

## Johanns vetos his own raise

*Nebraska has the nation's lowest-paid governor*

It'd be hard to accuse Gov. Mike Johanns of being in the business of running the state for the money.

Earlier this week, the Omaha World-Herald reported that not only was Johanns the lowest-paid governor in the nation at \$65,000, but he would veto Nebraska Legislature bill 956, which would raise his pay, along with the rest of the constitutional officers.

Johanns' pay would go up \$20,000 to \$85,000, which, according to the Council of State Governments, is about the midpoint among the 50 states.

But Johanns is saying no. He doesn't need the money, he said to the World-Herald, nor did he take the job because of it.

Financial responsibility is a good thing, especially if Johanns, whose wife has a good job with Alltel, doesn't really need it.

Maybe

*Johanns just believes that no one should be paid more than he deserves.*

We wonder, slightly, what the motivation behind such a veto might be. If the non-partisan legislature wants to help raise the pay of the constitutional officers, and Nebraska's is the lowest in the country, maybe it's time for a change.

Maybe Johanns just believes that no one should

be paid more than he deserves. Maybe he plans to use it as a campaign tool in a couple years — telling Nebraskans that he decided not to raise his own pay for the state's good — and then, in turn, gain favor with prospective voters.

Johanns' decision has an effect on other constitutional officers as well, though. They, too, may deserve to have money coming their way. Johanns' decision, then, should take their needs into account as well.

The governor has said he'll look at the needs of whoever might succeed, whenever that might be — in 2002 or 2006. This decision hints at a third alternative, Johanns' not vetoing the bill but also not putting his signature upon it, meaning that the officers would get the raise, and Johanns would not.

It's important to note that Gov. Ben Nelson also rejected a pay raise during his tenure in office, sharing Johanns' ideals in terms of fiscal responsibility with his own salary. But eventually, the amount the constitutional officers receive has to go up. It can't stay the same forever.

So the governor is left with a choice. It might not be an easy one.

Being low isn't always the best thing. Johanns' decision, whatever it might be, needs to take that into account.

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### Obermeyer's VIEW



## Something's missing

*Columnist still hasn't found what he's looking for*



I sat on the hill in late November, overlooking the city of Lincoln.

The sky was mostly clouded over, but I could still see a few stars in the inky blackness of night, and no cloud was going to hold back the wide beam of light the moon cast upon the grassy slope.

In my ears, the Red House Painters played the Cars' song "All Mixed Up." The soothing guitars and soft vocals only let my mind wander that much more easily.

Despite the fact that few people were awake at 2 a.m. on a Wednesday, downtown Lincoln was still awash in lights. I could make out major streets, and every so often I'd see a jet or a train lumber by.

It was about then that I realized whatever it is I'm looking for — and it's not in Nebraska.

For much of my life, I've felt like there was something missing inside of me. I've tried to attribute it to being manic-depressive sometimes, being single at others. I've spent time wondering if there were something wrong with me. I've been suicidal from time to time. I feel this sense of emptiness inside me.

Put simply, I'm "All Mixed Up." But the more I think about it, the more convinced I am it's this place. Nebraska.

Now, now, don't find an insult where there isn't one intended.

Whatever it is I'm looking for, it may not be out there either. It may not be anywhere at all. It might be inside me, as cheesy as that sounds.

I somehow suspect I'm not the only one who feels this way, so perhaps it's more than just Nebraska.

I've talked to people all over, not just from our country, but from others as well, and they too feel this sense that something is inherently wrong with the world.

Perhaps it's a generational thing, some residual effect left over from the past decades — the Free Love of the

Sixties, the Hazed Distortion of the Seventies, the Yuppie Paranoia of the Eighties and the Rambling Chaos of the Nineties — and that it isn't just going to go away.

Are we The Lost Generation?

It's that sense of isolationism that I think is driving people to shoot up schools and churches. It's that disturbing sense of everything falling apart that I think is causing the number of psychological disorders to grow.

We're fracturing, splitting, collapsing.

I'm sure not everyone feels like this. Some people can blindly trudge on despite the horrors the world shows them. You know the people — they just stand with their cliques gossiping about this or that, ignoring the world. Sometimes I wonder if they aren't the lucky ones, too numb to feel the pain.

And there is pain.

It's a dull, aching pain, the sense that there's a piece missing somewhere inside that was important. It's like a global headache, the feeling that something is unfinished.

We're all looking for a cure, too, trying to find some way to remove that fog that lingers in each of our heads that something has gone horribly wrong somewhere and we don't know what. Was this what it was like to be the captain of the Challenger?

Everyone has an explanation except me. Some people think it's a religious problem, although I don't buy that. I suspect people of all faiths across the world understand the hollowness I'm talking about. It has nothing to do with God. It has nothing to do with "values."

The things I'm talking about sink much deeper than that.

Maybe it's simply part of getting

older. I had just turned 23 a few days before I sat on the hill watching the city. When we were young, no matter what life handed out, there was always the sense that things would work out in the end. "You can achieve any dream," they told us. "Every story has a happy ending."

But it's not all happy endings, is it? Was it our parents' fault? Were they, perhaps, too soft on us? Should they have made us commit to one idea and follow it through?

Is it our own fault? Are we not working hard enough? Is the fact that we can't find a goal that excites us a sign that we need to create something new?

Flash ahead to January. I'm in The Coffee House drinking a Jones Soda, looking at people hanging around. On one couch, a girl sits listening to her headphones, reading a yoga magazine. A pair of people a table away are playing some card game I can't identify. There are a few conversations floating about in the air and, as seems commonplace these days, there is more dead air than actual words spoken.

I can hear a few people talking in the distance about how life lets you down a lot.

Is this what beatniks were talking about? Is this what inspired postmodernism, the feeling that something was dreadfully wrong in the universe?

Can we fix it?

Well, dammit, we have to try somehow. Even if it means crawling inside the innards of humanity and poking at all the little fiddly bits with a pointy stick.

Got that?

Now, stop the world and hand me a crescent wrench



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