

— LEGISLATURE —

Video theft may be made criminal

By Jill Zeman
Staff writer

People always forget to return the movies they rent.

No big deal, right? This attitude could change if the Legislature passes a bill allowing for the prosecution of people who don't return videos.

Members of the Judiciary Committee discussed LB1093 on Thursday, which would make the theft of video rental property a criminal offense.

The bill was introduced Jan. 7 by Sen. Elaine Stuhr of Bradshaw. It would allow video store owners to prosecute customers who keep video rental property for longer than the agreed amount of time.

Stuhr said the majority of customers are honest and responsible but sometimes just forget to return tapes.

This bill is not aimed at them, she said.

"This is for customers who continually ignore requests to return the videos, causing the store to suffer economic losses," Stuhr said.

Stuhr said 21 states currently have provisions where video rental property is protected under rental theft laws.

Some senators had disagreements with the proposed bill.

Omaha Sen. Kermit Brashear said he thought the bill would require law enforcement to become a video retrieval service, which isn't its responsibility.

Brashear said he thought video store owners could employ tactics other than the use of law enforcement.

"Why not have the customers pay a cash deposit or leave their credit card number rather than lay a burden on law enforcement?" Brashear said.

Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha agreed with Brashear.

Chambers said he thought the video store owners should enact practices that would protect them from video rental theft.

Chambers also said he thought video rental theft should be considered a civil case, not criminal.

Linda Taylor, owner of Video Kingdom in McCook, testified in support of the bill.

She said she thought it was important for the legislators to pass this bill.

Video retailers lose money because their videos are not available, which causes the state to lose sales tax revenue, Taylor said.

Dana Wenzl, store director of Hollywood Video at 2712 Cornhusker Hwy., said he thought the bill was a good idea.

Wenzl said his store frequently experiences video tape and video game rental theft, even though it takes precautionary measures.

Wenzl said his store required new members to present two forms of identification and to pay a \$10 deposit on each video game rented.

If customers have a late fee, they must pay at least a portion of it before making another rental, Wenzl said.

The committee has not yet voted on the bill.

If the committee votes to pass it, it will advance to the general file, where all senators will debate it.

Husker scalpers may see trouble

Bill would make selling a ticket for higher than face value illegal

By Jill Zeman
Staff writer

Students who purchase season football tickets with hopes of reselling them for a big profit may encounter a roadblock next fall.

Ticket scalping would be made illegal under LB1059, introduced Jan. 6 by Sen. Pat Bourne of Omaha. The bill was discussed Thursday by the Judiciary Committee.

The bill would make the sale of a ticket for more than face value a class IV misdemeanor, which is punishable by a \$100-\$500 fine, Bourne said.

John Anderson, University of Nebraska-Lincoln director of ticket operations, said selling tickets on campus for more than face value is already against university policy.

Anderson said he thought football would be the only UNL sport affected if the law passes.

Cornhusker football tickets are offered only as season tickets. Because of this, about 1,500 UNL student tickets are sold to non-students every game, Anderson said.

If the bill becomes law, there is the chance that the sale of student season tickets could go down, because some students purchase season tickets with the intent of reselling them, Anderson said.

Another group affected by the bill is ticket brokers.

Ticket brokers purchase tickets for events and resell them to individuals who are unable to purchase tickets directly from the promoter, said Chad Carr, president of Ticket Express, a small ticket brokering business in Lincoln and Omaha.

Carr testified against the bill

"People are being precluded from attending events because someone is trying to make a profit."

Pat Bourne
Omaha senator

Thursday and said his business would be forced to shut down if LB1059 passes.

"We provide a service for people who don't want to camp out overnight for tickets or those who forget to call on the opening day," Carr said.

Bourne said people who don't purchase tickets directly from the promoter run the risk of paying high prices.

"People are being precluded from attending events because someone is trying to make a profit," Bourne said.

Sen. Kermit Brashear of Omaha had a mixed opinion about ticket brokers.

"I can see they provide a service, but I also understand the object of the legislation," Brashear said.

Bourne's bill would exclude charitable groups or nonprofit organizations that purchase and raffle tickets for fund-raisers.

The committee will decide at a later date whether to advance it to the general file, where all the senators would debate it.

Senator has support for UNMC research bill

FETAL from page 1

researchers to put it on hold, they will leave."

Researchers will go to other universities that promote the use of aborted tissue, he said.

Miller said he would testify against the bill.

Schmit-Albin said she and her colleagues would provide whatever support Hilgert and the other co-signers needed to pass the bill.

That includes circulating petitions to show how many Nebraskans are in support of ending the use of aborted fetal tissue. So far, 3,000 signatures have been collected and given to the regents, Schmit-Albin said.

The bill has not yet been assigned to a committee. Hilgert said he

"If you tell researchers to put it on hold, they will leave."

Drew Miller
regent

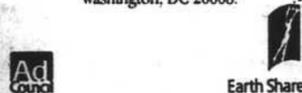
expected the bill to receive a committee hearing and go to the floor this session if it passes in committee.

So far no senator has identified the bill as a priority bill - which would insure that the bill would be put on the agenda for this session.

But Schmit-Albin said it is still possible for a senator who has not identified a priority bill to do so.

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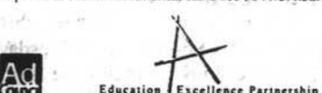


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Attention: University of Nebraska Chemical Engineering Students

I would like to extend an offer to attend an informational meeting on career and SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES available for University of Nebraska-Lincoln chemical engineering students. The meeting will be Wednesday January 26, 2000 from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. in room 336 Avery Hall. ADM will make a short presentation on career opportunities and explain the ADM scholarship process. Pizza and soft drinks will be served. Please feel free to dress casually. Anyone with an interest in learning about how a degree in Chemical Engineering fits in one of the world's largest agricultural processors is encouraged to attend.

So that we have plenty of food, we need you to respond to Nicole Church in the Engineering Career Services department by January 24, 2000 if you can attend. My thanks for your interest, and we look forward to seeing you on January 26th.

