

# Final speech stresses Nebraska's positives

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extended by an additional 2 percent, Nelson said.

Some senators have said proposals for deeper tax cuts overconfidently assume the economy and revenue collections will remain strong.

But Nelson said he was suspicious such arguments were a front for senators who want to hold on to the revenue for further spending.

"If we can't give (the surplus) back in the way of tax cuts, then it shouldn't be spent," Nelson said at a press briefing Monday morning.

In his speech, Nelson reiterated his support for returning the surplus to families.

"The right course for the state of Nebraska is to resist the urge to increase spending, and allow more dollars to stay with Nebraska families," he said.

Nelson also emphasized property tax relief, outlining three steps to achieve this goal.

The first, setting levy limits on property tax collections, was enacted last legislative session.

Nelson's second step was a call to limit increases in local government spending to 2.5 percent per year.

"The only way to achieve true, long-term property tax relief is to lower spending," he said. "It's time we got the job done."

Finally, Nelson said, the state should control the growth in property valuations. He proposed that a limit of 15 percent be placed on the amount that a property's value could rise in one year. Assessors should also draw upon five years of sales data, he said.

Nelson touched on a number of other proposals in areas such as education and economic development, health and human services, law enforcement, and safety and infrastructure.

Foremost among Nelson's educa-

tion and economic development proposals are a number of initiatives designed to retain the state's brightest students in its work force.

Dubbed the "brain gain" legislation, the proposal calls for government support of internships, loan forgiveness for students who work in Nebraska after graduation and improved marketing of Nebraska's graduate programs and career opportunities.

"We can keep our most promising students in Nebraska by giving them an incentive to study here and stay here," he said.

Heading into the home stretch of his gubernatorial tenure, Nelson vowed to remain focused and energetically pursue his goals — much as Nebraska Football Coach Tom Osborne approached his final game in this year's Orange Bowl.

Nelson also commended University of Nebraska at Omaha sophomore Rasheen Coleman, who was recently named National Youth of the Year for the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

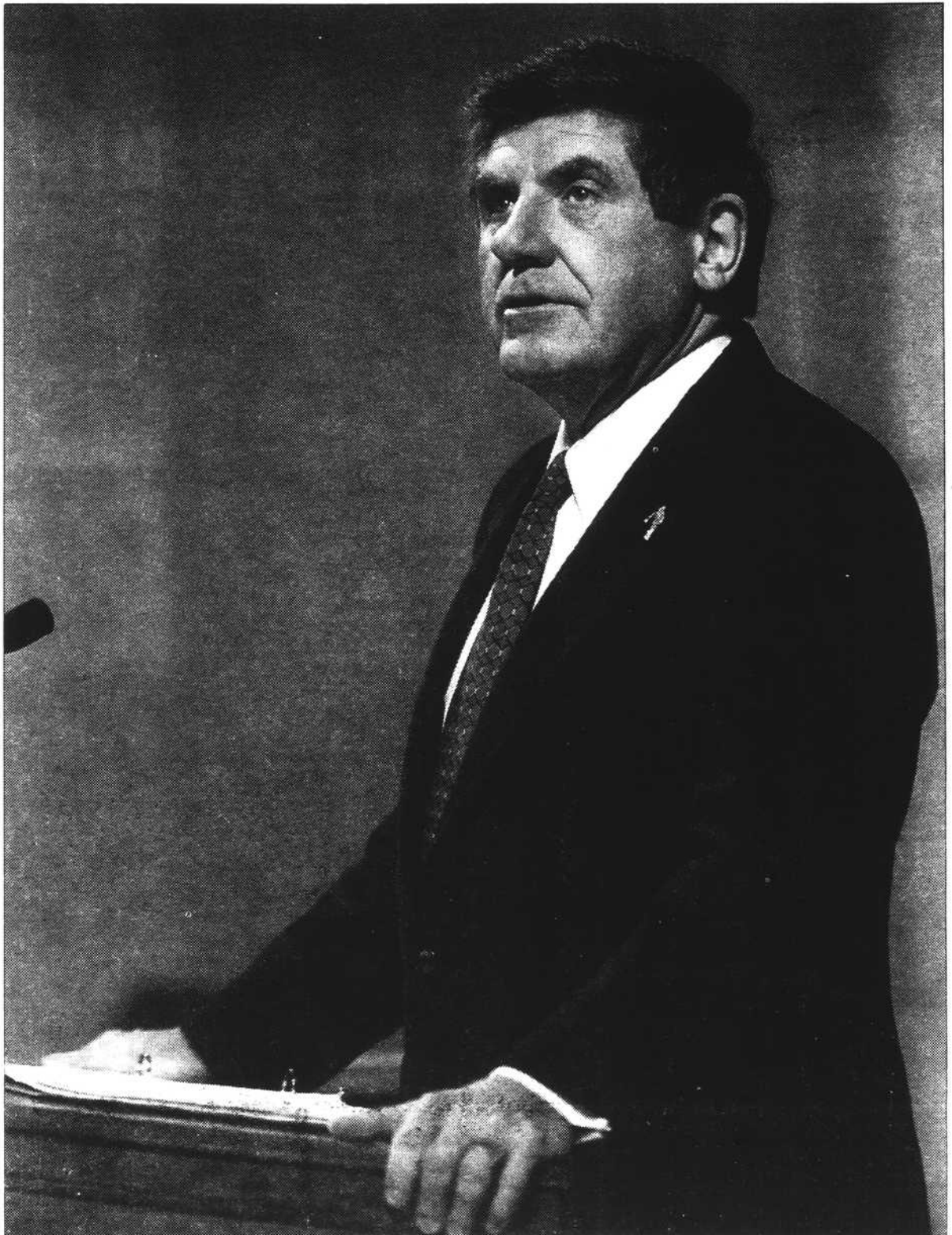
Sen. Doug Kristensen of Minden, the newly elected speaker of the Legislature, called Monday's State of the State speech Nelson's best in eight years.

He noted, however, that Nelson avoided discussing contentious social issues, as well as petition regulations and a proposed sports arena in Omaha.

Kristensen also took issue with Nelson's proposal to suppress property valuations.

He said the state's constitution requires that these be based on actual market value and said valuations could raise a number of problems.

"I'd much rather cap expenditures than property valuations," Kristensen said.



MATT MILLER/DAILY NEBRASKAN

GOV. BEN NELSON gives his eighth and final State of the State speech. He addressed issues such as "brain gain" legislation and budget surplus.

## The 5 Points

In his recent State of the State address, Governor Nelson outlined these 5 goals.

1. Making permanent the temporary state income tax cut that lawmakers passed last year.
2. Passing along state budget surplus to taxpayers.
3. Limiting spending increases for cities, counties, and other local governments.
4. Controlling growth in property valuations.
5. Passing "brain gain" legislation.

JON FRANK/DN

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## News Briefs

### Observatory to open

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Physics and Astronomy Department will officially open and dedicate its new UNL Student Observatory today at 4 p.m. in 211 Brace Laboratory.

The ribbon cutting will occur at 4:45 p.m. at the observatory on the roof of the Stadium Parking Garage west of Memorial Stadium.

Physics and Astronomy Department Chairman Roger Kirby, Professor Eugene Rudd and Associate Professor Martin Gaskell will speak at the ceremony, as will Chancellor James Moeser and Brian Foster, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

The observatory, paid for by a grant from the National Science Foundation and matching university funds, includes a new telescope and a heated viewing room.

Undergraduates began using the telescope last fall for astronomy research and stargazing. The telescope is among the most powerful in Lincoln.

### New directors named

John Witkowski will become the new director of the University of Nebraska Northeast Research and Extension Center in Norfolk March 1.

Witkowski now serves as the center's assistant director.

Witkowski, an Institute of

Agriculture and Natural Resources entomology specialist and scientist for more than 20 years, has been cited for his work in pest management and is a nationally known expert on the European corn borer.

He also has garnered several state and national honors, including a U.S. Department of Agriculture Honors award in 1995 and a citation as IANR Distinguished Cooperative Extension Specialist in 1994.

Witkowski replaces Robert Fritschen, who is retiring after 35 years with UNL, including five years as the northeast center director at Concord.

The research and extension offices recently relocated from Concord to the new Northeast Lifelong Learning Center at Norfolk.

Alan Baquet will become the new director of the University of Nebraska's South Central Research and Extension Center in Clay Center March 1.

Baquet, who specializes in risk management, now serves as a professor and assistant department head in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Economics at Montana State University in Bozeman, Mont.

Baquet joined Montana State University's Department of Agricultural Economics in 1985. He since has received the Rhone-Poulenc, National Association of Wheat Growers' Excellence in Extension Award.