

Students join against marriage amendment

Nebraska college group opposes outlawing civil unions for gays.

BY VERONICA DAEHN

Because of an amendment that could make gay and lesbian civil unions illegal in Nebraska, more than 150 university and college students across the state have joined together in protest.

Huskers Against the Defense of Marriage Amendment is the University of Nebraska-Lincoln subsidiary of United Students Against DOMA.

The two groups include students from UNL, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Nebraska Wesleyan University, the Lincoln public schools gay/straight alliance and the Omaha Public Schools gay/straight alliance.

Angela Clements, student coordinator of the groups, said

students will be key in defeating the Defense of Marriage Amendment when it appears on the November ballot.

"If this is defeated, it will be defeated by the youth," Clements said. "They don't have the hindrance of social stereotypes."

The amendment says: "Only marriage between a man and woman shall be valid or recognized in Nebraska. The uniting of two persons of the same sex in a civil union, domestic partnership or other similar same-sex relationship shall not be valid or recognized in Nebraska."

Students at UNL were granted domestic partner benefits Aug. 14. If the amendment passes, many think the benefits will become illegal.

Faculty and staff at UNL have been fighting for domestic partner benefits for years. Through organizations such as the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska's Sexual Orientation Advisory Council and Allies Against Heterosexism

and Homophobia, students have joined the fight in recent years.

But Clements said Huskers Against DOMA was not just another "gay group."

"We are gay, we are lesbian, we are racial minorities," she said. "Half of us are straight allies. If students take a stand against this amendment, they're not going to be perceived as gay."

Former ASUN president Andy Schuerman said the proposed amendment violates human rights.

"It's a hateful measure," Schuerman said. "Gay marriage is already illegal. This seems like a blatant attempt by a small group of people to make second-class citizens out of gay and lesbian people."

The amendment was drafted this summer by a group of Lincoln residents. They needed to gather 105,214 valid signatures to get the amendment on the ballot.

Secretary of State Scott Moore's office announced Aug. 22

that the group had gathered 19,000 more signatures than needed. Clements said the student group's main pull is to educate other students. Starting this week, there will be voter registration booths and campus mailings. Before November's election, the group will hold several rallies and teach-ins.

Clements said a teach-in would likely be held near Broyhill Fountain and would include speakers from a variety of campus and local groups.

National Coming Out Day is Oct. 11, and Clements said several campuses have planned to hold rallies that day.

Another preliminary idea was to hold a benefit concert, Schuerman said. Proceeds from that would go toward publicity and organizational efforts. But no definite plans have been made on that yet, he said.

Clements said the amendment would not only affect gays and lesbians but would also reflect poorly on the university.

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Regents candidates speak on issues

BY VERONICA DAEHN

Come November, the University of Nebraska Board of Regents may have a different look.

Four district seats are up for reelection.

Seven of the eight candidates spoke with the Daily Nebraskan last week. Below is a compilation of their comments:

Regent Chuck Hassebrook, Lyons, 3rd District

Hassebrook said the regents needed to do a better job of addressing the "crisis in rural Nebraska."

The university could be uti-

lized more to spark the agricultural economy, he said.

Hassebrook also said it was essential the university remain affordable to Nebraska families.

That will require a moderate increase in tuition each year and more need-based scholarships, he said.

Jeff Johnson, Blair, 3rd District

Johnson said he opposes using fetal tissue obtained from abortions for research, and he also opposes granting an abortion-provider faculty status.

Johnson also said he was opposed to domestic partner benefits for faculty and staff

because of the tax burden he said the benefits would create.

"I'm disturbed at the lack of accountability that the board has shown Nebraska taxpayers," Johnson said. "It's definitely time for a change on the Board of Regents. There seems to be crisis after crisis after crisis."

John Breslow, Lincoln, 4th District

He said he was encouraged by the results of the primary.

"The voters sent a clear message in the primary election," he said in a press release. "They want a new, positive voice on the Board of Regents."

Breslow called the university "world class" and said he wanted to keep tuition affordable and retain and recruit quality faculty.

Regent Drew Miller, Papillion, 4th District

Miller said he wanted to help the university reduce administrative costs and promote cost-effective education.

Miller also supports fetal tissue research at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

He said his support of the research affected the number of votes he received in May's pri-

Please see REGENTS on 6

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Historic farm, bypass threaten each other

FARM from page 1

The plans for the bypass are not final. There are several steps that need to be completed first, said Kaosola, the Lincoln representative of the Federal Highway Administration.

A draft and final copy for an environmental impact study is being completed, which the Federal Highway Administration must approve.

The environmental impact study, which will evaluate the social, economic and environmental effect of the bypass, will be available for the public to scrutinize at a hearing around February. People can comment on the bypass at that time. Consultant engineering firms will then look over the comments.

"We will evaluate the substance of the comments and see what we could do to address these comments," Kaosola said.

As one of more than 100 members of the Citizens for Accountable Route Selection, Rickertsen said she hoped the bypass wouldn't run near her family's farm.

It's not just the bypass that will affect the rural setting, but all the things that will come with it, Rickertsen said.

"You put a beltway out here in the middle of agricultural land, and soon a 7-Eleven and some houses pop up," she said.

These extra businesses and houses that pop up may be bad for the city of Lincoln, Nieweg said.

"When you build a quarter-of-a-billion-dollar highway that far outside the city, you get sprawl development," he said. "It's like leapfrogging from the city. It saps the economic vitality from the central city."

But, Kaosola said, just because there might be a bypass built, doesn't mean it will cause businesses or homes to be built in the area. Development would hinge on city zoning and whether land owners sell their land.

"It doesn't always necessarily follow that there would be a 7-Eleven or anything else put up," he said.

There are also three federal laws that protect the farm, which is listed on the national historical

Josh Wolfe/DN
Haley Wineman learns to ride horses at a neighbor's farm up the road. Most of the farms surrounding the homestead are owned by relatives and would be affected by the proposed bypass.



register, because the project is using federal money, Nieweg said. These laws protect the farm from being directly or indirectly affected by the bypass.

Rickertsen said the law is on her side, and she thinks that it will all work out in favor of the farm in the end.

"We believe that when the facts all get out and listed prop-

erly," she said, "then the route won't be built here."

If he were alive today, the bypass would upset Charles Retzlaff, the farm's founder and a Prussian immigrant, Rickertsen said.

"I think it would greatly upset him to see it destroyed," she said. "He was very proud of this place,

his cattle and the area. It was very important to him to have the tradition of passing it on."

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Jewish Student Association/Hillel

There will be a planning meeting and dinner held at the Nebraska City Union on Wednesday, August 30 at 6 p.m.

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