

# Hagel vies for GOP leadership

Republicans to cast votes today on head of senatorial committee

BY BRIAN CARLSON  
Staff writer

In a secret ballot election today, Senate Republicans will decide whether Sen. Chuck Hagel should replace Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., as chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

Hagel, Nebraska's freshman senator, announced his candidacy for the chairmanship last week.

In a letter to colleagues, Hagel said Republicans' lackluster performance in the 1998 elections showed the NRSC needs new leadership and new ideas. The GOP failed to increase its majority in the Senate, retaining 55 seats to the Democrats' 45.

Hagel said GOP Senate candidates can be successful only if they run positive campaigns that focus on the issues.

"Issueless campaigns don't work," Hagel said. "Our 1998 issueless campaign was a deliberate decision... we had no agenda."

"We can't just run negative ads about the opposition. We must give (the American people) a reason to vote for our Republican candidates — not against Democrats."

Hagel, who has been in the

Senate less than two years, acknowledged his colleagues would naturally have questions about his experience. Hagel said, though, that fellow Senate Republicans would not be taking "a leap of faith" if they elected him.

He has shown he can win elections, he said, citing come-from-behind victories in the 1996 GOP Senate primary over Attorney General Don Stenberg and over Gov. Ben Nelson in the general election. Under his leadership, he said, the Nebraska Republican Party has captured each statewide office except that of Democratic Sen. Bob Kerrey.

Hagel also pledged to raise the level of discourse in U.S. politics.

"Our most important responsibility may be to use our majority status to help clean up the political culture in America by 'defining up' the standards of debate, political discourse and campaigns," he said. "I would like to help lead this challenge."

Hagel said his first priority would be to help re-elect the 19 incumbent GOP senators whose terms expire in 2000. He said he would represent those senators at leadership meetings to ensure their concerns are considered in policymaking.

Hagel also said the NRSC should

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CHUCK HAGEL  
U.S. senator

focus not simply on raising money, but on raising it efficiently and ensuring it is spent wisely.

McConnell, a third-term senator, has led the National Republican Senatorial Committee since 1997.

Mike Russell, an NRSC spokesman for McConnell, said McConnell had counted votes and was confident he would be re-elected today.

"The bottom line is, he did a good job of raising money and distributing resources to make many races very competitive," he said.

The NRSC didn't buy into predictions by some political analysts that the GOP could gain five seats to achieve a filibuster-proof majority of 60, Russell said.

Down the stretch, he said, McConnell and the NRSC believed the election results would fall somewhere between no change in seat distribution to a GOP pickup of three seats.

## LPD assigns additional officers to stop DWIs

BY JOSH FUNK  
Senior staff writer

In response to the annual increase in drinking during the holidays, Lincoln Police have stationed extra officers in problem areas.

The 10 additional officers will be patrolling areas with high concentrations of alcohol sellers on weekends throughout the holiday season, Sgt. Dave Harnly said.

Police made 23 drunken driving arrests last weekend, 16 on Friday and seven on Saturday.

"This time frame is always a time of high alcohol consumption," Harnly said.

All the officers involved in the project have been trained to recognize drivers who are impaired by drugs.

That training has led to a projected 20 percent increase in the number of DWI arrests this year, Harnly said.

A grant from the Nebraska Office of Highway Safety is covering the costs of the additional officers, who will help police address holiday drinking.

The patrols will focus on different areas of the city each night.

"We can saturate the city with the extra officers," Harnly said.

The holiday enforcement project will culminate with New Year's Eve, which is second only to St. Patrick's Day in alcohol offenses.

Harnly encouraged people to use alternative drivers, designated drivers or taxi cabs when they are drinking.

And it is important to designate a sober driver before starting to drink.

Harnly also urged people not to drive if they have been drinking at all.

"Don't get behind the wheel if you have had anything to drink," Harnly said. "There is always a danger you might be over the legal limit and may not be able to judge your own impairment."

## New gun check causing hassles for shop owners

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Ammo Sporting Goods, 5601 S. 56th St., said the store finally got its first background check to work at 3:30 p.m.

"If the system is up and working, it will be OK," Gagner said. "But I doubt it will affect crime."

"There are plenty of places to get guns illegally."

Eighty percent of the new checks are supposed to be instantaneous, Peschong said. The other 20 percent of the time it may take a couple days to check paper records.

If a gun shop does not hear back from the FBI within three days of inquiring, the sale will be cleared.

"There were not many guns sold in this community today," Peterson said.

In Nebraska anyone wanting to buy a handgun must apply for a purchase permit with their local police or sheriff's office.

Then police do a check of their background. Now police will also check with the national system.

Federal law bans gun purchases by people convicted or under indictment for felony charges, fugitives, the mentally ill, those with dishonorable military discharges, those who have renounced U.S. citizenship, illegal aliens, illegal drug users and those convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors or who are under domestic violence restraining orders.

If buyers are approved they will get their permit in a couple of days, which they can take to a store to purchase a handgun.

That permit can now be used to purchase a long gun. Permits issued before Monday will be valid until their expiration date.

An estimated 12.4 million firearms of all kinds are sold each year in the United States. All will be covered now, plus another 2.5 million annual pawn shop transactions.

Gun owners who pawn their guns and later retrieve them also will undergo a background check.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

## Young sworn in as interim mayor

From staff reports

Immediately following the official resignation of Lincoln's mayor, the City Council swore in Lincoln's interim leader Monday evening.

Seven-year city councilman and Lincoln banker Dale Young recited the oath of office to become mayor of Lincoln until citywide elections in May.

Young will replace governor-elect Mike Johanns, who will move into the state office in January.

Young, who had decided not to run

City Council



for council re-election in May, will finish his city government career as mayor.

He said he was selected by the City Council to avoid a political battle while choosing from several applicants.

"I just thought it would be an interesting way to finish it," Young said.

Ross Hecht, a Lincoln banker who has served on several local and state boards and committees, was sworn in

to fill Young's council post Monday evening.

Both the City Council seat and mayoral seat will be open to new candidates in May's general election.

Lincoln Sen. Don Wesely has already announced he will run for mayor, and councilwoman Cindy Johnson is expected to make an official run for mayor soon.

Randall Reichert, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln student and an employee for the Nebraska Education Telecommunications Commission, said he also plans to run.

## Commission OKs Peru State renovation

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ommendation.

The only dissenting vote came from Commissioner John Emery of Omaha, who questioned the ability of Peru State and the surrounding community to make the effort necessary to help Peru State become a valuable and viable campus.

Much of the talk at the meeting was on whether Peru State would commit to make the changes the college needs.

No public testimony was given against the recommendation, but Carrol Krause, executive director of the State Colleges Board of Trustees, said his board now supported keeping the college in Peru, saying it was best for the college and the region.

"It is our intention to do everything possible to make this work," Krause said.

Nancy Hoch, president of River Country Economic Development Corporation in Nebraska City, said the town also supported keeping the college in Peru.

Nebraska City officials had originally supported moving Peru State within its city limits.

Along with renovating existing facilities, the commission's recommendation requires the college to look at ways to improve student recruitment, retention and graduation rates.

The college's retention rate from freshman to sophomore year has been about 55 percent. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's

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CARROL KRAUSE  
executive director of  
State Colleges Board of Trustees

retention rate has been about 80 percent.

To improve Peru State's statistics, Krause said, the state colleges board was asking the Peru State College Foundation to increase scholarship funds.

Krause said the college also was looking at admissions standards, which could increase retention rates.

Commissioner Eric Seacrest of North Platte said the survival of the college was dependent on the college's improvements in those areas and the amount of money the Legislature would allocate to college renovations.

If in the next four to six years the Legislature doesn't allocate the needed funds, the next option would be to shut down Peru State College, Seacrest said.

Commissioner Dick Davis of Omaha was confident the college would survive.

"I would like to give southeast Nebraska a chance to succeed more

## UNL to add film studies major to arts curriculum

BY LINDSAY YOUNG  
Senior staff writer

GRAND ISLAND — University of Nebraska-Lincoln students interested in pursuing a film studies major will have their chance.

The final step in establishing film studies as a bachelor's in arts was taken Monday by the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education at its meeting at Central Community College.

The commission voted unanimously to accept the program proposal for the major.

In the proposal's public hearing, nobody spoke for or against the proposal.

The degree, which was approved by the NU Board of Regents at its July 25 meeting, will start in the 1999 fall semester.

The major will be an interdisciplinary undergraduate major with-

than anything else," Davis said. "I truly believe they can do the right thing."

Commissioner Barbara Marcy of Chadron said for that to happen, all involved have to be committed.

"I do not see us doing a service by

in the departments of English, art, art history, broadcasting, philosophy, communication studies and theater arts and dance.

It requires 30 hours of approved courses, with four courses serving as core classes. The core classes will cover introduction to film history, film genre, film directors and film theory and criticism.

A minor in film studies has been and will remain available.

One of the program's strong points, according to a commission evaluation, was that no significant costs would be associated with beginning the program. The degree program will utilize existing courses, faculty, library holdings, facilities and equipment.

Commissioner Barbara Marcy of Chadron said the commission's academic committee saw no real flaws with UNL's film studies program proposal.

"We think the program is worthy of being started."

going into this halfheartedly," she said.

Krause agreed.

"If we're going to vote (for the recommendation), then there has to be no doubt Peru State will exist 100 years from now."