

Safety walk postponed

From Staff Reports

The Spring Safety Walk scheduled for 4 a.m. Saturday has been postponed a week until 4 a.m. April 19. Linda Cowdin, Parking Advisory Committee recording secretary, said organizers were concerned the snow

would illuminate the paths too much and make it difficult to see which paths needed better lighting. On April 19, the group will leave from the Parking Services building near 18th and Y streets. The walk takes about an hour to an hour and a half. Those interested in joining the safety walk can call 472-4455.

Legislators lobby to relieve petition-related pressures

By BRIAN CARLSON
Staff Reporter

Legislators wrestled with plans for freeing petition drives from the grips of paid petitioners Wednesday before advancing a proposal also designed to eliminate fraud. Lamenting the drop of volunteer petition drives, senators passed Amendment 1311 to LR7CA, sponsored by Sen. Doug Kristensen of Minden.

Kristensen's amendment, which replaced original LR7CA sponsored by Sen. DiAnna Schimek of Lincoln, requires petition signing to be done at a polling place or public building.

Currently, Kristensen said county clerks are unable to check the legitimacy of all petition signatures. If the revised LR7CA becomes law, signatures could be verified at the time and site of the petition drive.

He also said that by reducing fraud, the proposal would combat the influence of paid petition drives, which are usually driven by political agendas and money making and are more likely than volunteers to be fraudulent.

"If you're going to have a petition drive, don't go circulating petitions in bars or in malls where you're just trying to make money," he said. "Those

people give volunteers a bad name." Some expressed concern that requiring petition signers to go to an approved site would be burdensome.

Kristensen and Schimek said they hoped to compensate by reducing the number of signatures required for a proposal to reach the ballot, although the current bill has no such provision. Schimek said a lower number of required signatures would reduce the influence of paid petition circulators by cutting back on the need for highly funded drives.

"The reason for the legislation is to make it more possible for a volunteer petition drive to succeed," Schimek said.

Her original proposal would have

Legislature

meant signatures collected by volunteer circulators would count twice.

That plan was opposed by Sen. Merton "Cap" Dierks of Ewing. Dierks agreed that paid petitioners had gained too much influence in the system, but disagreed with counting one citizen's signature more than another.

Dierks expressed his desire to preserve petition drives' long-time role as a check on the state's one-house Legislature, invoking the man often called the father of the Unicameral.

"This is not what George Norris intended."

Law & Order

A look at crime on campus and in the community

ASSAULT

A Lincoln police officer tried to arrest a man who ran from him, then tried to grab the officer's gun in a scuffle Wednesday morning.

Lincoln Police Sgt. Ann Heermann said Officer Todd Hruza pulled the man over between 23rd and 24th streets on Sumner Street about 2:30 a.m.

Hruza was walking the man back to his cruiser when the man ran down an alley toward Euclid Street.

Hruza caught up with him and a scuffle ensued. During the scuffle, the man tried grabbing Hruza's gun, but was unable to take it out of the holster, Heermann said.

When Hruza searched the man, he found a pocket knife and a bag of white powder believed to be methamphetamine. The man did not have any identification, Heermann said, so police are still trying to identify him.

The man was cited for felony assault of a police officer, possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia.

NARCOTICS

University police officers and Abel Residence Hall staff followed their noses, and two residents were ticketed Wednesday for marijuana-related incidents.

St. Mylo Bushing said police received a report of a marijuana smell coming from one of the rooms. When officers and a residence director went to the room, they smelled the drug.

Bushing said they knocked but got no reply. They then heard a rustling in the room, and the residence

director unlocked the door with a pass key.

The two women then gave officers permission to search the room, where they found a pipe and less than an ounce of marijuana.

Freshmen Eryn Loucks and Jamie Burke, both from Rock Port, Mo., were cited for possession of drug paraphernalia. Loucks was also cited for possession of marijuana.

DISTURBANCE

A report that first started as a second-degree assault with a knife turned out to be a mutual school-boy brawl, in which the only weapon used was a chain-link fence.

Police said Tuesday that a 13-year-old boy was allegedly slashed with a knife in a fight that spilled out of a school bus.

Heermann said that after police contacted the other boy involved, they found that the cut the victim received came from a collision with a fence during the fight. A knife was pulled, but not used in the fight.

Heermann said both boys would now be cited for disturbing the peace by fighting.

BUZZ ON THE FUZZ:

RADAR WATCH

Lincoln Police radar units will be on 16th and 17th streets, K to Holdrege streets today. On Saturday, they will be on O Street from Ninth to 27th streets and on Ninth and 10th streets, K to Van Dorn streets.

Late-season storm causes fatal accident

SNOW from page 1

Terrance Springer's 1984 Dodge pickup was driving north in the inside lane and slammed into the passenger side of Eckhout's car, fatally injuring the boy. Clint Eckhout was taken to Lincoln General Hospital and pronounced dead.

Mari Eckhout sustained a broken jaw in the wreck, and Springer was not injured.

Lincoln streets were slick throughout the morning, snarling traffic and making the commute to work and campus a chore. As the day wore on, and the snow melted, the streets turned to a river of slush.

Public works trucks were out sanding and salting slick streets starting 8 a.m. Thursday. Plows started on emergency and bus routes and then moved to major streets as snow kept falling.

Gov. Ben Nelson warned the state's residents to take precautions and be aware of the hazardous conditions.

"I hope Nebraskans will take this spring storm as seriously as they do our winter snows," Nelson said.

Matt Werner, an analyst at the High Plains Climate Center on East Campus, said almost half of the past 50 Aprils have been fooled by spring

snow storms.

The biggest snow was just five years ago, a dumping of 7.9 inches on the capital city.

Lincoln averages 1½ inches of snow every April, but this year's spring snowfall has gone far above that number, Werner said.

As much as 4 inches of snow have fallen so far, and some forecasts have called for a foot more.

Werner said this snowfall has come early in the spring months while half of the years with spring snows were in the last week of the month.

Because this snowfall comes after a few weeks of nice weather, people are more shocked, Werner said.

"It's really not that rare," he said. "It's relative to what you are used to."

So Nebraskans better get used to snow.

A winter storm watch is in effect for today because another storm system, which had been building in the Rockies, plunged into the Plains Thursday.

The forecast for today included a 90-percent chance of precipitation, starting as rain but switching to more snow as a gusty northeast wind will hold temperatures to highs in the mid- to low-30s.

Mentally retarded spared

OFFICERS from page 1

sequences in a slew of appeals from death row convicts clamoring for IQ tests.

"Do it with the expectation that there will be another flurry of appeals," Bromm said. "If I'm sitting on death row ... who am I going to call? My attorney."

But Chambers said the bill could not affect any death row cases because

the courts had already looked for possibilities of mental defects.

Sen. John Hilgert of Omaha, who also supported the amendment, said those who had troubles with the amendment should consider it as the Legislature should lean toward preserving, not ending, life.

"If we're going to err, let's err on the side of safety and life and protection," Hilgert said.

the new spring

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