

Legislature votes down birth control bill

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same time, up to \$80 in Viagra pills may be covered by insurance, proponents said.

Mari Ann May, a UNL associate economics professor, said each month women have \$20 to \$30 less to spend while men receive Viagra under their insurance.

"The failure of insurance companies to provide coverage puts an unfair financial burden on women over men," May said.

The university insurance policy covers birth control for health purposes, such as hormone therapy, but not for prevention of pregnancy, she said.

When the Viagra frenzy ensued last year, UNL added Viagra to its insurance coverage. After lobbying by UNL's Faculty Women Caucus, of which May is a member, the university dropped Viagra from its coverage.

Margee Bartle, who testified on behalf of the Nebraska Business and Professional Women, said women who have diabetes or high blood pressure should take different contraceptives than women without those problems. Unfortunately, some women with health conditions don't have enough money to choose the safest method, she said.

Landis said he also saw the issue as multifaceted.

"This is not just simple irony," he said. "The deeper question seems to be the role of contraceptives in the long-term health interests and long-term economic interest of this large group of people."

The cost to give women the option of more contraceptive methods is worth the minimal increase in insurance premiums, said Becki Brenner, vice president of Medical Services Planned Parenthood of Omaha-Council Bluffs.

Insurance customers could see an increase of \$10 to \$16 per employee, or about \$1.33 a month, she said.

She also pointed out that all insured people pay for services they might not utilize.

Randy Boldt, a Blue Cross and Blue Shield insurance company

Teachers want policy clarified

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when such decisions have to be made.

Opponents said current law is sufficient and took issue with some provisions.

John Bonaiuto, executive director of the Nebraska Association of School Boards, said the bill's one-year requirement could mean boards would avoid making changes that would be good for employees.

"I just think that policies are fluid," he said. "I don't think board policy was ever supposed to be this static."

Bonaiuto also said the bill would take flexibility away from school boards and put the focus on saving senior staff members' jobs instead of keeping quality staff.

"We're looking for loopholes," he said of the bill.

But Scott Norby, who represented the Nebraska State Education Association, said current policies used by many schools are too vague to help employees make life and career decisions that will help them keep their jobs. In other cases, he said,

highly qualified employees lose their jobs because their positions were eliminated.

Debbie Adler said she lost her job because of elimination. She taught special education for seven years in Hooper. When the district decided to cut one of the two special education positions, she said, they only looked at those two positions.

The school used a point system for reduction in force, she said, but because she was compared only to the other special education teacher, she lost her job. She said she had the second-highest point total for the entire school.

Pam Nickel said she taught in Western for 18 years before losing her job. During her career, she said, she had worked with junior high sports programs, served as head teacher and been involved in several school activities. But by the time her position was cut, she said, another teacher was head teacher.

Four of the six teachers had less tenure, she said. But the board focused on involvement during the past year.

"We've got a good statute in place."

AL INZERELLO
Westside Community Schools

"Whatever I didn't do that year was what they felt was important," she said.

Al Inzerello of Westside Community Schools in Omaha, who spoke in opposition to the bill, said that by the teachers' stories, it sounded like the school board did not follow current statutes. When the Legislature passed current reduction-in-force laws in 1978, he said, Westside worked to develop a policy that would be in place every year.

He said the changes proposed in LB169 would cause more harm than good.

"We've got a good statute in place," he said.

Committee kills regents merger bill

From staff reports

The Education Committee took action Monday on several higher education bills.

The committee killed LB561 and its accompanying constitutional amendment, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Pam Brown. The legislation would have merged the University of Nebraska Board of Regents and State College Board of Trustees.

A similar bill, introduced by Speaker Doug Kristensen of Minden, is being held by the committee. LB631 would also merge college governing boards. The bill would add Wayne State College and Chadron State College to the NU system, and turn Peru State College into a community college.

If the committee decides not to take action on the bill this year, it will stay in committee for next year's session.

The committee also informally voted in executive session to do an interim study on higher education governance and needs in Nebraska.

"(An informal vote) means it was a consensus that they felt that they wanted to have a study," said LaRue Wunderlich, Education Committee clerk.

Interim studies, which are conducted in the fall, can show the necessity or lack of need for certain bills.

Wunderlich said the study would probably be a provision of LB814, 815 or 816, if the committee decides to advance one of those bills. All three bills are sponsored by Hastings Sen. Ardyce Bohlke, who is also the committee chairwoman.

LB814 would create a planning team to study future higher education needs in the state. LB815 would require the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education to conduct regional studies of all higher education institutions in Nebraska. LB816 would redefine the duties of the Coordinating Commission.

In other news, LB366 advanced to final reading on a voice vote Tuesday. The bill, introduced by Omaha Sen. Deb Suttle, would create a provisional license for post-doctoral intern psychologists.

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MARI ANN MAY
UNL associate economics professor

lobbyist who testified against the bill, said insurance companies typically cover drugs only for treatment of specific diseases, not for preventative measures.

Galen Ullstrom, senior vice president of Mutual of Omaha Insurance Company, said he

avored options for employers.

"(Contraceptive coverage) is a mandatory benefit (under the bill)," he said. "We favor employee choice. We think that's the best choice."

Ullstrom said advancement of the bill could pose even more philo-

sophical questions for the Legislature.

"If, in effect, we were to mandate coverage of contraceptives, would it be discriminatory to not mandate coverage for infertility drugs?" he asked. "It's a question we ought to look at."

Jim Cunningham, executive director of the Nebraska Catholic Conference, came at the issue from a moral prospective.

It is coercive for insurance companies to mandate employers to cover a prescription such as birth control pills, Cunningham said, which may be morally objective to some employees.

"This bill attacks religious freedom and denies the right of morally based decision making," he said.

Man dies after brief SWAT team standoff

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When police arrived, they were unable to talk to Towle because he would not respond to police, Casady said.

After a period of time, police entered the house and found Towle either asleep or unconscious in a chair, Casady said.

Towle was taken and admitted to BryanLGH Medical Center West by an ambulance waiting at the scene Monday morning.

Police cited Towle for discharging a firearm within the city limits.

Hospital officials called police just before 7 a.m. Tuesday to report that Towle had died.

An autopsy will be conducted to determine the cause of death, and then a grand jury will be convened to look into the matter.

Casady said Towle had a num-

ber of serious medical problems before Monday's incident and it would be unfair to speculate on the cause of death until after the autopsy.

"My understanding is that he has been quite ill for some time," Casady said.

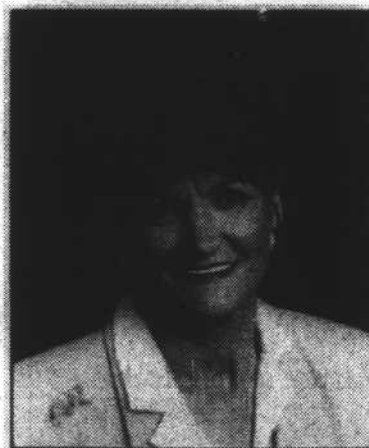
Any time someone dies in the custody of police, or the corrections department, a grand jury is required by state law to investigate the death, Casady said.

"If someone is terminally ill with congestive heart failure and dies in prison at the age of 90, there is a grand jury," Casady said.

Each year, several grand juries are called to look into these deaths, Casady said, and it doesn't have anything to do with suspicions of police misconduct.

Managing editor Brad Davis contributed to this report.

"Failures of Feminism" Bay Buchanan



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