

Summer Daily Nebraskan

Editor: Tim Karstens
Associate Editor: Sam McKewon
Questions? Comments?

Ask for the editor at (402) 472-2588 or e-mail dn@unl.edu
Fax number: (402) 472-1761 World Wide Web: www.dailyneb.com

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Nader's Green Party gets votes for ballot inclusion

By Kate Grafel
Staff Writer

Nebraska Green Party co-chairmen Tim Rinne and Frances Mendenhall announced Tuesday that circulators have gathered enough petition signatures to get Presidential nominee Ralph Nader on the Nebraska election ballot for November.

The Green Party needed 5,600 signatures to qualify for the ballot. Mendenhall said that as of her arrival in Lincoln on Tuesday morning, more than 10,500 had been gathered from Nebraska's three Congressional districts.

The initial crowd of 28 supporters rapidly grew to nearly 40 as the Green Party began its press conference outside the west entrance to the Capitol under the blinding mid-day sun. Volunteers ranging in age from 4 to 74 held two-tone green signs that resembled the American flag and read "Ralph Nader for President."

Under Rinne's direction, a chant began: "2, 4, 6, 8! We want Nader in the debate!" Later the chant shifted to "Bush and Gore make me wanna Ralph!"

"This day when we get our signatures turned in, we know Ralph is on the ballot. The next step is getting the votes."

Tim Rinne
co-chair, Nebraska Green Party

Rinne said that if Nader were to win five percent of the national popular vote in November, he would qualify for federal matching campaign funds in 2004.

"This day when we get our signatures turned in," Rinne said, "we know Ralph is on the ballot. The next step is getting the votes."

Rinne assured his audience that Gore had no chance of winning any electoral votes in Nebraska, a historically Republican state, and urged them instead to give Nader the support he needed to garner his 5 percent.

"Don't waste your vote in Nebraska or any of the other states that George Bush already has in his political pocket," Rinne

said to Nebraska voters.

Marc Tuepker, a junior sociology major at UNL, became involved with the Green Party as a supporter of former Green Presidential candidate Jello Biafra.

Tuepker said he supports the party for reasons of "social justice, grass-roots democracy and people doing it themselves and not getting paid for it."

UNL junior Josh Bader, a biology and geography major, said he is interested in the environmental issues and politics for working-class people.

The Green Party will officially announce Nader's candidacy at its state convention on Aug. 26 in Lincoln.

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The Post & Nickel

Former dissident to speak at NU

By Jill Zeman
Staff writer

On Friday, politics in Nebraska will take on an international flair as Alexandr Vondra, the Czech Republic's ambassa-

dor to the United States, is scheduled to speak at 3:30 p.m. at the Nebraska Union.

Vondra's speech, "The Czech Republic: On the Threshold of the 21st Century," will address the Czech Republic's place in Central Europe and its pending membership into the European Union, said Mila Saskova-Pierce, professor of modern languages and literature.

The 38-year-old ambassador was active in the mid 1980s as a pro-democracy dissident leader and because of his controversial actions, he was arrested and imprisoned for two months.

Vondra has been the Czech Republic's ambassador since 1997, when he was appointed by President Vaclav Havel, Saskova-Pierce said.

The ambassador has scheduled many stops during his stay in Nebraska. After speaking at UNL, he plans on addressing the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and then he will meet with state and local politicians and members of Nebraska industries, she said.

Vondra will also attend the Nebraska Czech Festival in Wilber, Aug. 4-6, she said.

Saskova-Pierce said Vondra was drawn to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln because of Nebraska's strong Czech heritage.

"Nebraska Czech history is rather glorious," she said.

The Czech language has been offered at UNL since 1907, and was one of the first foreign languages to be taught at the university, she said.

Saskova-Pierce said in order to bring Vondra here, she had to contact the Embassy, write an official invitation and find funding for the event.

"He was ready to come and we wanted him to come," she said.

Tom Carr, a UNL professor of modern languages and literature, was part of the team that helped find ways to fund Vondra's visitation.

"I'm delighted he's coming and I plan on attending," he said.

Saskova-Pierce said she hopes Vondra's speech will draw a large crowd.

"We invite everybody and anybody to come," she said.

"He's a very important and interesting person."

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