

State prepares for high court

By Michelle Starr
Staff writer

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear a Nebraska abortion case in less than three weeks, and preparation has begun.

A ruling in Attorney General Don Stenberg vs. Dr. Leroy Carhart could clarify regulations on partial-birth abortions throughout the country.

The case went to the U.S. Supreme Court after the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Carhart, a Bellevue doctor who performs abortions. Stenberg appealed the decision.

To prepare for the 30 minutes allowed for case presentation in Washington, D.C., Stenberg announced Tuesday he will hold two moot court sessions on April 11 and 18.

Both sessions are closed to the pub-

lic because Stenberg does not want to disclose his strategy, but the media will be allowed in the first session for a few minutes, Stenberg said.

Margie Kelly, spokeswoman for the Center of Reproductive Law and Policy, the center that is representing Carhart, said the center is following standard practice and will also have an undetermined number of moot sessions to prepare for the April 25 hearing.

Previous court briefs showed support for Carhart from 175 organizations including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the nation's solicitor general.

Stenberg plans to submit a response brief no later than April 17, he said.

For Stenberg's case, 118 groups, including Family First and the U.S. Catholic Conference, showed support in briefs, Stenberg said.

According to court documents, the

case, originally filed by Carhart against the state in 1997, said the wording of a 1997 Nebraska law banning partial-birth abortions is vague enough to imply the banning of all abortions.

Carhart argued that the law is unconstitutional because it conflicts with the 1973 Roe v. Wade, Kelly said. The 1997 law has not been enacted because of the pending case.

But Stenberg said the law is exclusive to an uncommon method of abortion known as dilation and extraction.

Dilation and extraction involves extracting the fetus through the birth canal, cutting the skull and draining the contents.

Stenberg said though not all states may be affected by the ruling, those that have partial-birth abortion statutes similar to Nebraska's could use the high court's ruling to determine the constitutionality of their laws.

Senate OKs benefits resolution

BENEFITS from page 1

need to be very clear about that," Roysircar-Sodowsky said.

But other members of the senate thought the resolution needed to be addressed immediately.

"UNL has a policy that it does not discriminate on basis of sexual orientation," Latta said. "(Our current policy) hurts us in recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty, and that hurts students."

Twenty-six senators voted in favor of the resolution, and 12 voted against it. Three abstained.

In other business, the senate approved a bylaw that could help deter-

mine how faculty members divide time among teaching, research, administrative duties and other responsibilities.

Currently, faculty members meet with their department or unit heads to negotiate how their time should be divided.

Sometimes they disagree. Before this bylaw was passed Tuesday, there was no one to mediate if this happened.

But with the new bylaw, elected faculty members will review the needs and wants of the faculty member and the unit head. The group will then recommend how to divide the faculty member's time.

"We felt this was needed despite the fact that this is not encountered very

often at UNL," Latta said.

The senate failed to take action on a much-discussed issue at recent Academic Senate meetings.

At the March 7 meeting, Alan Christensen, chairman of the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee, presented a student absence form to the senate.

Christensen said the form would serve as an agreement between student athletes or other students required to miss class and the professors whose classes they are missing. But some senators said that the forms were unnecessary and confusing.

The item was tabled and will be discussed at the April 25 senate meeting.

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