

OPINION PAGES

Our VIEW

Scapegoat 101 No petty politics in matters of civil rights

Discrimination is legal in Nebraska. And if some state senators have anything to say about it, that's the way it will stay.

A bill currently before the Legislature's Judiciary Committee, LB280, would outlaw same-sex marriages in Nebraska and would not recognize those performed in any other state.

That's unfair and just plain wrong — or as one concerned father said last week at the bill's committee hearing: "LB280 is gay-bashing with a legal club."

Supporters cite biblical examples and decry the breakup of the American family in urging the bill's passage.

The bill's sponsor, Sen. Jim Jensen of Omaha, said last week: "Marriage is the bond that keeps the family together, and I'm deeply concerned about marriage and the family."

That's right on track, senator. But it's a shame you only extend that concern to your heterosexual constituents.

It is the height of political irresponsibility to preach that recognizing committed relationships among gays and lesbians is somehow contrary to "family values." Even Doug Patton, the director of the Nebraska Christian Coalition, conceded to Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha that same-sex marriages would not negatively impact heterosexual couples.

A 50-percent divorce rate. Unplanned pregnancies. Drugs and violence in public schools. An educational system falling into disarray. Inner cities in economic ruin. Those are some of the real problems facing America's families.

And LB280 is the best Nebraska's leaders can come up with?

That's called political scapegoatism, and there should be no place for that within the government of this state.

Other supporters of the bill recall biblical passages, particularly from the Book of Leviticus, denouncing same-sex unions.

That's ancient Hebrew law — hardly a code upon which to build modern laws. If it is, then by all means let's not just pick and choose those passages convenient to our cause. Let's get serious about it. Let's legalize polygamy. Legalize slavery. Ban poly-cotton blends. Ban ham and bacon and lobster. Pull Noxema from the shelves.

LB280 is pure politics, and bad politics at that. What makes it even worse is that it comes at the expense of some Nebraskans' civil rights.

But the Legislature has an opportunity to show the pioneering spirit of this state by passing Chambers' LB407, which would legalize same-sex marriages in Nebraska.

Where civil rights are concerned, there is no room for petty politics.

Or at least there shouldn't be.

The Judiciary Committee — and the Legislature as a whole, if either bill gets that far — should reject LB280 and pass LB407 and support the rights of all Nebraskans.

Mehsling's VIEW



AHHH... THE GOOD 'OL DAYS.

Anne HJERSMAN

Death before life

Justice blind to 'viability' of the unborn



Zachary Taylor Gricsemer never had a chance.

He never had a chance to coo his first word, or teeter around on wobbly, little legs, or play peek-a-boo.

He will never know what it feels like to fall in love, or to giggle uncontrollably with a best friend. He will never own a puppy.

He will never skip. He will never run. He will never sing. He will never hum.

He will never learn how to snap his fingers or whistle a tune. He will never believe in Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy or the Easter Bunny.

He will never know the world outside his mother's womb. And he will never know the dreams that died with him the day a drunken driver crashed into his mother's car and fatally wounded her, leaving Zachary's father without a wife or a son.

Less than a month from birth, Zachary already had a family. He probably had a bedroom with a crib, some clothes, a changing table and toys.

His mother and father probably

“Now all that Zachary's father has to show for his son's brief life is a birth certificate, a baptismal certificate and a death certificate, issued on the same date — and lots of timeless, shattered dreams.”

had begun to fantasize about whom their son would become — what his talents would be. They had certainly imagined what he would look like, whose eyes he would have, which side of the family he would most resemble.

This little person already had quite a life — loving parents and all kinds of potential.

But he was robbed of that by a 24-year-old man who chose to drive

while he was under the influence of alcohol.

And then little Zachary was robbed of his humanity by a Nebraska statute that says he was not really a person — and thus, not a victim of homicide — because he had not been born at the time of the accident.

He was delivered by Caesarean section at the hospital shortly afterward but died several hours later.

Now all that Zachary's father has to show for his son's brief life is a birth certificate, a baptismal certificate and a death certificate, issued on the same date — and lots of timeless, shattered dreams. He is left to grieve the loss of both the son he never knew and the woman he loved more than anyone in the world.

But when the man who killed them goes to trial on Dec. 20, he will be charged with only one death.

Zachary's death will go unrecognized by the state of Nebraska, though it will not be forgotten by those who loved him.

To say this "fetus" was "viable" is an understatement — to say he wasn't is a cold, sterile, tragic mistake.

Surely the legislators of this state can recognize that, even if the law as it is now refuses to recognize the life of Zachary Taylor Gricsemer.

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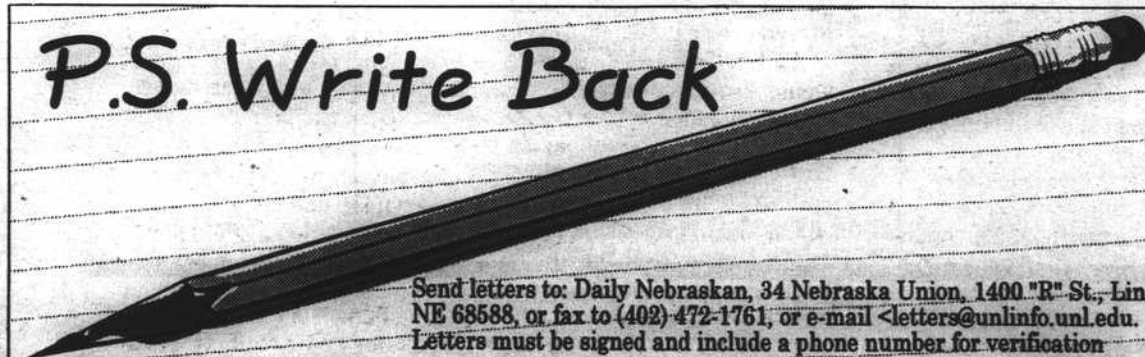
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