



Offensive maneuvers

The Nebraska men's basketball team looks to improve its offense after several low-scoring outputs over the season. **PAGE 9**



Zoo TV

Throughout the month of January, Nebraska ETV is running a series of recorded concerts from the Zoo Bar's 25th anniversary festival. **PAGE 12**

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STONE COLD

Blustery and colder, high 35. Clear tonight, low 7.

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Pardons Board refuses Reeves clemency

Emotions run high after 3-0 decision is announced

By JESSICA FARGEN AND JOSH FUNK
Senior staff writers

After the Nebraska Board of Pardons decided not to grant Randy Reeves clemency, the crowd of family

members and supporters started sobbing and pleading for his life.

Monday afternoon's hearing at the State Capitol was composed until Gov. Mike Johanns made it clear he would vote not to commute Reeves' sentence to life imprisonment.

Sobbing, the daughter of one of the murder victims, Audrey Lamm, stood up in the middle of the proceedings: "Excuse me, governor ..."

Johanns interrupted without making eye contact, asking her to "please sit down." The stress in the room was evident in his voice.

The Board's decision eliminated Reeves' best hope to avoid the electric chair, though there is still a motion pending in the state Supreme Court.

Eighteen years ago, Reeves was sentenced to death for the 1980 murders of Janet Mesner and Audrey Lamm.

The two women were killed in a Quaker meeting house in Lincoln. Reeves had been drinking all day before the murders.

Reeves' attorney, Paula Hutchinson, applied for clemency to address issues in the case she said were unresolved.

The pre-sentence report contained comments that were "unsubstantiated and hearsay," she said, calling the report a "disgraceful piece of work."

Hutchinson said the report also mis-

represented the positions of members of the Lamm and Mesner families, many of whom oppose the death penalty.

Hutchinson also pointed out that Reeves had a consistent pattern of nonviolent behavior in prison.

But Kirk Brown, assistant attorney general, said all the questions in the case had been answered with 18 years of litigation, including four U.S. Supreme Court hearings.

Johanns agreed there was no reason for a hearing in the case.

"There is a point at which a case comes to an end," he said.

The crowd realized the impact of Johanns' statement — the Board was going to vote no — and started to react.

Hutchinson marched to the back of the room to compose herself.

Reeves' supporters had held hope that Johanns, the swing vote of the Board, would vote for clemency.

Johanns had been tight-lipped about how he might vote at his first Pardons Board hearing, though Reeves supporters had hoped his Catholic faith, and the churches' calls for clemency, would sway his decision.

Please see **BOARD** on 3

Changes not foreseen in death penalty laws

By JESSICA FARGEN
Senior staff writer

Thursday's scheduled execution of Randolph Reeves, which would be Nebraska's fourth in five years, is unlikely to harness Legislature support for abolishing the death penalty.

But that has not stopped some legislators from introducing bills proposing to abolish or reform existing statutes.

"Nil" is how Sen. David Landis describes the chances of bills — such as Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers' LB76, which would abolish the death penalty — passing.

"These are positions that are usually long-standing, philosophical perspectives," said Landis of senators' opinions on the death penalty.

Landis, a senator from Lincoln, said Monday that he was planning on introducing a death penalty-related bill of his own.

Later this week Landis plans to introduce his bill that would "create a defense based on racial discrimination to the use of the death penalty."

Landis would not elaborate on the specifics of his bill.

Sen. Kermit Brashear of Omaha also introduced a bill last week that

Legislature



would change the method of execution in Nebraska.

But the name in the Legislature synonymous with abolishing the death penalty is that of Chambers'.

As he has every year since he joined the Legislature in 1971, Chambers introduced a bill that proposes to abolish capital punishment and replace it with life in prison without parole. In more than 25 years, the bill has passed only once, but was vetoed by then-Gov. Charles Thone.

The bills' low success rates are not surprising, said Plattsmouth Sen. Roger Wehrbein.

"I think the body in general is pretty much pro-capital punishment," Wehrbein said.

Although lawmakers passed a bill last year that prohibits mentally handicapped people from receiving a death sentence, many senators said their constituents consistently tell them to keep the death penalty alive in Nebraska.

Hastings Sen. Ardyce Bohlke said her constituents are no exception.

Please see **DEATH** on 3



AUDREY LAMM REACTS to the Nebraska Pardons Board declining clemency for Randy Reeves on Monday at the State Capitol. Reeves murdered two women in 1980, including Vicki Lamm, Audrey's mother. Lamm and other family members oppose the scheduled execution of Reeves, set for Thursday.

AP PHOTO/S.E. MCKEE