

Leaders scrutinize late-term abortion ban

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voted three times to ban partial-birth abortion.

"This is about a civilized society standing against a heinous procedure that is used to kill a mostly born child — a procedure that, as even some advocates of abortion rights have conceded, comes dangerously close to murder," he said in a statement Tuesday.

Steven Emmert, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood in Omaha-Council Bluffs, said protecting a woman's right to choose the procedure protects her right to make the best medical decision for herself.

He said it was an insult to women to believe that anyone would have a late-term abortion without having a medical reason. It's not a light decision to make after months of carrying a child, he said.

He also said a decision affecting women's health should not be made by the government.

"Obviously a physician would know better than a politician which procedure would ensure the health and well-being of a woman," Emmert said. "If the government has control

over your body, that should be a concern to all of us."

Nancy Huston, president of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, agreed and said the decision should be made by the woman, her family, physician and clergy.

She also said that though the religious right has been the most vocal on the abortion issue, many religious people believe abortion is a personal choice.

Emmert and Huston both said the law chips away at the rights granted to women and their families by Roe vs. Wade.

Sara Fiedler, public relations chairwoman of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Students for Life, said she hoped a decision in favor of Stenberg would open the door to enact legislation to reverse Roe vs. Wade.

"It's like getting a foot in the door," Fiedler said. "We can go from there."

The procedure is unnecessary, and the unborn child that late in the pregnancy could probably survive on its own, Fiedler said.

The method of abortion banned in the Nebraska law is "dilation and

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

One other, more common kind of abortion, "dilation and evacuation," involves extraction of the fetus from the uterus in pieces by using forceps. It is done within the first 13 weeks of pregnancy.

Carhart argued the 1997 Nebraska law is worded so vaguely it potentially bans all abortions, making the law unconstitutional.

Lt. Gov. Dave Maurstad said in a live online forum moderated by the Washington Post on Tuesday that he supported the Nebraska law and Stenberg.

Maurstad said he thought the language of the law was clear and understood by medical practitioners performing abortions.

"Only when segments are taken and interpreted out of context does it become vague in some people's opinion," he said.

Maurstad also said he thought the attorney general's campaign for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate had little influence on the case.

"In fact, he's been criticized by his

opponents for not campaigning," he said.

During the forum, Maurstad fielded a question asking what he hoped to accomplish through the court case.

"Our hope is that the law will be able to remain on the books, and this procedure not occur in our state," he said.

Maurstad was also scheduled to

appear on MSNBC's "Hardball with Chris Matthews," "The Ollie North Show," "The Dan Lundren Show," and "The Roger Hedgecock Show."

Stenberg answered questions to Nebraska media over phone lines from the country's capital Tuesday.

He said he expects an opinion from the high court before its summer session begins, which is in late June.

Final arguments presented in execution method case

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Reilly said.

Also, Hohenstein testified Tuesday that, to test the effectiveness of electrocution, the Department of Correctional Services used a 55-gallon drum of pure water. That is unrepresentative of the human body during an actual execution, Reilly said.

"I would say it's a very naive concept cooked up by someone who is not familiar with electricity," Reilly said.

"I don't think this has been a scientific process where the electric chair has evolved."

Reilly said the Department of Correctional Services, in its lack of knowledge, also puts the inmate through more pain and suffering than is necessary.

Soucie said Nebraska law allows for a continuous flow of electricity, but in practice the department uses high then low voltage and then takes a break.

Donald Price, an expert on pain from Florida who testified Tuesday, said Nebraska is the only state that

paused between jolts of electricity.

Reilly's testimony corroborated with Tuesday's testimony from John Peter Wikswo, a physics professor from Vanderbilt University, that when a pause in the electrocution is made, and the inmate is still alive, the pause creates extreme pain for the inmate.

One reason electrocution is painful is because when electricity is sent through the body, all the muscles contract, including the respiratory muscles, which results in suffocation.

If the inmate is still alive, the inmate will gasp for air.

Robert Kirshner, a forensic pathologist from Chicago who testified Tuesday, said no evidence exists that the inmate is unconscious during electrocution, making it extremely painful.

Price said the current going through the inmate's brain could also trigger nerve sensors inside the brain and intensify feelings of pain and dread.

Warner said in closing arguments that the U.S. Supreme Court upheld death by electrocution three times.

"Death is swift," Warner said.

"There are few ways to die that don't involve pain."

Doug Warner

Deputy Scotts Bluff County Attorney

Soucie said he didn't think the department should deviate from the Nebraska law, and by doing so it creates a cruel and unusual punishment.

If electrocution is found constitutional, Mata could appear for sentencing May 11 in Scottsbluff.

If it is found unconstitutional, Kirk Brown said, the state would appeal the decision as far as it would go.

Either way the decision goes, Brown said, he expects an appeal.

Hippe's decision should come within a week to 10 days, Soucie said.

Pizza feeds \$1,000 into NU on Wheels

From staff reports

A whole lot of pizza eating paid off for NU on Wheels on Tuesday.

Money raised during a February pizza feed made its way into the hands of the NU on Wheels safe ride home taxi cab program.

The Chancellor's Leadership Class and the Innocents Society turned over a \$1,000 check to NU on Wheels coordinator Molly Schmitz to help pay for additional operating costs.

Demand for the service, which started last fall, has led to increased costs. The program only budgeted for 45 rides a week but has had demand for as many as 80 rides a week, Schmitz said.

This is the first year the

group has designated the proceeds from the annual event go to NU on Wheels, said Stacey Duncan, member of the Innocents Society.

"We knew it was a good program on campus," Duncan said. "We wanted the money to go somewhere where students could benefit."

Both groups sold tickets for the benefit and solicited prizes from local businesses to raffle.

Duncan said the campus and the community responded positively to the pizza feed.

In the future, the groups may donate their money to NU on Wheels again, Duncan said.

"It's a good cause, and students are supportive of it," she said.

Concerted effort brings Tutu to Lied

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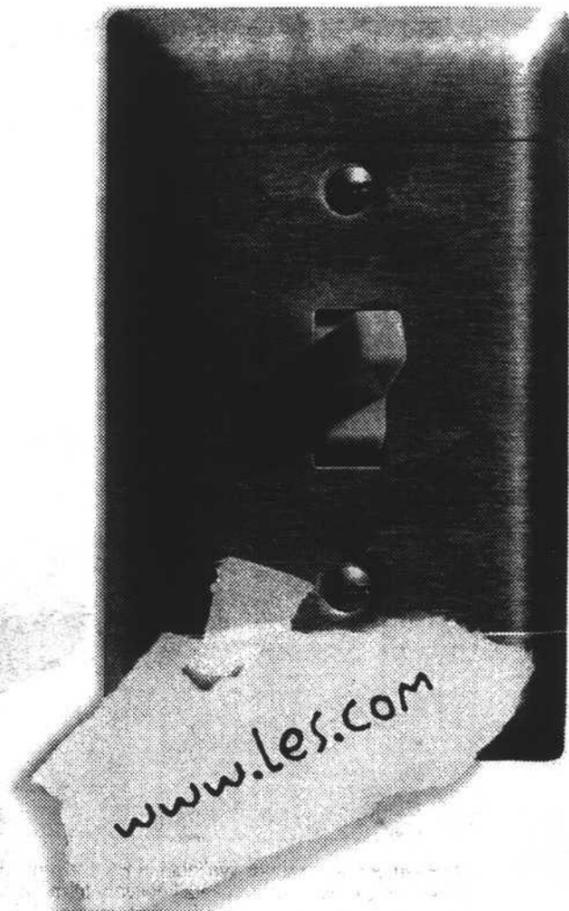
After the end of apartheid, Tutu was appointed as chairman of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The commission was appointed by the government to look at the crimes that went on during apartheid.

Hitchcock predicted Tutu would talk about his experiences with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission during his speech today. It is titled "Crying in the Wilderness: Struggle for Justice in South Africa."

He also could talk about South Africa's increasing democracy, which has included a constitution supporting gay rights and women's rights, Hitchcock said.

Hilliard said he expected the Lied Center to be full and recommended people arrive early.

Doors to the Lied Center will open at 2:30 p.m. The speech will also be broadcast on EduCable, Channel 17.



Log on to start/stop your electric service and you could win a \$50 gift certificate.

Before you head home for the summer or move within Lincoln, you need to start or stop your electric service. Every student that starts/stops service on our website from April 19-May 7, will have their name put into a drawing for one of six \$50 gift certificates to the Nebraska Bookstore and University Bookstore.

Just go to our web site at www.les.com, click on the Starting & Stopping Service light, go to the "I'm a student and I'm moving" section, click the appropriate option for you, fill out the simple form, submit it, and you're done.



To be eligible for the drawing, entrants must be students who use the LES web service for stopping/starting service between April 19 and May 7, 2000. Landlords, realtors, title companies, and apartment managers are not eligible. Winners will be drawn on May 8, 2000, and notified via mail.

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