

# MIP bill next on list for ASUN

BY MARGARET BEHM

Although student government took a vacation this week from passing any legislative bills, they used the break to prepare for debating a slew of bills next week.

Association of Students of the University of Nebraska President Joel Schafer will present four bills next Wednesday to student government.

One bill will ask to send the Government Liaison Committee to lobby LB114, proposed by Omaha Senator Mark Quandahl.

The Government Liaison Committee is the lobbying arm of student government.

LB114 proposes making it easier to charge people with minor in possession violations.

The bill allows police officers to arrest minors for simply being in the proximity of alcohol, Schafer said.

Current law states that a minor would have to be in physical possession of booze to get "mipped".

Also, under the proposed bill, MIPs could be given without blood alcohol tests being administered.

"So even if you make the personal choice not to drink, you can still get an MIP," Schafer said.

Although ASUN does not promote at-risk drinking or abuse of alcohol, Schafer said that cutting loose in college usually includes downing some booze.

"Even if a student chooses not to drink," he said. "Alcohol is involved in the college social setting."

Under the bill, if people get an MIP their licenses could be suspended for a minimum of three months and a maximum of six months, for the first alcohol

violation. Taking away the license is an over-reaction, Schafer said.

"It's a harsh punishment for a mistake that some students make," he said.

If the bill were passed into law, designated drivers would be discouraged, Schafer said.

"If I'm under age, it would be an added risk for me to go to a party to be my friend's designated driver," he said.

Schafer also will submit a bill to send GLC lobbyists to fight two different bills that would re-organize the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

The lobbyists would fight to ensure the ASUN president continued to have a seat on the Board of Regents.

A third bill that Schafer will introduce would have the GLC lobbyists persuade the Legislature to pass Gov. Mike Johanns' budget recommendation for the university. Johanns recommends an increase in funding for the university - the largest in a decade.

The fourth bill will ask ASUN to endorse a class ring. The Nebraska Alumni Association is planning on having only one design available for class rings.

The ring would be a splendid tradition for the university to start, Schafer said.

"We don't have strong traditions like some other universities," he said.

If the bill passes, the Alumni Association will move forward on making the ring tradition status quo.

In other news, Tag Herbek was sworn in at the meeting as the Law College senator for ASUN.

# Officials blamed for rape, murder

BRANDON from page 1

According to Buckel, the defense's claim that Brandon told police she was going to Lincoln sometime between Christmas and New Year's Eve of 1993 is not relevant because Brandon was in the sheriff's office for an interview Dec. 29, two days before she was murdered.

Buckel said the sheriff should have taken measures to protect her after that interview. "He knew how incredibly

harmful these two killers could be, and he didn't do anything about it."

The ACLU-Nebraska filed briefs in the case on behalf of eight other organizations who were not parties in the action but have a vested interest in the decision.

Tim Butz, ACLU-Nebraska executive director, said Richardson county was held responsible for between \$17,000 and \$18,000 in the original decision apportioning damages, which Brandon is now appealing.

"From the oral arguments that were made, I think that the justices have a sense of the significance of the case," Butz said. "I hope the family will prevail in the matter."

Buckel said Joann Brandon's goal in the lawsuit is to ensure the safety of other hate crime victims.

"Her biggest hope is that the outcome of this case is that fewer mothers in the state of Nebraska will go through the hell she's gone through in losing her child," Buckel said.

# Lack of energy causes blackout

POWER from page 1

that alarms were out and security cameras were out," said Ron Low, spokesman for Pacific Gas & Electric Co., whose territory stretches from Oregon to Bakersfield, Calif., 500 miles away.

Those affected in the first wave of blackouts included 200,000 to 500,000 PG&E customers in the San Francisco area, and thousands more in Sacramento, Modesto and Turlock.

Other parts of the state were unaffected. The Los Angeles area, for example, has its own utilities that are not connected to the state's power grid.

Despite several close calls in recent weeks, it was the first time the Independent System Operator, the keeper of the grid, failed to scrounge up enough electricity from around the country to avoid scattered outages.

Jim Detmers, ISO managing director of operations, said several power plants that were expected to return to full operation Wednesday after repairs did not.

He also said out-of-state power suppliers were not selling badly needed electricity to California because the state's two largest utilities were on the verge of bankruptcy.

"We are trying to manage the picture here today, but we've come to the end of the road here as far as supply within California and out-of-state resources go,"

Detmers said.

Detmers said the ISO was too busy trying to supply power to find out whether suppliers were ignoring a federal order to sell to California.

A spokesman for Gov. Gray Davis said the state implemented its plan to cut power 5 percent by scaling back use in state offices and shutting down huge pumps that send water from Northern to the Southern California.

California has struggled for months with the effects of deregulating its electricity market.

Under the plan, utilities had to sell their power plants and buy electricity on the open market - an approach that was supposed to lead to lower rates.

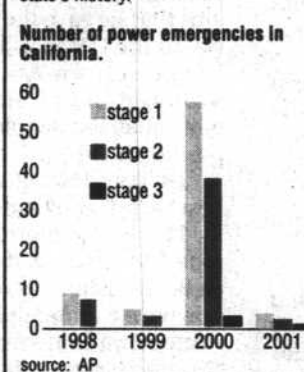
But PG&E and the state's other major utility, Southern California Edison Co., have lost at least \$10 billion because of soaring wholesale prices for electricity and because rate caps imposed under deregulation have prevented them from passing on those costs to customers.

State lawmakers are scrambling to find a fix. The Assembly approved a plan Tuesday under which the state would buy electricity from wholesalers and sell it to struggling utilities at about one-fifth the going market rate. The measure now moves to the Senate.

The help cannot come too soon. SoCal Edison, which serves 11 million people, said it cannot pay \$596 million in bills due now and will run out of cash Feb. 2.

## Power Crunch

Facing severe weather with many of the state's power generators off-line, California power regulators declared a stage 3 emergency Thursday - the first of 2001 and the second in the state's history.



Melanie Falk/DN

PG&E, which serves 14 million people, had just \$500 million in cash left as of Jan. 10 and faces bills of \$1 billion due next month.

Standard & Poor's has downgraded the credit ratings of SoCal Edison and PG&E to junk-bond status.

Wholesale power prices have risen dramatically since June, in part because of a hot summer and a cold winter. In 1999, they averaged perhaps 3.5 cents a kilowatt. Now they are running about 30 cents, or far higher.

Demand has remained high, supplies are strapped because no new plants have been built in the state in recent years and imports are tight because other states are fighting over the power.

# Bar-goers could gain half hour

BARS from page 1

early birds out of the way and free up some cabs before the late-night crew hits the streets, he said.

Despite these apparent benefits, several related bills have been introduced in the Legislature and failed, Beutler said.

"It's become a perennial bill," he said.

Beutler said the bars keep closing early because Nebraska is a conservative state.

Many people are simply too reluctant to let drinkers stay out late, he said.

Linda Major, project director for NU Directions, the campus group that works against "high-risk" drinking, wouldn't say if her coalition favors or opposes the legislation.

But, she said, the small extension didn't seem like too big of a request.

"I don't know how much a difference 30 minutes is going to make," she said.

Jeff Boehmer, another Zoo Bar owner, agreed that half an hour didn't seem like too much to ask.

A lot of other cities, some close to Nebraska, let bar doors hang open well into morning, he said.

"One a.m. is the earliest closing time," he said.

McMeen said these all-night bars don't run into any more problems than bars who close shop early.

"Some people cause problems, some don't. Hours have nothing to do with it," he said.

# Budget aids NU teachers

BUDGET from page 1

"The problem is that we've maintained low tuition rates," he said.

Increased tuition rates, along with recruiting more students - especially out-of-state students - are ways to continue to boost faculty pay, he said.

Joel Schafer, Association of Students of the University of Nebraska president, said he thought tuition needed to increase.

"In all realities, we need to take a hard look at tuition, and students need to realize they have a role (in increasing faculty pay)," he said.

Gail Latta, past president of UNI's faculty senate, said she was encouraged by the governor's recommendations.

"I don't think I could have expected this," she said.

The battle for increased pay has been a long one, she said.

Johanns' proposal especially rewards faculty members who've been with the university for years, she said.

"I think the governor recognized we haven't been gaining any ground," she said.

UNI's Academic Senate has been active in lobbying for increased salaries, she said.

When the university prepared its budget to submit to the Legislature, senate members had input, she said.

"The administration has been very supportive," Latta said.

"We've been on the same side of the fence for this issue."

UNI's goal to move toward the midpoint of its peers can't be achieved overnight, she said.

"The question for the administration is how aggressively we should make up that gap," she said.

"(Johanns) says we want to do it quickly."

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