

416 opponents: Despite loss, cause still wins

BY VERONICA DAEHN

All around the rectangular room in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Nebraska Union were signs – stuck to the walls, the doors and the lectern up front.

Just about everyone in the crowd of more than 100 people donned small circular stickers – on the fronts of their shirts, the backs of their shirts and elsewhere.

The signs and the stickers said in one word and three letters what the more than 100 people in the room had been fighting for since July.

"B.A.D. 416," they read.

Despite the posters and the stickers and the homemade T-shirts, the opponents of Initiative 416 lost what they said was their battle for civil rights Tuesday night.

Nebraskans overwhelmingly voted to pass Initiative 416, the so-called Defense of Marriage Amendment.

As of midnight, with 39 percent of the precincts reporting, 56 percent of Nebraskans voted in favor of the amendment that would ban gay and lesbian marriages, civil unions and partner-

ships in the state. Forty-four percent of the vote tallied, or 122,476 people, voted against it.

Angela Clements, a leader in the student movement against the initiative, said the group hadn't lost.

"I knew way back in July we were going to win either way," Clements said. "We've started a movement, and it's great.

"We were going to win because things were going to be talked about and issues were debated."

Clements told her supporters that they had been outspent in the campaign by a 6-1 margin. But they hadn't been outvoted 6-1, she said, and that was encouraging.

"We have achieved victory either way," she said. "There are so many issues to fight about. We can't lose."

Mary Carol Bond, Lincoln campaign coordinator for the Vote No on DOMA Committee, said the fight was not over.

Though there was some disappointment, Bond said there was much more pride and appreciation for the work they had done, she said.

"It's an incredible triumph to face the odds we faced," Bond

said. "It was an incredible struggle, but also rewarding."

In a speech, Clements recounted the work in the fight against 416.

Since late August, Clements and her crew have sponsored a rally to the Capitol for National Coming Out Day. They've put fliers in the mailboxes of all residence-hall students. They've held rallies outside the Nebraska Union, they've traveled the state, they've done fund-raising and they've written letters to their hometown newspapers.

"We've raised hell at UNL – I can guarantee that," Clements said.

And the fact they got the issue out there and got people to debate it is important, she said.

Clements urged the students involved with the fight against Initiative 416 to stay involved.

"We're here, and we're going to stay here, and we're going to keep fighting," she said.

Former ASUN President Andy Schuerman also was instrumental in leading the student fight against the initiative.

The work was especially meaningful for him, he said, because of personal issues that coincided with the struggle

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Angela Clements
Huskies Against 416

against the amendment.

"I feel emotionally exhausted," Schuerman said. "But this fight has shown me glimpses of light, and we need those to keep going."

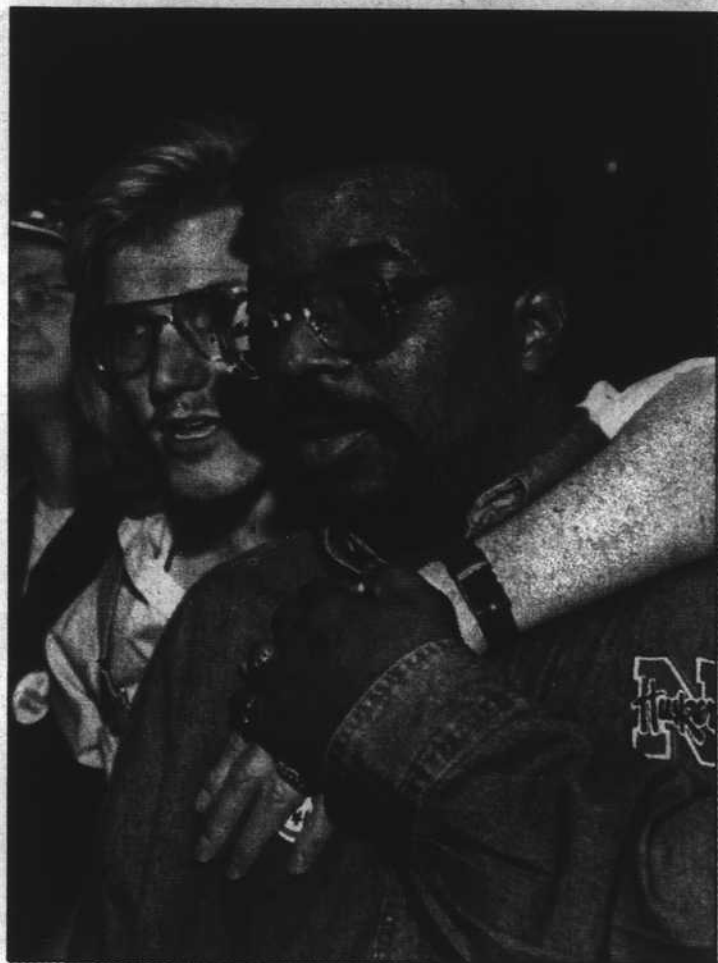
Schuerman said he spent five hours standing on the corner of 27th and Normal streets Tuesday afternoon with a sign against Initiative 416.

A man passed him once and told Schuerman that he supported what he was doing. About an hour later, that same man returned, pulled out a notebook, wrote "Vote No to 416" on it and stood with his makeshift sign alongside Schuerman for about an hour.

It's these glimpses that Schuerman is talking about.

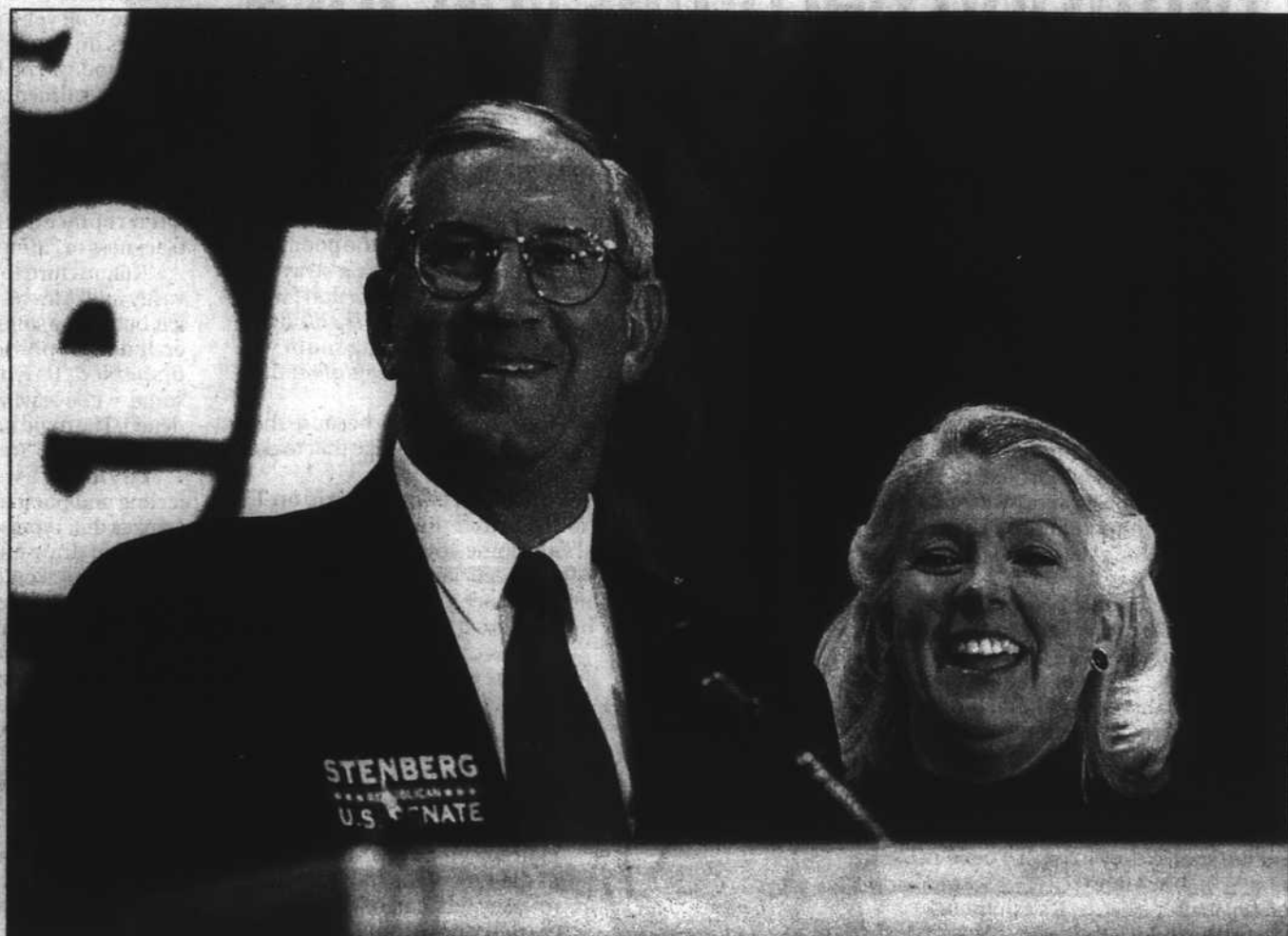
But the challenge now is to stay motivated, he said.

"Win or lose on 416, we still have a long way to go," he said.



Derek Lippincott/DN
J. Wright consoles his friend, Roy Wright on Tuesday night at a party in Omaha after Initiative 416 passed.

Nebraska Republican Senate candidate Don Stenberg and his wife, Sue, make an appearance at a Republican rally at the Cornhusker Hotel on Tuesday night. Gov. Mike Johanns, Congressman Doug Bereuter and U.S. Sen. Chuck Hagel encouraged voters to keep their hopes up for a Stenberg victory. Stenberg lost but did not concede the race.



Nate Wagner/DN

Stenberg refuses to concede race

BY JOSH FUNK

Don Stenberg defied pollsters by fighting to get within 1 percent of Ben Nelson for Nebraska's open Senate seat, and he refused to concede early today until all the votes were counted.

Yet CBS News and the Omaha World-Herald picked Nelson as the winner around 1:30 a.m., and The Associated Press joined them at 3:15 a.m.

With 92 percent of the precincts reporting, Nelson pulled ahead of Stenberg 51 percent to 49 percent. Nelson held a 7,957 vote edge.

"(Stenberg's) not ready to concede right now, and we aren't either," Nebraska Republican Party Chairman Chuck Sigerson said.

Stenberg, the state's attorney general, planned to hold a press conference today when all the votes were counted. If the candidates remain separated by less than 1 percent in the final count, the state government will be required to recount the votes.

"We wanted to put a little excitement in this for you," Stenberg told supporters at a rally at the Cornhusker Hotel earlier

Tuesday evening. "So far it's just the way we planned it."

Ballot complications in one of the state's largest counties contributed to the suspense. Sarpy County election officials had to make photocopies of about 1,000 ballots to accommodate heavy voter turnout late Tuesday, and election workers were tallying them by hand and weren't expected to finish until at least 4 a.m.

At his campaign rally in Omaha, Democratic former Gov. Nelson sent his supporters home after 2 a.m. thinking he had won.

"Even though I haven't heard from my opponent, I think we have heard from the people of Nebraska," Nelson said.

Stenberg trailed Nelson by 31 percentage points in an opinion poll in March but narrowed the gap to 12 percentage points in a copyrighted Omaha World-Herald poll released last week.

In the weeks leading up to the election, Stenberg said his strategy was to stay close in the eastern part of the state and rely on the mostly Republican 3rd District voters to seal a victory.

A host of top Nebraska

Republicans attended Stenberg's rally to lend support to the party's candidates.

After securing his 12th term in Congress, Doug Bereuter compared this year's Senate race to the 1996 contest in which Sen. Chuck Hagel vanquished Nelson by 14 points after trailing throughout the race.

"I think our former Gov. Ben Nelson has that deja vu sick feeling in his stomach again," Bereuter said.

The partisan crowd rode an emotional roller coaster through the night as the lead alternated in news reports. At one point Stenberg appeared to pull away from Nelson only to fall back into a dead heat after one news station corrected its numbers.

Gov. Mike Johanns' predictions of a long night awaiting results certainly held true.

"When I came into the hotel I didn't see anyone with their sleeping bags," he said at 10 p.m. "You're

going to need them."

Throughout the campaign, which was marked by aggressive TV ads from both candidates, Stenberg stressed his conservative views and pledged to govern as a team with Hagel and Republican presidential nominee George W. Bush.

If Stenberg wins, it would mark the first time since 1976 that Nebraska has had an all-Republican Congressional delegation. It would mean the state's highest-ranking Democratic officeholder would be state Sen. Dave Landis – who has served in the nonpartisan Legislature since 1978.

Stenberg has two years remaining on his term as attorney general, which he would resign if elected to the Senate.

Nelson and Stenberg are vying to replace retiring Democratic Sen. Bob Kerrey, who will become president of New School University in New York.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

416 supporters: 'The Lord did it'

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"That's right," she said. "The Lord did it."

Mills said although she expected the initiative to pass, she was excited.

"We believed, with conviction, we needed to protect the institution of marriage," she said.

Mills' confidence didn't falter throughout the campaign, she said.

When a copyrighted Omaha World-Herald poll said support of the initiative was 59 percent, Mills said she thought the numbers were too low.

"The polls are unfair to conservative movements," she said.

Mills and her supporters have faced heavy criticism from some who said the initiative went too far, and said it was discriminatory against gays.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Interim Chancellor Harvey Perlman said he opposed the initiative because it would discourage potential faculty and staff members from seeking employment at UNL.

But Mills said the passage of the initiative sends a strong message to businesses that Nebraskans are strongly pro-family, not anti-gay.

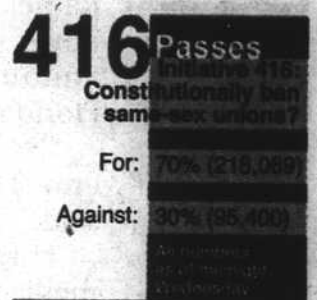
"We're open to everyone," she said. "It's about marriage – we're not about being discriminatory to anyone."

Mills participated in a heated debate two weeks ago. At the debate were members of a student group formed against the initiative, Huskers Against 416.

The majority of the debate crowd was opposed to the initiative, and Mills endured heavy criticism and name-calling throughout.

But on Tuesday, more voters were on Mills' side.

Much of the night



revolved around spiritual matters, with the group taking time to pray for the opponents of the initiative after the results were announced.

The supporters' room also had a large banner on the wall, supported by the Nebraska Family Council, of which Mills is the executive director.

The banner quoted a Bible verse, Micah 6:8: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Deb Badeer, a supporter of the initiative, said she had mixed feelings about its passage.

Badeer said she was excited the initiative passed, but she said she was disappointed the opponents of the initiative were angry.

"We never had the intentions to be hateful," she said. "There's a sadness in my heart along with the joy."

David Vaughn, pastor at the Victory Bible Fellowship in Grand Island, said he had a good feeling now that the initiative has passed.

"I feel the people of Nebraska have spoken and spoken loudly," he said.

But a downside to the initiative's passage is how some people lives will be affected by it, he said.

"As a pastor, I hope we can reach out to the homosexual community, even though they probably hate us now," he said.

Former NU Coach Osborne takes race in 3rd District

OSBORNE from page 1

He has dominated his opponent, Rollie Reynolds, for months with opinion polls' showing his approval ratings topping out near 80 percent.

Osborne said his strong showing had to do with his name recognition from being the Nebraska football coach.

But he said his time as a coach gave Nebraskans a chance to see how he works as a person.

Osborne's unparalleled domination did not go unnoticed at the

Republican campaign party at the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln.

Murmurs in the crowd gathered at the hotel jokingly compared the tight presidential race with Osborne's blow-out victory.

Osborne, though, told no jokes about his opponent.

Instead, he said Reynolds was a good opponent.

His friendly tone contrasted sharply with his blow-out victory.

Reynolds was equally complimentary about Osborne.

"Tom will make a great congressman," Reynolds said.

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Call or e-mail **Major Tammy Lundborg, 472-2473 or tlundborg2@unl.edu,** for more info or to let her know you will attend.