

Students mull bill's attributes

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examine their actions.

"The number one issue is that the university's governing body has already made a decision, and it should be left in their hands," he said.

Schuerman's term as president expires March 29, and if members of ASUN wish to continue to lobby against LB1405, they'll need to pass another bill, he said.

"The timing is a little awkward, but we'll be lobbying to the best of our ability during this next week," he said.

Joel Schafer, ASUN president-elect, said he has no concrete plans about what he will do with the issue.

"Before I do anything I will speak with Students for Life and other student groups," he said. "I know when ASUN passed (the bill to lobby against LB1405), some groups felt left out of the discussion."

Schafer said he felt the bill ASUN passed caused students to become divided about the issue.

"I want to avoid the divisive nature of the first and second bills ASUN passed," he said.

After members of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska passed a bill to lobby against LB1405, ASUN senators sent letters and made phone calls to members of the Legislature, Schuerman said.

Schuerman did not testify at the Judiciary Committee's hearing of the bill because there was a lengthy list of testifiers, and Schuerman felt they adequately covered ASUN's views.

Becky Schlautman, a UNL senior psychology and English major and co-president of UNL Students for Life, said she was excited the bill advanced to the floor.

Schlautman and her group have spent time contacting students and senators to give them information about their viewpoint.

If the bill fails to pass, Schlautman said she feels the issue still should be discussed.

"We need to let people know where we stand," she said.

Kelli Doyle, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln junior biochemistry major, said although she thinks research should be checked periodically, she opposes the legislative ban.

Doyle said, the ban could hinder groundbreaking research by causing researchers to be hesitant about drawing controversy.

"(A ban on the research) could cause people to be afraid of trying something new," Doyle said. "It takes away from the intellectual ability to find new things and progress."

Doyle said she thought too much importance is being placed on the cells being used.

"The aborted cells are just cells, and I don't believe there has to be any value placed on them," she said.

Schafer emphasized the importance of students voicing their opinions.

"I encourage students who feel strongly about the issue to take the initiative to contact their own state senators," he said.

"ASUN lobbying shouldn't take the place of legislative lobbying."

Regents say legislators making a wrong move

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"The research has the potential to save millions of lives without causing additional abortions."

The regents on Dec. 11 unanimously voted to support the fetal tissue research being conducted at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

It was publicized in November that UNMC was using aborted fetal tissue for research on neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.

Critics of the research say using aborted fetal tissue encourages abortion. They say it's impossible to separate the two. But Hassebrook said the two were unrelated.

"This is a mistake," Hassebrook said. "This research could save millions of lives. It's not causing a single abortion, and we're going to stop it?"

Don Blank, a regent from McCook, agreed that passing the bill into law would be a mistake.

"They want to discuss it, and that's fine," Blank said. "But there's a tremendous amount of good coming from this research."

He said the Legislature should not interfere with internal decisions made by the university and the Board of Regents.

"They think it's something they have to do," he said. "I disagree with them. (Interfering with decisions of the university) is a precedent that's not good."

Blank also said stopping or continuing the research with aborted fetal tissue would not affect the number of abortions performed.

Kearney Regent Kent Schroeder said the research at UNMC should continue, but he said the medical center needs to continue to look for alternative sources of tissue.

UNMC announced last month that it had started looking for other sources of fetal tissue.

Schroeder said he was unsure if the Legislature should get involved with the issue.

"It's tough for me to say," Schroeder said. "There's not a lot of choice with those issues. (They) will be debated in the political arena whether they should be or shouldn't be."

Other examples of issues similar to the fetal tissue research debate are Social Security and a Republican plan to cut funding for school lunches that was raised several years ago, he said.

The issue of using aborted fetal

"I guarantee the Legislature in Massachusetts is not telling Harvard what tissue to use."

Robert Allen
Hastings regent

tissue for research is a political and emotional one, Schroeder said.

Robert Allen, a regent from Hastings, said the bill could hurt the people of Nebraska.

"It's unfortunate the Legislature is doing what they are doing," Allen said. "They don't realize the quality of the research being done."

Allen said senators are being swayed by information put out by groups like Nebraska Right to Life.

"They are listening to people who are making this an emotional issue," Allen said. "(The right-to-life groups) are filled with inaccurate comments."

Allen said he does not think the Legislature should be involved with a university decision.

"I guarantee the Legislature in Massachusetts is not telling Harvard what tissue to use," he said.

The fetal tissue research is important, Allen said, and he is not sure when or if other sources of tissue will be available.

The regent said there is nothing wrong with using tissue from an aborted fetus.

Allen compared the fetal tissue to a transplant.


"Medicine needs this material to continue to make progress," he said. "To take information from Right to Life is unfortunate. They want to force you to agree with them. That's not the way we work in this country."

Hassebrook said there are an increasing number of Alzheimer's patients in the country and in Nebraska.

As a land-grant institution, it is part of the University of Nebraska's responsibility to look for a cure to diseases that afflict Nebraskans, he said. The Legislature's bill would prevent UNMC from doing so.

"This is not a pro-life measure," Hassebrook said. "(Stopping the research) will cost life."

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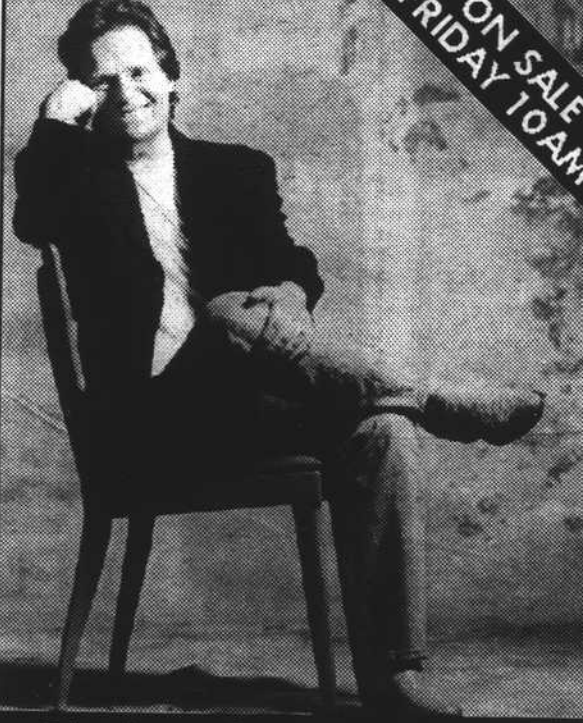


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