

# State to play role in prayer case

BY JILL ZEMAN  
Staff writer

The question of whether student-led prayer is permissible at school events, such as football games, is on its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, and the state of Nebraska is involved.

A Galveston County, Texas, school board is appealing a lower court ruling that student-led prayer on the public address system at sporting events is unconstitutional, said Steve Grasz, chief deputy to Nebraska's attorney general.

Along with eight other states, Nebraska signed an amicus curiae brief asking the Supreme Court to hear the Texas case, Grasz said. A decision is expected by the end of June 2000.

Nebraska Attorney General Don Stenberg, on the basis of free speech and religious rights, showed he supported the position of the Texas school board by signing the brief, Grasz said.

Not all area high schools agree with Stenberg's decision to support the appeal.

Mike Wortman, principal at Lincoln High School, said the school would not modify its policies if the Supreme Court ruled in favor of student-led prayer but would allow discussion if a group such as the student council proposed a change.

"We are dedicated to diversity and honoring the right of students to be unique," Wortman said.

Administrators at Lincoln High School will need to discuss the school's policy regarding school prayer, but Wortman said he did not anticipate allowing prayer in school.

Currently, Lincoln Southeast High School does not permit prayer at school events, said Associate Principal Patrick Hunter-Pirtle.

Lincoln Southeast is a public institution, with students of many faiths, and the school needs to be respectful of all religions, Hunter-Pirtle said.

He argued not all students pray the same way, and offering a student-led prayer on the public address system runs the risk of offending.

"How would Christian students react to a Buddhist-led prayer?" asked Hunter-Pirtle.

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MIKE WORTMAN  
Lincoln High School principal

Lincoln Southeast is home to several Christian-affiliated groups, such as Fellowship of Christian Athletes and a Bible study club, and he said prayer is allowed in these groups as only participants are affected.

If the Supreme Court rules that student-led prayer is constitutional, the Lincoln Southeast school officials will consult other public school administrators in order to be responsive to all students' needs, Hunter-Pirtle said.

Hunter-Pirtle said the case is affected by the Columbine High School tragedy and other recent school-related violence because it is increasing

support for school prayer.

"They're taking a complex social issue and offering a very simplistic answer, thinking it will change schools," he said.

Supporters of the appeal believe that the government is censoring the religious rights of students by not allowing them to speak freely, Grasz said. Stenberg believes allowing student-led prayer over the public-address system protects students' religious liberty and free-speech rights, Grasz said.

If the Supreme Court approves the appeal, students will be allowed to pray at sporting events.

## Research-stopping efforts worry faculty

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of Sunday, McShane would not comment on it.

Mary Beck, a professor of animal science and another winner of the academic freedom award, said concerns about inhibiting academic freedom exist at the university.

"It would be difficult for me to see how anyone who believes in the bigger mission of academics would condemn academic freedom as this would," Beck said.

James Cole, a psychology professor emeritus and winner of the award, said he faced a similar situation in the 1970s at Nebraska. The Legislature threatened to cut funding to the university if it did-

n't ban human sexuality classes and fire the faculty associated with them, Cole said.

Cole won the academic freedom award for fighting the legislature's decision.

"This is a typical reaction," Cole said. "When politicians don't like an idea, they threaten to intervene."

In related news, UNMC officials announced on Friday that they would seek fetal cells from other sources to do their research.

Cells from spontaneous abortions, ectopic pregnancies and stillbirths will be used when possible, officials said. But because of the limited availability, aborted fetuses would still be used, they said.

## Fiesta Bowl could bring back memories

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was a game that was a very close ballgame; it came right down to the end."

No. 15 Tennessee comes into the game with memories of its own after beating Florida State 23-16 there last year for the national championship.

"It's the best we've ever been to," UT Coach Philip Fulmer said. "Obviously, we have very fond memories of being there last year and a special time in our football tradition."

Tennessee comes into the game having won its final two games over Kentucky and Vanderbilt handily. UT was 7-1 and heading toward a possible national title bid when it lost to Arkansas 28-24.

Had it won that game in Fayetteville, Ark., the Vols would likely be in New Orleans playing Florida State.

As it was, the defense that had held Tennessee up for most of the season finally faltered in the second half. Most of the year, it was UT's offense that

failed to execute. A few mishaps on both sides led to the losses.

"We were probably two or three plays or six points, just the same as Nebraska, from being an undefeated football team," Fulmer said.

Solich answered several questions from reporters concerning the game played two years ago, only briefly turning his attention to the game at hand.

"I think you have a tremendously balanced football team in Tennessee, in terms of their offense, defense and special teams. It should be a great matchup," he said.

A student ticket lottery will start today, NU Ticket Director John Anderson said. An allotment of 1,000 tickets, at \$75 each, will be put in a lottery, although Anderson said the lottery hadn't been needed in the past.

"We have one anyway," Anderson said Friday.

Anderson said the seats will likely be in the lower end zone of Sun Devil Stadium, as they have been for many of the NU bowl games.

## Hudson Foods acquitted of lying to investigators

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owed the two men an apology.

"The judge decided no reasonable person could find these men guilty of the charges," Romatowski said, referring to a set of charges that Urbom threw out last week. "And our problem was we weren't dealing with reasonable people."

U.S. attorney Tom Monaghan and Assistant U.S. Attorney Jan Sharp, who

prosecuted the case, declined comment after the verdict was delivered.

"The message here is that in this trial, what you saw is the extreme that a company goes through to ensure food safety," Hudson's attorney Ty Cobb said. "It is not good business to sell bad food."

Wolke continues to work at the Columbus plant, which was closed after the recall and later sold to IBP Inc. Gregory works for Tyson Foods.



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