

State wants court to give priority to Reeves' appeals

BY JOSH FUNK
Senior staff writer

Condemned murderer Randy Reeves' case could be decided as early as April if the Nebraska Supreme Court accepts the state's request to expedite his appeals.

Attorney General Don Stenberg asked the court Thursday to act quickly so Reeves' sentence could be enforced. The request came one week after Reeves was scheduled to die in Nebraska's electric chair.

Two days prior to the execution, the court issued a stay to consider two matters related to the case.

Assistant Attorney General Kirk Brown, who is handling the appeals, said that after 18 years of litigation all of the questions in the case have been answered.

"All we're really asking the court to do is give priority to this case," Brown said.

But Reeves' attorney, Paula Hutchinson, said that these questions have never been answered by the courts, and executing Reeves would violate his rights.

"Time-after-time, the courts have agreed that this is wrong, but it is a state question," Hutchinson said. "The state court has not answered it.

"We were always told we are in the

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KIRK BROWN
assistant attorney general

wrong court." Reeves was sentenced to death in 1981 for the murders of Vicki Lamm and Janet Mesner, who were killed in a Quaker meeting house in Lincoln.

Since his trial, Reeves' case has been appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court three times, the last in 1998 when the court determined that all the issues had been addressed, Brown said.

In Reeves' current appeal for post-conviction relief, Hutchinson argued that the execution would violate Nebraska's new equal protection clause, adopted in November.

Hutchinson also argued that death by electrocution is cruel and unusual punishment.

The motion was rejected by a Lancaster County District Court judge Jan. 5, and then appealed to the Nebraska Supreme Court on Jan. 11.

Brown said that if the appeal was expedited, the court could hear the

case in early April.

"The post-conviction relief process is the wrong vehicle to address the issue," Brown said. "All the previous courts found that Reeves' sentence was valid, and his rights were not violated."

The other matter related to the Reeves case before the state supreme court was filed by two family members of one of Reeves' murder victims. In their complaint, the family members alleged that the Pardons Board violated their rights by refusing to hear them.

Gus and Audrey Lamm, Vicki Lamm's widower and daughter, respectively, have been lobbying state officials since December to commute Reeves' sentence to life imprisonment.

A Lancaster County District Court judge rejected that claim on Wednesday, but Hutchinson said she planned to appeal that decision.

House prosecutors talk to Lewinsky

WASHINGTON (AP) - House prosecutors brushed off Democratic fury and interviewed Monica Lewinsky on Sunday, a move that triggered fresh partisan convulsions in President Clinton's impeachment trial.

Three House prosecutors, Republicans Asa Hutchinson, Ed Bryant and Bill McCollum, arrived mid-afternoon at Washington's stately Mayflower Hotel to interview the former White House intern whose affair with the president led to the Senate impeachment trial. Lewinsky's lawyer, Plato Cacheris, arrived earlier. Independent counsel Kenneth Starr's office also sent representatives.

The prosecutors indicated they also wanted to talk to presidential friend Vernon Jordan, who helped Lewinsky in her job search.

The House managers said they would ask substantive questions of Lewinsky about her relationship with Clinton. McCollum said he wanted to question her about "her current state of mind on the grand jury testimony that she gave." In that testimony last sum-

mer, Lewinsky said Clinton never asked her to lie about their affair.

At the Mayflower Hotel where Lewinsky was housed, concierge John Dignan said the former White House intern has received about a dozen messages by phone and fax - some with off-color comments but most offering support.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, meanwhile, said he would go ahead with a plan to submit written questions to Clinton, even though White House lawyers - who first suggested the questions - now say the attorneys would respond rather than the president.

In a move that shattered the Senate's bipartisan approach to the impeachment trial and caught senators from both parties off guard, Starr's office obtained a court order to help the House schedule the interview with Lewinsky.

Starr on Saturday obtained a court order for Lewinsky to submit to the interview, arguing that she had an obligation to cooperate under an agreement giving her limited immunity from prosecution.

U.S. attacks Iraqi sites

WASHINGTON (AP) - American warplanes, threatened by Iraqi artillery systems while patrolling the "no-fly" zone in northern Iraq, attacked two surface-to-air missile sites in separate incidents Sunday.

It was the second day in a row that U.S. jets enforcing the flight-interdiction zone met resistance and fired back.

A U.S. F-15E Eagle fired a precision-guided missile and "suppressed" an Iraqi SA-3 surface-to-air missile site that threatened forces in the area, military officials said.

The missile scored a direct hit, Operation Northern Watch officials said in a statement. Northern Watch operates out of the NATO base in Incirlik, Turkey, to enforce the truce that ended the 1991 Persian Gulf War and bans Iraqi aircraft in the northern sector of the country.

The American aircraft in the area reported they were illuminated by the Iraqi surface-to-air missile system, said Air Force Lt. Col. Dennis Linn, a spokesman at the European Command headquarters in Germany.

A pilot whose plane is illuminated,

or locked on by radar, assumes he is about to be fired upon.

Less than an hour after the first attack, a U.S. Marine EA-6B Prowler and two U.S. Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcons fired high speed anti-radiation missiles after their aircraft were illuminated by Iraqi systems.

The damage to Iraqi forces in the second incident was being assessed.

On Saturday, American warplanes were threatened by Iraqi MiGs and anti-aircraft ground fire, and responded with laser-guided bombs on two surface-to-air missile sites in southern Iraq.

Planes from the Navy aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson, on station in the Persian Gulf, are patrolling that zone south of Baghdad.

Iraq has demanded that the United States and Britain end what Iraqi President Saddam Hussein calls "illegal" patrols in the restricted zones set up over northern and southern Iraq to protect Iraqi Kurds and Shiite Muslims.

President Clinton has said the bans will be fully enforced because they are central to the U.S. strategy for containing Iraq's military.

HHS promises communication

Directors plan to improve relations with agencies

BY BRIAN CARLSON
Staff writer

Legislature

The new directors of Nebraska's Health and Human Services System pledged improved communication with the Legislature and showed breaks from policies of the previous governor's administration Friday.

In a briefing before the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee, the system's three directors discussed its ongoing transition from five agencies to three under a single system. The transition began during the administration of Ben Nelson, whose second term as governor of Nebraska expired earlier this month.

Nelson's successor, Gov. Mike Johanns, retained Jeff Elliott as director of finance and supply. He hired Dick Nelson as director of regulation and licensure and Ron Ross as director of services.

The three men spoke to the committee Friday, vowing to work closely with both the committee and HHS system employees still adjusting to the system's transition.

Elliott discussed the state's partnerships with managed care organizations to provide health care at reasonable costs. After a rough start, the cooperation has improved, he said.

"I think vendors have continually

and steadily improved over time," he said. "At this point, we've gotten a lot smarter and better at working with vendors."

Sen. Deb Suttle of Omaha, a former nurse and member of the committee, said managed care is "the only program I've ever heard of that everybody hates - doctors, hospitals patients." She encouraged the HHS system to ensure that quality of care was not sacrificed.

Elliott said the state must prove to the federal government that it saves money by awarding contracts to managed care organizations. When taking bids from managed-care organizations, the state considers quality of care as well as cost, he said.

Ross told the committee that the HHS administration had abandoned a Nelson administration policy that would have used six districts statewide to manage health care services at the local level.

"The plan to go out and create six little Nebraskas is dead," he said.

Ross also said he had terminated a state contract with Liberty Health Care, a physician recruiting service that had been hired to recruit psychiatrists. He said the contract was invalid.

“The plan to go out and create six little Nebraskas is dead.”

RON ROSS
HHS director of services

Ross told the committee that he would try to juggle the interests of health-care recipients, system employees, vendors, other agencies and taxpayers in his new job.

Dick Nelson said one of his priorities was to speak to HHS system employees who were unsure of their roles in the new system and assure them their contributions were important.

"We need to share our vision with them," he said.

Several senators said they withheld tough questions from the HHS directors Friday because they were new to the job. But Sen. Dennis Byars of Beatrice said that wouldn't last.

"This is a honeymoon period, and you all have long white veils, but for long?" he quipped.

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Housing director calls for honors without elitism

BY BERNARD VOGELSANG
Staff writer

RHA

Doug Zatechka, director of housing, said he wants to get the best students to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln without becoming an elitist institution.

Zatechka said making Neihardt Residence Center an honors-only hall and building a new honors hall may raise concerns of the university becoming an elitist institution. But, he said, UNL also has a big interest in getting the best students.

"Better students bring in more non-state and non-student money," Zatechka said Sunday at the Residence Hall Association meeting.

Zatechka said becoming an elitist institution would be against the ethic of the state of Nebraska.

"History proves that the University of Nebraska always has offered good education at a reasonable price," Zatechka said.

Beginning in the fall of 2000, non-honors students now living in Neihardt will be denied further residency because of a lack of rooms for new honors students.

After the senate meeting, Zatechka said he wouldn't let non-honors stu-

dents who already live in Neihardt stay.

"New honors freshman students have a top priority," Zatechka said.

Zatechka also spoke at the senate meeting about the construction of the \$30 million Kaufman residential center. The new honors hall will be built on the parking lots north of the Nebraska Union. The construction is planned to start this summer.

Acting Speaker Dave Burns asked Zatechka whether taking away the parking lots without the housing department reimbursing Parking Services could lead to an increase of parking permit prices. Zatechka said he couldn't answer that question.

He also announced that next year the planning for another new honors hall will begin.

"The new hall will be built somewhere near the Cather-Pound and Neihardt residence halls," he said.

In addition, Zatechka announced that housing costs for freshman students will increase 5.3 percent for 1999-2000.

In other business, RHA elected Dave Burns as the new speaker. Burns was the acting speaker after Larry Willis resigned in December.