

Students' partner benefits threatened by amendment

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purchase two separate student policies instead of paying the rate for a spouse.

Despite the expectedly low number of students who will sign up for the domestic partner benefits, Wolf is still concerned that the insurance benefit will be taken away in November if the state constitutional amendment passes.

Those touting the petition needed to gather 105,214 valid signatures by July 7 to get the amendment on the November ballot.

Secretary of State Scott Moore's office said Tuesday that the group had gathered 19,000 more signatures than needed to place the amendment on the ballot.

The signatures can be contested, and if enough are found to be invalid, the amendment could be removed.

The fact that the amendment will be included on the ballot gives the university administration a chance to stand up for its students and domestic partner benefits, Wolf said.

"This will test the resolve of the administration right now before the election," he said. "It's up to them whether they're going to defend this by opposing the amendment or whether they're going to remain silent and let this be taken away from the students."

"That will require people like (University President) Dennis Smith and the regents to decide what kind of effect this will have on recruitment."

Robin Mills, spokeswoman for the conservative group Nebraska Family Council, said the council pushed the amendment to "save the institution of marriage."

"It is our desire to not let a minority define marriage in Nebraska," Mills said.

Wolf said the university administration should realize the effect the Defense of Marriage Amendment could have.

"If they were wise, they would realize if the amendment passes, recruitment will suffer,"

"I can't get married. Legally, there's no other way my partner and I can care for our family. I think it's because they think we're immoral. And I'm so angry about it."

Barbara DiBernard
associate English professor

he said. "People will not come here. This will tell them what kind of place Nebraska is to live in."

DiBernard has lived in Nebraska for 22 years. But her lesbian partner is still not eligible for DiBernard's insurance because they are not married.

No U.S. state will allow the two to get married. And only Vermont recognizes civil unions. UNL's Academic Senate passed a bill for the third time April 4, urging the administration to approve faculty and staff domestic partner benefits.

From the Academic Senate, a motion moves to the university-wide Benefits Committee, a group made up of representatives from UNL, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, the University of Nebraska at Kearney and the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

In August 1996, the committee permanently tabled the motion to grant domestic partner benefits to faculty and staff.

On April 15, 1999, UNO's faculty senate voted in favor of benefits for domestic partners.

But even though another faculty senate and UNL's student senate have voiced their support, the committee refuses to discuss the issue again, said Agnes Adams, then-chairwoman of the committee.

Even if the committee approves the benefits, they will have to go through other committees before going to the Board of Regents.

After the university-wide committee passes a motion, it then goes to the university's Council of Business Officers, a group made up of chief business officers from each of the four university campuses.

David Lechner, vice president for business and finance and a member of the committee,

said he didn't know what the CBO would do with a motion proposing domestic partner benefits if the university-wide committee passed that on to them.

"I have been dialoguing and trying to give (supporters of domestic partner benefits) the opportunity to get the issue teed off," Lechner said. "I have met with student leaders and offered them advice about how to move forward."

Lechner stressed he was not taking sides one way or the other but providing information about the process.

After the Council of Business Officers passes a motion, it then goes to the President's Council, which is made up of Smith and each of the four chancellors from the university system.

If the President's Council approves, the proposal then goes to the Board of Regents for a final decision.

Guyla Mills, chairwoman of the Defense of Marriage Committee, said she hoped to pass her amendment so the board won't have to make a decision.

Guyla Mills said marriage needs to be protected from gays' trying to get married.

"Marriage since the beginning of time has been between one man and one woman," Guyla Mills said. "In the last 6,000 years, there's been no precedence of gay marriage. What would that open the doors to?"

To DiBernard, a "gay marriage" would open up a lot.

"I can't get married," she said.

"Legally, there's no other way my partner and I can care for our family."

"I think it's because they think we're immoral. And I'm so angry about it."

Girl's burns lead to arrest for abuse

A Lincoln man was arrested Monday for felony child abuse based on the scalding burns a young girl sustained while he was watching her earlier this month.

On Aug. 11, 23-year-old Jeremy Brown was caring for his girlfriend's 3-year-old daughter

Law & Order

at a 624 W. Fairfield Drive apartment, Lincoln Police Ofc. Katherine Finnell said

That evening the girl was taken to Saint Elizabeth Regional Medical Center, where she was treated for scalding burns on her feet and rear end from bath water that was too hot.

37 firearms stolen from northeast home

Last week 37 rifles and shotguns were stolen from a northeast Lincoln home while the owner was away.

Between August 14 and 17 someone broke into 5010 Sherwood Drive and took the guns, worth \$20,000, Finnell said. There was no sign of forced entry. Compiled by Josh Funk

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The Big Red Welcome committee offers a big red THANK YOU to all the faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate volunteers who helped make Friday and Saturday night a success.

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