

Frazier takes position with Gov. Nelson

By **BRIAN CARLSON**
Assignment Reporter

Tommie Frazier's latest option has involved him in politics.

The former Nebraska quarterback, who led the Huskers to national titles in 1994 and 1995, went to work Tuesday in the office of Gov. Ben Nelson.

Frazier has been hired to work as a public information officer for Nelson. He will work as a liaison between Nelson and the Department of Health and Human Services and will handle public relations matters.

Frazier, who received a bachelor's degree in communications at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said he was approached by Nelson earlier this summer about the entry-level position.

"I told him I wasn't big on politicians," Frazier said.

But Frazier expressed interest in learning about state politics and putting his communications skills to work.

In his first couple of weeks on the job, Frazier will spend time familiarizing himself with state health issues. The Department of Health and Human Services is the state's largest agency, and Frazier will need to be informed about its operations and the politics that affect it.

Frazier said he still is getting used to rising early in the morning and dressing in a suit and tie every day. But so far, things are going well.

Karl Bieber, director of media relations for Nelson, said he and other staff members were impressed with Frazier during the application process.

Bieber said Frazier went through the same process as any other applicant. Bieber reviewed Frazier's resume, interviewed him and spoke to several references.

One of those who put in a good word for Frazier was Turner Gill, the quarterbacks coach at Nebraska.

Bieber said he spoke with Gill for about a half hour. Gill told Bieber he thought the job would be a good opportunity for Frazier, and said Frazier's desire and focus would make him well-suited for the position.

Bieber said the governor's staff was impressed that Frazier graduated in four years while establishing himself as one of college football's top stars. Frazier's experience in dealing with the media could also prove helpful, Bieber said.

Gun sales decline; bill still debated

WASHINGTON (AP) — Police background checks on 2.6 million would-be handgun buyers last year prevented the sales of 70,000 guns, more than two-thirds of them sought by people convicted or charged with felonies, the Justice Department said Thursday.

Since the Brady Act requiring such checks took effect in early 1994 through 1996, about 250,000 handgun and long-gun sales, were blocked under that law or state background check laws, the department's Bureau of Justice Statistics found. They included 173,000 handgun sales, which the report focused on.

"It's extremely heartening to

demonstrate again that the Brady law is one of the great legislative successes of the '90s," said Naomi Paiss, spokeswoman for Handgun Control Inc., which led the battle to get the legislation enacted.

But the National Rifle Association, which supports only instant checks, criticized the lack of prosecution of those who try to buy guns illegally.

"Excusing 250,000 criminals from a prison term is hardly a reason for celebration," said NRA spokesman Tom Wyld. "We believe that the instant check remains the superior system in part because the instant check facilitates the instant apprehension of a

prohibited person. ... The wait-based system prompts flight."

The Supreme Court ruled in June that the federal government could not force state and local authorities to conduct Brady's background checks, but left intact its five-day waiting period for a handgun purchase. Most law enforcement officials in the 23 states affected — states that lack their own background check laws — have continued the checks.

Of the 70,000 block handgun sales last year, about 47,000 — or 67.8 percent — involved buyers convicted of a felony or charged with one, the bureau said.

An additional 6 percent were fugitives from justice, 6.2 percent were prohibited by state or local law from buying guns, 3.9 percent were subjects of restraining orders, 1.5 percent were mentally ill or disabled and 1.2 percent were drug addicts.

The final 13.4 percent include illegal aliens, juveniles, domestic abusers, people dishonorably discharged from the armed services and those who renounced their U.S. citizenship.

Under the Brady law, the waiting period will be eliminated when a national computerized instant criminal background check system is established by November 1998.

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