

Fetal tissue dominates Regents' campaigns

BY JILL ZEMAN

A clear-cut line has been drawn for those vying for spots on the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

The support or abhorrence for research using aborted fetal tissue conducted at the University of Nebraska Medical Center has divided candidates and helped several constituents decide who to vote for.

Other issues besides aborted fetal tissue research have come up throughout the campaign.

Below is a comparison of the eight candidates vying for four positions on the board.

3rd District: Chuck Hassebrook, Lyons, and Jeff Johnson, Blair

Hassebrook, the incumbent, said he supported aborted fetal tissue research.

"I could not, in good conscience, stop the research," he said.

Keeping tuition affordable for Nebraska's families is another priority, he said.

In Hassebrook's eyes, tuition increases should be nominal and always accompanied by a rise in need-based scholarships, he said.

Johnson, on the other hand, said he opposed fetal tissue research.

The challenger also said he didn't support domestic partner benefits for faculty and staff members because of the tax burden the benefits would create.

"It's definitely time for a change on the Board of Regents," he said. "There seems to be crisis after crisis after crisis."

4th District: John Breslow, Lincoln, and Drew Miller, Papillion

The race between Miller and Breslow has turned brutal, with mudslinging and name-calling throughout the campaign.

Miller, the incumbent, supports fetal tissue research and was outspoken when the Legislature introduced a bill that would ban the research.

Breslow, who won May's primary election with more than twice as many votes as Miller, said he opposed the research.

Miller has filed two complaints against Breslow for brochures that were circulated that call Miller a "pro-abortion Nazi."

No name was printed on the material, and Breslow denied any connection to it.

5th District: Jay Matzke, Seward, and Robert Prokop, Wilber

Matzke and Prokop are running for the seat that will be vacated by Regent Robert Allen of Hastings.

Matzke said he supported fetal tissue research, while Prokop said he was opposed to it.

Matzke also said the university needs to actively recruit more students and promote quality leaders within the university.

"The University of Nebraska apparently does a poor job of picking leaders," Matzke said in August. "There's a real problem at the top, and we have to ask those difficult questions."

8th District: Randy Ferlic, Omaha, and Rosemary Skrupa, Omaha

Ferlic has spent more than \$200,000 to compete with incumbent Skrupa's name recognition, he said.

Ferlic's spending triggered the release of public money to Skrupa under Nebraska's voluntary campaign finance law. Skrupa asked for only \$29,200 of the \$275,000 she was eligible for.

As of Nov. 1, Skrupa had spent \$27,945.

Skrupa said she supported fetal tissue research. Ferlic said he thought the university

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Jeff Johnson

3rd District candidate

should aggressively seek alternatives sources of tissue.

"I don't think it's fair to jeopardize the entire university's budget with just one issue," he said.

Skrupa also said she thought agriculture and education were the most important issues facing Nebraskans.

But Ferlic said he wished the race wasn't all about the money and the research.

"There's more than that going on in the state," he said.

Tax levy among contentious city issues

BY GWEN TIETGEN

Two local issues, which will appear as amendments on Tuesday's ballot, have caused quite a stir in Lincoln this election season.

One amendment deals with emergency services, while the other deals with a tax levy and spending override for Lincoln Public Schools.

Both have been contentious.

The charter amendment would create an emergency medical authority, consisting of a five-member board chosen by the mayor, to oversee emergency services.

It was put on the ballot by the Supporters of Ambulance Value and Excellence after the City Council voted 4 to 3 in June to let the fire department take over the city's 911 ambulance service.

The city's contract with its current private provider, Rural/Metro Ambulance, expires at the end of the year.

The amendment prohibits the use of city tax dollars to subsidize the city ambulance service and defines the process for the city to choose an ambulance provider, said Phil Young, campaign coordinator for S.A.V.E.

If the amendment passes, the fire department's Jan. 1 takeover would be delayed for two years while the new ambulance

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Mike Spat

Lincoln fire chief

authority is established.

In turn, Rural/Metro's contract would be extended for two years, allowing the committee enough time to pick the best 911 ambulance provider, Young said.

Young was quick to point out that S.A.V.E. does not support or oppose any potential ambulance provider.

Mayor Don Wesley and Fire Chief Mike Spat said the fire department's takeover would be better, faster and cheaper for the city of Lincoln.

"With the fire department, the money stays in the community, and the government stays efficient," Spat said.

"If a surplus is gathered, we can potentially lower rates to citizens whereas with Rural/Metro, the surplus goes to stockholders."

The second contentious issue appearing on Tuesday's ballot is a tax levy and spending override for Lincoln Public Schools.

Under the current law, property taxpayers are charged \$1.10

per \$100 of property they own. In 2001-02, Nebraska statutes will lower the maximum property tax levy to \$1.00.

With the amendment, the voters will decide whether to authorize a three-year maximum levy of up to \$1.14 in 2001-02, \$1.18 in 2002-03, and \$1.22 in 2003-04 per \$100 of property assessed valuation.

The amendment will also grant an 11.43 percent spending override which will allow the school district to spend the additional money collected by the tax levy increase.

Jim Garver, vice-president of the Lincoln Board of Education, said if the overrides are not approved, a budget shortfall of \$10 million dollars is expected in 2001, and an approximated loss of \$6 to 7 million in 2002 and 2003.

"The proposal is nothing extravagant, we don't think," Garver said. "It's just to increase programming and to cover the once-a-generation costs of opening two new high schools."

Terry promises to limit spending

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depends on prudent and wise government spending, he said.

Specifically, Terry said he wants to pay down the national debt and pass "pro-family" tax cuts, which would eliminate the marriage tax and the so-called death tax.

In addition to tax cuts, Terry said, Congress needs to secure Social Security and Medicare during the coming legislative session.

"We need to fix these things for ourselves and our children," Terry said.

Terry graduated from Northwest High School in 1980, received a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in political science in 1984 and earned a law degree from Creighton Law School in 1987.

He practiced law in Omaha and was a member of the Omaha City Council until elected to Congress in 1998.

Another term in Congress, Terry said, would give him the opportunity to help students, too.

One bad vote on an economic bill can spell disaster for college graduates who are looking for jobs, he said. Terry said he won't let such a disaster happen.

"I match the values of the district with government policy."

Kiel inspired by family, career

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dents in the form of Pell Grants, loans and financial supports.

Kiel said the government needs to help states repair old, dangerous school buildings.

Kiel has firsthand knowledge of high educational costs.

After earning a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1972 and a master's degree in reading from the University of Nebraska-Omaha in 1977, Kiel taught at Omaha Gross High School, Metropolitan Community College in Omaha and Creighton University.

Being a mother of six has also shown Kiel the importance and cost of a good education.

Kiel said concern for her children slowly nudged her into the political arena.

She became involved in educational groups like the Community College Board of Governors and then was elected to the Legislature in 1996.

Experience in the Legislature taught Kiel about important issues such as gun control and health-care reform - two policies she advocates.

Kiel worked to defeat a concealed-weapons bill in the Legislature and has pushed for health-care reform.