

Using their thinking caps

Unicameral finally taking note of underpaid teachers

With 10 days left in the Nebraska Legislature's session, the unicameral is finally taking steps toward addressing teachers' pay.

In early March, Education Committee members nixed two bills that would have raised Nebraska teachers' salaries, which, according to a report released in December by the National Education Association, rank 43rd in the nation.

But with teachers gaining no money this year, it's going to be hard to tell them to wait 'til next year. And it's going to be hard to keep quality educators from going to a state that truly respects them.

Instead, Sen. Ardyce Bohlke proposed a bill, LB1399, that would establish a task force to evaluate ways to raise teacher pay.

The bill also suggested teachers who receive national accreditation should receive a bonus. Nebraska currently has only eight nationally accredited teachers.

The bonus was initially set at \$10,000 annually, then lowered to \$7,500 when the bill left committee.

By the time lawmakers on the floor voted on the bill, that number had been reduced to \$5,000 a year.

Their final decision was to drop the bonus altogether because Gov. Mike Johanns threatened to strike it down himself - the extra money would have been outside his budget recommendations.

On Friday, the Legislature all but instituted the task force, and with such a small portion of the legislative session remaining, that's the most anyone who supports better education in Nebraska could hope for.

The task force will complete its evaluation on Oct. 1, 2000, possibly in time to get something done in next year's legislative session.

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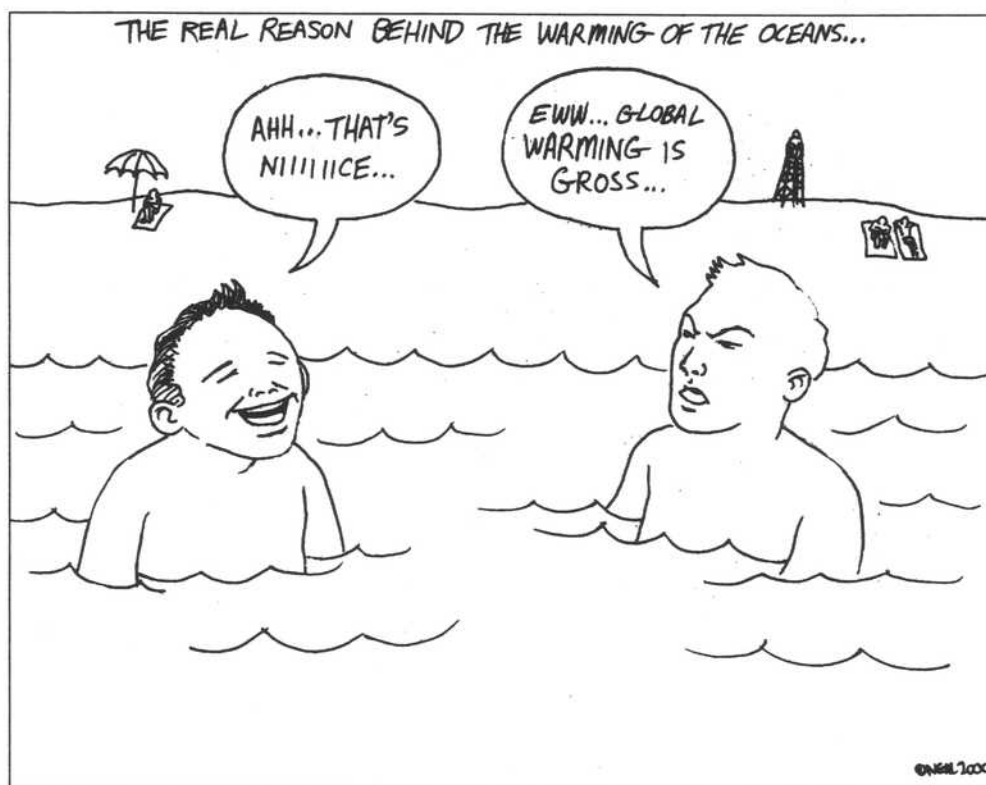
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Obermeyer's VIEW



Letters to the EDITOR

Nerd defense

As the structure of the Kauffman Center rises and controversy rises along with it, I'd like to put in a word of defense for myself and the rest of my fellow computer science/engineering/business nerds.

When I was in high school, I sacrificed most of my free time to take honors classes. My senior year, when most of my friends took it easy, I spent the summer taking a self-taught crash course in pre-calc so I could take honors calculus, took an advanced placement literature course and completed my fourth year of French.

When I got to UNL, I applied and was accepted into J.D. Edwards, a program that obligates me not only to fill my computer science requirements, but also the requirements of the Honors program and an additional truckload of extensive, hands-on work with business structure and application that is specifically designed for J.D.E. students.

Handling this workload along with being on the track team is turning out to be quite a challenge for me. I've decided to give up the majority of my vacations to take summer school for the next four years to ease the pressure during semesters. Even with that, it'll be quite a challenge to keep my GPA above the 3.5 that I need to stay in the program, especially considering the difficulty of my classes.

The Kauffman Center will be open to J.D. Edwards students in the summer of 2001. Assuming I manage to make it that far, when I finally open the door of my posh upperclassman suite, I'm not going to feel very guilty.

After working this hard to earn a place in the new facility, I think the first thing I'll do is collapse on the couch in my new living room and sleep for about three days.

Christy Linnell
freshman
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Elective exception

As a supporter of LB1405 and as an active supporter of life, I was disappointed after reading the article pertaining to the Regents' perspectives of LB1405 (DN 3/23). It seems as though the whole truth about our opposition to the use of aborted fetal tissue in research at the UNMC is being

misrepresented again.

It has been said repeatedly that we in the pro-life movement want the research to be banned. This is untrue. We understand this research could help save lives, and we are strong supporters of life, from conception to natural death. What we do want, however, is a ban on the use of fetal tissue obtained from elective abortions in the research.

Banning the use of aborted fetal tissue will not end the research. There are other respected institutions (e.g. the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Georgetown University, the University of Tennessee-Memphis, to name a few) that are doing research similar to that being done at UNMC, with the exception that they are not using tissue obtained from elective abortions.

Then where are these institutions obtaining the tissue from?

The tissue they use comes from natural miscarriages and from adult human stem cells. It is obvious from the research at these institutions that aborted fetal tissue is not the only viable means for the research to continue, contrary to what opponents of LB1405 claim.

The research can continue to save lives with the use of these alternative sources, sources that do not result in the loss of the lives of the pre-born.

This is what we in the pro-life movement would like to see happen with the passing of LB1405.

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Neal Obermeyer/DN