

Amendment allows input

■ Student voice in NU governance was expanded through student regents about 25 years ago.

By VERONICA DAEHN
Staff writer

More than 25 years ago, students did not have a voice in the governing body of the university system.

The University of Nebraska Board of Regents existed as a group of eight adults and no students that met to talk about and decide what the university ought to do.

Because of an amendment to the state constitution passed in December 1974, the board now has four students who represent their campuses.

Each campus in the University of Nebraska system has one student regent.

Ronald Clingenpeel was the first person to serve as student regent for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and he said it was an interesting experience.

Suddenly, students had a voice. "We had the opportunity to speak to any issue at any time," Clingenpeel said. "No longer were we relegated to short, set appearances before the board. Students could no longer be shut out of critical conversations regarding the life of the university."

Though they had a voice, they had no vote.

Student regents today do get to vote, but it does not count in the official tally, said Andy Schuerman, UNL student regent.

Schuerman said though his vote does not count toward the final tally, the opportunity he has to voice his opinion makes up for that.

"The ability to sit as equals and discuss is really invaluable," Schuerman said. "It really overshadows any inequality of our vote."

Clingenpeel said it didn't matter that he wasn't given a vote 25 years ago. He was given a voice, and that was enough for him.

"The real issue is voice," Clingenpeel said. "You can vote all you

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CHUCK HASSEBROOK
NU regent

want, but the ability to discuss and come to a common understanding is exceedingly important.

"People are converted in their heart by relationship, not by casting a ballot. Change someone's heart, and you can change a policy."

Schuerman said the student regents used to cast their votes after board members had already cast theirs.

It has since been changed because it didn't make sense to hear which way the students would vote after the final decision had already been made.

Regent Chuck Hassebrook said the board benefits from students' presence.

"In a large measure, the university is there to serve the students," Hassebrook said. "I believe in a democracy, and the people affected by decisions ought to be at the table."

Without the student regents, the board would be more insulated from student concerns, he said.

Schuerman said the four student regents benefit from the board as well.

"I've gained a broader perspective on how UNL fits into the university system," he said. "It's made me privy to the politics that go on among campuses and to what extent the regents involve themselves at the campus level."

The student regent amendment grew out of the student movements of the late 1960s and early '70s, Clingenpeel said.

Students were becoming more interested in the American political process, and they wanted to be more involved in decisions that affected them.

So, they pushed to establish the student regents.

The amendment to the constitution was proposed in the Legislature and placed on the fall 1974 ballot.

Clingenpeel said it was up to the

students to promote the amendment.

Students from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the University of Nebraska Medical Center offered little help, he said.

Most of the work was pushed onto UNL's student government group, the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska.

Clingenpeel said he and several others talked to civic groups throughout the summer of 1974 and tried to get as much press coverage as possible.

Final election results showed voters had shot down the student regent amendment. It was not until December that Clingenpeel found out absentee ballots had pushed the amendment through by fewer than 1,500 votes.

The attitude of regents and administrators toward the students changed almost immediately, Clingenpeel said.

People who had been cordial before but never overly friendly were suddenly inviting the student regents out for drinks.

Schuerman said student regents are unusual nationwide and that most universities don't have them.

But they are important, he said. "We talk like any other member does," Schuerman said. "All regents are responsible for their own region, but there's also a broader view. It's for the greater good of the institution."

Clingenpeel agreed that students need to be involved.

"When students stop taking an interest and active part in helping to mold the institution, the institution will no longer be able to respond to their needs," he said.

"Progress occurs when an institution serves the people. Stagnation occurs when people only exist to serve the institution. Progress is sweet. Stagnation simply stinks."

Chow chow dogs shot in back yard

By JAKE BLEED
Senior staff writer

Two dogs were shot early Thursday morning in their masters' back yard.

One of the dogs, which were both chow chows, died after being shot in the chest, and the other was taken to Kansas State University for care of a gunshot wound to the leg, said Kent Forney, the veterinarian who initially treated the dogs.

Between 2 and 2:11 a.m., a car drove down the alley behind the home at 4619 Holdrege St. A person in the car shot the dogs, which were in the back yard.

Raven, a 4-year-old female, was shot in the chest. Forney said she arrived at the Forney Animal Clinic in shock and that the bullet had passed through the 39-pound dog.

Forney said he was unable to stabilize the dog's condition enough for surgery. The dog died at about 6 a.m.

The other dog, Jewel, a 2-year-old female, was shot in the tibia, Forney said. A small bullet fragment remained lodged in the dog's leg.

Forney said he did not operate on Jewel because he was not sure he could keep the wound from being infected. Kansas State's facilities are better suited to deal with the wound, Forney said.

Forney said Jewel was a well-behaved animal and reacted to the situation calmly.

Raven belonged to Rick Schroeder, 29, who told police he heard the dogs barking at 2:11 a.m., Lincoln Police Sgt. Dennis Duckworth said.

Duckworth said Schroeder told police he did not hear gunshots. Police found a shell casing at the scene that came from a large caliber handgun, Duckworth said.

Jewel belongs to Schroeder's roommate, Sean McNulty, 31. Both men live at 4619 Holdrege St.

Raven was valued at \$300, Duckworth said.

Election 2000

Bereuter sole candidate so far for House election

By JOSH KNAUB
Staff writer

Republican Congressman Doug Bereuter has no announced competition for his House of Representatives seat in the 2000 election.

Deborah Lanner, a spokeswoman for the Nebraska Democratic Party, said local Democrats were trying to recruit a candidate to oppose Bereuter.

"We don't have a candidate for the first district," she said. "I don't know what's going to happen with that."

Bereuter was first elected to the House in 1978. He represents Nebraska's first Congressional district, which includes Lincoln.

Robert Sittig, a retired UNL political science professor, said unseating Bereuter would be a monumental task.

Sittig said Bereuter's track record of winning elections by large margins was discouraging to potential opponents.

According to the Federal Election Commission, Bereuter captured almost 75 percent of votes in beating Democrat Don Eret in the 1998 election. That was up from the 70 percent of votes he earned in beating Democrat Patrick Combs in 1996.

Sittig said it was difficult to unseat incumbent representatives because office-holders gain name recognition from media coverage. He said it was rare for challengers to

gain name recognition anywhere near that of incumbents.

Challengers also have a hard time raising funds, Sittig said.

"The major donors, the political action committees and such, bend terribly toward incumbents," Sittig said. "This is true for Republicans as well as Democrats."

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Bereuter had \$119,197 as of June 30 for the 2000 election.

Federal election rules prohibit individuals from raising money for an election before declaring candidacy.

Sittig said he expected at least one Democrat to enter the race before the March filing deadline.

"What will happen is a pretty reputable Democrat will accept the task and go through the motions of running," Sittig said.

Lanner refused to speculate on any potential candidates for the seat.

"We stay neutral during the primaries," she said.

Sittig said the most likely scenario for a Bereuter loss in November included a moral or ethical lapse by the congressman.

"If he were to engage in an unethical or illegal act, that is usually the context in which incumbents are defeated," Sittig said.

Sittig said incumbents also become ripe for a loss when they forget to pay attention to their districts.

"That's certainly not the case with Bereuter," he said.

Report: Airline service quality to lower

By MICHELLE STARR
Staff writer

Flying the friendly skies this holiday season may not be too friendly of an experience.

According to research by the National Airline Quality Rating, travelers might expect a lower quality of service from now until January for all major airlines.

The report, based on 1998 statistics released in April, also ranked airlines in order from highest quality to lowest but forecast an overall drop in quality for the holiday season compared with other times of the year.

"If travelers pick one of the higher ranked airlines, they're more likely to have a good experience," said Brent Bowen, director of the University of Nebraska at Omaha Aviation Institute.

Bowen, along with Dean Headley, associate professor of marketing at Wichita State University, recently released a report that compared data from November, December and January of 1998 to forecast 1999's service.

The report compiled national statistics such as consumer complaints, overbooking, delayed flights, denied boarding, age of the fleet and mishandled baggage from the Department of Transportation and the National Transportation Safety Board.

The report does not examine problems with equipment.

The report shows that U.S. Airways will offer the No. 1 service, according to 1998's airline performance during the holiday season.

U.S. Airways hopes to continue

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RICK WEINTRAUB
U.S. Airways spokesman

the same amount of quality this year, said Rick Weintraub, primary press spokesman for U.S. Airways based in Arlington, Va.

"In our own standing from last year, we're quite proud of our service, but you can't always count on your past performance," Weintraub said.

Following U.S. Airways in ranking from best to worst are: Continental, Delta, Southwest, American, Northwest and American West.

Southwest Airlines, rated No. 1 in quality service for 1996 and 1997, moved to fourth for 1998. Linda Rutherford, spokeswoman for Southwest Airlines, which is based in Houston, Texas, attributed the difference to a change in the rating system.

Rutherford said Southwest Airlines' quality has not declined in the past year. If anything, she said, the airline characteristically has the lowest number of customer complaints.

The National Airline Quality Rating has been released annually since 1990 and is used throughout the nation as a gauge for airline quality, Bowen said.

"We're the only place that evaluates the airlines in this quantitative capacity. Nobody does it like we do,"

Bowen said.

Michaela Schaaf, program coordinator for NASA Nebraska Space Grant and Epscor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said about 50 million people across the nation would see or use the report.

This year's travel season may be different from previous years because of Y2K, Bowen said.

Bowen said he didn't think there would be Y2K problems because he was confident that the government had everything under control for travel, but travelers seemed more concerned with Y2K.

"Airlines are already seeing a decrease in booking around New Year's," Bowen said.

Rutherford disagreed that Y2K has decreased flights, adding that Southwest Airlines had an increase in bookings this year.

Airlines generally decrease the number of flights on holidays because people usually are where they want to be going, Rutherford said.

Regardless of quality of flights or the threat of the Y2K bug, airline representatives said they expected flights to run smoothly this holiday season.

Woman sentenced for role in death

From staff reports

The last of five people convicted of breaking into a north Lincoln home and killing a 15-year-old boy was sentenced Thursday to 15 to 30 years in prison.

Angela Marie Vonsegger pleaded no contest to manslaughter and use of a firearm to commit a felony.

On May 10, 1998, Vonsegger and four others broke into a house at 2820 R St. armed with shotguns, looking for a pound of cocaine and marijuana.

Christopher Rucker was killed in the break-in, and two other men were wounded.

The other four people who took part in the crime are in prison.

Brenda Novak was sentenced to two consecutive terms of 10 to 20 years for manslaughter and use of a weapon to commit a felony.

Lester Wagner was sentenced to 17 to 32 years in prison after being convicted of manslaughter.

Robert O'Neill and Jerrold McLeod, the two men convicted of killing Rucker, are both serving life sentences for homicide.