

Slashing and burning

Johanns' budget vetoes will hurt education

Growing up, most people were taught to deal with problems as soon as possible and pay for expenses before going into debt.

Apparently Gov. Mike Johanns never learned those lessons.

Last week Johanns announced his vetoes from the state's budget, which included trimming \$2.5 million from a recommended \$6 million dollars for the University of Nebraska.

Now NU's Regents are discussing a tuition hike to account for Johanns' veto unless legislators can pass an override this week.

The money that the university requested was not for anything frivolous such as academic programs or faculty salaries.

The money is needed to pay for rising health care costs for the university's 10,000 insured employees.

An appropriate benefits package is an important part of employee compensation, and as the university struggles to attract top faculty,

it is crucial that benefits remain comparable.

The university cannot reduce the benefits it offers, and it cannot control the cost of providing those benefits.

When the cost of health care increases, the cost of providing health insurance increases.

If the Legislature and the governor cannot agree to pay for the increased health costs, the university will be forced to look elsewhere in its budget.

That means either programs or administration will be cut or tuition will increase. Those are the only places the university can get money.

When the university made this emergency request, Johanns proposed granting \$4 million of the \$6 million request, but in the aftermath of the governor's veto pen, only \$3.5 million remains.

In his veto announcement, Johanns said the matter can be delayed. We think this is foolish.

The university is already considering program cuts and tuition hikes in reaction to Johanns' veto.

The university should provide health care to its full-time employees. Those benefits should not be decreased.

But the increased cost of health insurance should not be shouldered by students or academic programs.

The Legislature should override Johanns' veto to ensure there will be enough money to pay for health care.

Editorial Board

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Submit material to: Daily Nebraskan, 20 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448 or e-mail to: letters@unl.edu

Editorial Policy

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Obermeyer's VIEW



Letters to the EDITOR

Learn the law

I was troubled by the report in your newspaper that a UNL faculty committee had recommended Professor Reinhard be fired, in part, due to questions regarding the legality of his research.

Apparently, the committee concluded that his research had violated the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), based on its belief that this law prohibits certain kinds of scientific studies. This belief is mistaken. There is absolutely nothing in the law itself that prohibits studies of remains in the control of museums or universities.

The Department of the Interior, which is the Federal agency charged with implementing NAGPRA, has made its official position on this point crystal clear: "NAGPRA does not prohibit new scientific studies; it simply cannot be used as the authorization for them ... Public agencies and museums [including universities] that hold such remains ... are permitted to undertake or allow new studies according to their articles of incorporation, statements of purpose, or other legal statements under which they were established." [U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Resources hearing on HR2893, June 10, 1998].

In other words, so long as Reinhard's studies did not violate any other statutes and were consistent with UNL's mission, those studies were legal.

Across the nation, archaeologists have worked long and hard to forge positive relationships with Native Americans. In most cases this has been done in a spirit of compromise, which attempts to balance legitimate public and scholarly interest in archaeology with legitimate religious concerns.

As one who worked on the language of NAGPRA and lobbied for its passage, I can attest that this law was an example of such a compromise.

Being so far removed from the painful situation at UNL, I cannot independently judge the merits of the various charges against Professor Reinhard. But it appears that the faculty committee made its recommendations without a clear understanding of the relevant law.

Vincas P. Steponaitis
professor of anthropology,
University of North Carolina at
Chapel Hill

past president, Society for American Archaeology

Militant gays

In his letter, John DeLair expresses the popular argument that gay and lesbian soldiers undermine the necessary cohesion for an effective military. However, it cannot be disputed that thousands of gays and lesbians have already served proudly in every branch of the U.S. Armed Forces in all military operations, including World War II.

We do not have to wait for the next war to see whether gays and lesbians are a weakness to military readiness; they have already proven themselves combat-worthy.

If the documented existence of military gay beaches on South Pacific islands in the 1940s (see "The Other Side of Silence: Men's Lives and Gay Identities" by John Loughery) isn't proof enough of openly gay soldiers fighting successfully for our country, I don't know what is.

John Kastning
senior
chemical engineering and
German

The right to refunds

I am writing in response to the editorial published

Thursday (March 30) regarding Fund A student fees. The editorial board accurately reported that the Fund A fees can be refunded to students upon request, and this is a right that students do not have at all universities. I hope that we as students do not take this freedom lightly, but rather use it to hold the institutions that are funded with our money accountable for their actions and how they represent the student body.

ASUN is an organization that is funded by Fund A student fees and therefore should be accountable to students. If the policies of the student government leave a student feeling alienated, then he or she should exercise the rights afforded to them as students and send a message to ASUN by asking for their funds to be returned.

It is for this reason that Fund A student fees should not be given the same protection afforded to Fund B student fees. Any movement toward protecting Fund A fees should be seen as an infringement upon student rights and would originate from my office. It is my hope that my term as ASUN president will be one that is open enough to all students, that no one will feel it necessary to request their fees to be reimbursed. However, I know that no institution is perfect, and I want students to have the power to exercise their rights.

Joel Schafer
ASUN president



Delan Lonowski/DN