225 back in the wallet of the average Nebraskan, he said.

"We can afford it and we ought to do it," Nelson said. "It's time to cut back and give back to the people of Nebraska."

Nelson has officially proposed the tax cuts through two legislative bills, LB493 and LB401. The first bill would give all resident homeowners a \$160 state tax credit. The second would provide an average income-tax reduction of 5.5 percent to Nebraskans, he said.

Income-tax savings would equal about \$65 for a family of four making about \$46,000 a year, he said.

The governor will testify on behalf of both bills during a Legislature Revenue Committee hearing at the Capitol Friday afternoon.

Legislators have given Nelson's two tax-cut bills a "lukewarm reception," he said. Many are afraid that such cuts are not sustainable over two or more years, because they would mean a \$106-million annual loss to the state.

Some legislators said the \$106 million could go to funding other state programs, Nelson said. But he said the money should not be spent to increase programs.

"We don't need to grow government to grow Nebraska," he said.

But Nelson said Nebraskans do need money deposited in the federal Highway Trust Fund to help the state grow.

During the National Governor's Conference in Washington this week, state governors unanimously agreed a portion of funds raised by the federal gas tax should be returned to the states, Nelson said.

In 1994, Congress raised the federal gas tax by 4.3 cents to help fund budget-reduction efforts.

Money raised by gas taxes goes into the Highway Trust Fund, Nelson said, and should not be earmarked for other purposes.

Currently, for each dollar in gas taxes Nebraskans put into the trust fund, only 80 cents is returned for highway improvement projects, he said.

Recovering cheerleader attends game

By MIKE KLUCK
Senior Reporter

BOULDER, Colo. — Tracy Jensen has received many mementos and gifts from family and friends to make her third-floor room at Craig Hospital in Englewood, Colo., feel more like home.

Despite the posters, teddy bears, Precious Moments figurines and pictures of her home in Lyons, Jensen could never completely forget she was still in a hospital room.

Wednesday night Jensen left the hospital room, in which she has been for nearly two months, and attended the Nebraska-Colorado women's basketball game at the Coors Event Center in Boulder, Colo.

It was the UNL cheerleader's first trip out of her hospital room since arriving at Craig in December.

Jensen, a junior, injured her neck during a basic tumbling routine during practice Dec. 4. She was treated and stabilized at Lincoln General Hospital before being transported to Craig Hospital, which specializes in spinal cord injuries.

At Craig she has undergone physical therapy and rehabilitation, which has helped her progress. In December she was able to move only her toes. Now she can stand and support her own weight.

"I can't walk yet," Jensen said. Her voice was weakened by stress, but she was enjoying her first outing. "I've been working out on a stationary bike and I'm able to pull my wheelchair to me and get in it on my own."

Two weeks ago, her progress had improved enough that Jensen's doctors told her she might be able to make trips outside the hospital.

When Jensen noticed that the Husker women's basketball team was playing Colorado on Feb. 5 in nearby Boulder, Colo., she set a goal to be at the game.

"The CU cheerleaders have kind of adopted me and invited me to attend

Please see JENSEN on 3



RICHARD CREES, a tour guide at the State Capitol, answers a question from a Trinity Lutheran Elementary student. Crees explained who built the Capitol, why it was built and the symbolism behind its art.

A Capitol idea for a good time: Tour the tower of Nebraska

By JIM GOODWIN
Staff Reporter

In the maze and tower of the Nebraska State Capitol, a trio of workers links Nebraskans with the symbol of their statehood.

Those three elements — Richard Crees, Gloria Witherspoon and Angie Turner — are the building's official tour guides.

In an atmosphere thick with concerns of property taxes and naming the official state fish, the guides are the casual tourist's relief from what can be government vertigo.

Whether visitors arrive by the pairs or by the hundreds, the guides said they offer tours full of information about history, architecture, craftsmanship and symbolism.

"We enjoy showing and sharing the building with the public," guide supervisor Roxanne Smith said. "To get them beyond saying, 'You could stack a lot of hay in here,' to understanding the nuances of the Capitol's architecture is quite fulfilling."

Enjoying the building and conversing with those who visit it are two of the many highlights Witherspoon cited about the seven years she's been showing the Capitol.

"I want my tours to reach out and grab people," Witherspoon said. "I enjoy having action in the building because I get to interact with people."

Witherspoon said her favorite spot in the Capitol depended on the time of day, the season and her own mood. For example, following a tiring flurry of tours, she energizes in the powerful ambience of the Supreme Court.

The Rotunda, with its tile-mosaic representations of "The Virtues of the State," is Turner's area of choice.

Turner said she was drawn by the floor's more than 25,000 black-and-white, hand-cut pieces of marble representing Mother Earth and the four elements of classical

Please see TOURS on 6