

# ASUN passes bill despite opposition



**NIKKI BERAN**, from the campus group Students for Life, waves a handful of petitions in front of the ASUN senate while speaking against an ASUN bill that would support research at UNMC with aborted fetal tissue. Beran believes the group collected more than 250 signatures in a 24-hour period.

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people performing the practice, but the people who are using the legally garnered material for the benefit of research at UNL."

Fine and Performing Arts Sen. Erin Reitz spoke out strongly in favor of the bill.

"It scares the hell out of me to think the state can dictate what I can and can't research at school tomorrow," Reitz said.

The bill passed with a vote of 13-9, with two senators abstaining.

"It isn't a victory yet," Schuerman said after the bill had passed.

## UNL Students for Life get petition support

By Kimberly Sweet

Staff writer

Word travels fast, especially for members of UNL Students for Life.

After hearing the student senate would vote on a bill that would send the lobbying arm of ASUN to the Legislature to oppose banning the use of aborted fetal tissue in research, the group sprang into action.

A 24-hour effort to amass support for a petition led to hundreds of signatures and a vocal majority at the Wednesday night meeting of the Association of Students at the University of Nebraska.

The Nebraska Union room where the senate met was filled to capacity with observers. Most of them were Students for Life members, eager to discuss their views on the issue that has spurred debate between university officials and a variety of city and state anti-abortion leaders.

But this time, it was the students' turn.

The legislative bill up for discussion was one sponsored by Sen. John Hilgert of Omaha.

The bill would ban the use of aborted fetal tissue in research at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

After Students for Life found out about the ASUN bill introduced by President Andy Schuerman that would lobby to oppose the legislative bill, group members went to him to explain the bill didn't represent the opinions of all UNL students, said Becky Schlautman, co-president of Students for Life.

Students for Life member James Andrews said because ASUN claims to be the student voice on issues, legislators could get the wrong idea.

"ASUN is an organized student organization for all students,"

*"People took the effort to come up (to the second floor) and sign it."*

**Becky Schlautman**

Students for Life co-president

Andrews said. "Passing the bill would take away other student groups' power to lobby the Legislature as well."

After a meeting with Schuerman to clarify the bill's intentions, the group had one day to organize itself, Schlautman said.

Mass e-mails, efforts to compile research and phone calls to members and senators took place in 24 hours, she said.

On Wednesday, the members camped out in a room on the second floor as potential petition-signers appeared throughout the day.

By 3 p.m., the group had more than 100 signatures.

Schlautman said the petition drive shows students care about the issue of research involving aborted fetal tissue.

"We aren't even on the main floor," Schlautman said. "People took the effort to come up (to the second floor) and sign it."

The group has been active in working with other anti-abortion groups across Nebraska since it was founded, Schlautman said.

But this was one of the first times the group has gotten the opportunity to voice its opinion on an issue at the campus level, she said.

Schlautman said Wednesday's hurried petition drive was a small example of what the group is capable of.

"This is just one day," she said.

## Stenberg: Bill would be legal

■ Prohibition of aborted fetal tissue research would not break any laws, attorney general says.

By Jill Zeman

Staff writer

Supporters of a legislative bill that would ban research using aborted fetal tissue received some good news Wednesday.

Attorney General Don Stenberg reported that prohibition of the research would be legal.

Stenberg conducted a lengthy analysis to determine whether the banning of aborted fetal tissue research was legally permissible, said Steve Grasz, chief deputy to the attorney general.

Stenberg determined if the bill is

properly drafted, a ban on the research would be legal.

Stenberg looked at existing cases and case law to come to his decision, Grasz said.

Stenberg's decision was not specifically about the proposed bill; it just discussed the legality of such a ban, Grasz said.

Sen. Jim Jensen of Omaha, chairman of the Health and Human Services committee, requested Stenberg's study early in the legislative session because he thought the bill might end up in his committee, he said.

"I wanted to have any information I could whether a ban would be legal," Jensen said.

The bill has been referred to the Judiciary Committee, and a hearing has not yet been scheduled.

The bill gained momentum when Sen. Paul Hartnett of Bellevue made it

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**Jim Jensen**

Omaha senator

his priority bill, which increases the chances the bill will be debated before the entire Legislature, Jensen said.

Jensen said he had requested the attorney general to do studies in the past.

"He's paid to provide information to us," Jensen said.

## Pratt appointed interim dean

By Kimberly Sweet

Staff writer

The head of the English department will temporarily take on the reins as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences beginning Feb. 21.

Linda Pratt, English department chairwoman, will serve as interim dean of the university's largest college. She was appointed by Richard Edwards, vice chancellor for academic affairs.

She will take over the duties of Brian Foster, who is leaving the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to become provost and vice president for academic affairs at the University of New Mexico.

Pratt, who will fill the position until a national search for a new dean is complete, said she was looking forward to taking on the job.

"I think it will be a challenging job," Pratt said, "but there are a lot of exciting things going on in the college."

David Brinkerhoff, associate vice chancellor for academic affairs, said Pratt has shown leadership in many

areas throughout the university.

Three years ago, Pratt was appointed by NU President Dennis Smith to serve on the University of Nebraska's Task Force on Gender Equity.

She has served as the chairwoman of the English department for the last four and a half years.

Pratt also served as president of the American Association of University Professors.

She has taught at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln since 1968.

Selecting Pratt to serve as interim dean required polling faculty chairpersons as well as other people throughout various departments.

Brinkerhoff said Pratt will make an effective interim dean.

"She can do a really good job for us during this interim time," he said.

Foster was scheduled to leave UNL about April 1. He will still depart at the same time, but the overlap of his and Pratt's tenure will allow him to be a resource for her, Brinkerhoff said.

A committee to search for Foster's permanent replacement was recently formed, and a national search will

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**Linda Pratt**

Arts and Sciences interim dean

begin soon, Brinkerhoff said.

He expects the process to take at least a year. If everything goes smoothly, a new dean could be in place by the spring of 2001, Brinkerhoff said.

An acting chairperson to replace Pratt in the English department has not yet been named.

Pratt said her main goal for the next year is to help the college move forward on initiatives Foster began.

"I hope to help some of them bloom," she said.

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