

OPINION PACES

Our VIEW

New rules miss mark

Sen. Chambers still can delay bills

Senators in the Nebraska Legislature are nervously checking their wrist-watches as precious minutes tick away in the shortened 60-day session.

Friday, they thought they found a way to conserve time over the entire session by getting one man to shut up.

But it probably won't be that easy.

It seems to be no secret in the Legislature that the rules changes passed 29-6 last week were designed to keep Sen. Ernie Chambers from using filibuster and stall tactics to fight bills he didn't support.

Instead, senators can go through a different process to debate a bill, (but two-thirds of the Legislature has to agree to use that process). A trio of senators then will meet - the speaker of the Legislature, the senator who introduced the bill and the chairman of the committee where the bill originated. Other concerned senators may join.

That small group has to agree on how to structure debate, which involves deciding on the number of amendments, putting the amendments in order on the agenda and determining debate time limits. After debate has been structured, the three (or more) will present the plan to the rest of the Legislature.

This is where it gets really complicated.

Other senators may then argue about the group's proposed debate plan. That means they will be debating about how to debate the bill. Remember, the goal was to save time.

If this process is enacted only a few times, it might work. But that's not likely.

This week, Chambers plans to pull all his bills off the agenda. If he doesn't have to worry about his own bills, he would have more time to devote to debating other bills. Or debating how to debate them.

"I'm going to clear the battlefield," he said.

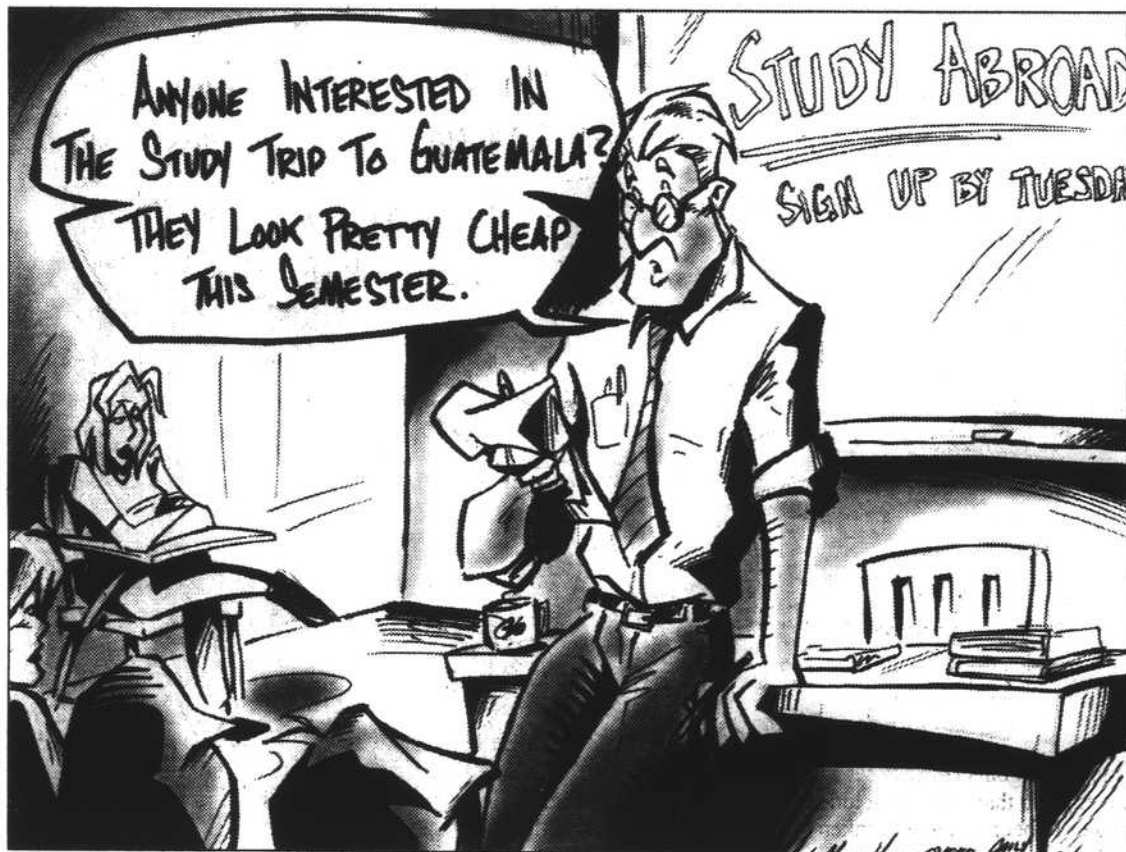
The man the Legislature was trying to shut up now has the device to make his voice louder. It seems like a lot of trouble to go through to try to get one man to behave, even if the measure does work.

It seems the democratic system has a different way to silence those who truly interfere with legislative process. It's called the election.

And constituents in Chambers' district seem to be pretty satisfied with what he's doing, considering they put him in office for the 28th year.

Let the man speak. He speaks for his people.

Haney's VIEW



DN LETTERS

When in Rome ...

Lori Robison's column on her general dislike of the Nebraska football program (No Big Red, Jan. 19) was very enlightening. I am a Husker fan, and I would have to agree that some Husker fans are quite obsessed, but learn to deal with it. Would you rather go to a school that has mediocre athletic programs and that nobody cares about? I went to school in Iowa for a year and I had to listen to Iowa Hawkeye fans spout off about a football program that seems to fall short every year. I did not like to listen to it, but I lived with it.

Nebraska football has been a source of pride for our state since the Bob Devaney era, and I do not see it changing any time soon. Allow yourself a little extra time to find your parking space downtown, and you'll make it through these crazy football seasons.

The Nebraska football team does bring in a lot of money for the school, and you should be glad it does. The whole university benefits from the revenue the football program brings in. I think the university is concerned with giving the students a quality education, not pumping out future NFL players or trying to make as much money off student tickets as it possibly can. Not all schools have free student tickets for athletics. I have a friend who goes to Iowa State, and he actually pays money to see the pathetic Cyclones play football.

And why would you be upset that your daughter is becoming a Husker football fan? You said you are a Baltimore Orioles fan. Would you have wanted your parents to tell you that you couldn't be? Your family will probably not fall apart if your daughter is a Nebraska football fan.

Bottom line, Nebraskans love the Huskers, and that probably will not change, so put some headphones on during football Saturdays and try to block it all out.

... get over it ...

Ms. Robison, I have two words in response to your column in Monday's Daily Nebraskan: Then move.

By the way, kudos to your daughter for taking pride and an interest in a hard-working, successful athletic organization. Just because we get excited about having a good football team does not mean we all turn into blithering idiots when the season begins. I think your daughter is safe.

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... but while you're here ...

I would like to thank Lori Robison for acknowledging the presence of people who aren't into Husker-mania in her Jan. 19 article.

I've lived in other towns across Nebraska, and Lincoln seems to be the most football-oriented place of all. I'm not against Husker-mania, I just don't care. Spending hours crammed into Memorial Stadium or in front of the television watching football doesn't appeal to me. The problem I have is when people look at me as if I'm from another planet because I'm not interested.

One day I was at work and this man asked me what I thought about a recent Husker game.

I said, "Oh, I don't pay any attention to football."

He looked at me as if I had thrown up on him, then he walked out with a look of disbelief. I think people should stop with the idea of: Nebraskan = die-hard football fan, or that it's abnormal if you don't care about Tom Osborne or the latest news on the players.

There's nothing wrong at all with dedicated, active football fans but there's nothing wrong either with people who don't get into it.

... do as the Romans do.

I enjoyed (Shawn Meysenburg's) editorial (Language lessons, Jan. 19). I agree wholeheartedly that a well-rounded education should include mastery of at least some foreign language. The quandary, however, is, "What language should I learn?" In high school, I took three years of German, but quite frankly haven't used it since. I might remember a few lines.

We, as Americans, often look to other cultures and bemoan, "Their children all study two languages, why can't ours?" But for nonspeakers of English the answer is easy: They learn English in school because it is the international language of business. It's much more a necessity for them to learn English than it is for us to learn some other language.

I lived for a time in Thailand, long enough to learn enough of the language to be able to carry on a reasonable conversation. I didn't need it for business because all of the people from all of the different countries I did business with spoke English. Why did I learn their language? When in Rome. ... Actually, it was kind of fun, but difficult because of the tonal quality of the language, not unlike Chinese. The other thing was that the Thai people really enjoyed seeing a foreigner make the effort to learn their language, however poorly spoken, and would make an extra effort to try to communicate with you. Bargaining in their language in the street markets also had the effect of reducing prices.

So the bottom line is, do you learn a language in high school that you may never use in your life, or do you learn a language later in life when there may be an actual usefulness to it?

I say yes to both.

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