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Victim rights bill awaits enforcement

BY JILL CONNER

Two months ago, Randy Reeves would have embraced a bill heard Friday in front of the Legislature's Judiciary Committee.

LB847, introduced by Sen. Kermit Brashear of Omaha, called for enforcement of a Victims Bill of Rights statute voted into Nebraska's constitution five years ago.

But because the Legislature never passed a law to enact it, the bill could not be relied on in Reeves' case.

The committee took no action on the bill Friday. Reeves, 44, was sentenced to

death for the murders of Victoria Lamm and Janet Mesner inside a Quaker meeting house in 1980.

The Nebraska Supreme Court stayed his execution in January of 1999, two days away from his execution date. The court ordered a re-sentencing.

The victim's rights bill says victims should be told of criminal proceedings as well as be allowed to attend the trial and make statements at hearings.

Gus Lamm, Victoria Lamm's husband and Audrey Lamm, her daughter, were denied the chance to speak to the Board of Pardons.

Brashear said LB847 was introduced partly because of the

Legislature

Lamm case.

"It provides a remedy to pursue a civil action to seek an injunction to enforce those rights," Brashear said.

Two people testified in support of the bill, and no one spoke in opposition.

The Pardons Board voted against a commutation hearing, which also would have allowed the Lamm's to speak before the high court.

Assistant Attorney General Kirk Brown said in his opening

oral arguments at the Pardons Board hearing that the right to speak in front of a high court was unenforceable.

Brown said the Legislature has not passed a law for the enforcement of the victims' rights amendment in the state's constitution.

Although it is too late for the Lamm's, their attorney, Paula Hutchinson, was at the hearing Friday to speak in support of the bill.

"Victims that have a different philosophy (about the death penalty) are orphans in the criminal justice system," Hutchinson said. "It's been worse than neglect - it's a situa-

tion where the individuals have been treated with contempt."

Hutchinson said the courts only wanted to help the victims when victims wanted to help the courts.

"If you support the death penalty, then they'll let you testify," she said.

But the family of Janet Mesner supported the bill because of a different reason.

Don Marsh, second cousin to Janet Mesner, defended LB847 because he felt it was a way for the Mesner family to gain some recognition for their opposition to the death penalty.

"We felt that Janet Mesner's family had not been well repre-

mented by the members of the family who wanted to support the decision," Marsh said.

Marsh and Dale Mesner, another second cousin to Janet Mesner, sent a petition in opposition of Randy Reeves' execution to extended family members across the country.

Marsh said they have received more than 80 signatures on the petition, from family members of all religious backgrounds, some for and others against the death penalty.

"We will feel better if it is a life sentence instead of execu-

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From contest to company

BY MARC SALEME

A year ago, UNL student Stephanie Watkins competed in UNL's International Business Plan Competition.

Watkins, who graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln last year, now runs her own dance studio.

On Friday, Watkins spoke to students who, like her, are vying to open their own businesses.

Watkins spoke at the 14th annual competition held at the Cornhusker Hotel, 333 S. 13th St.

Terry Sebor, director of the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship, described the competition as a weekend celebration of free enterprise in Nebraska.

The Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship is geared toward helping UNL students start their own businesses.

Sebor said students came from all over the world - the farthest coming from Bangkok, Thailand - to use the center.

At the weekend competition, students present their own business plans to judges in hopes of winning money to help start companies. The conference also featured a productivity improvement competition and several business workshops.

The goal of all this was to drive students to create, to educate students and to improve students' chances of success in the business realm, Sebor said.

"Most students have the idea of taking a good job to make money," he said. "We want to maybe infect some of you - give you the idea that you can create a job instead of just taking one."

The competition is split into two divisions: graduate and undergraduate students.

The graduate section yields awards of \$10,000 for first place, \$3,000 for second place, \$2,000 for third place and \$500 for an honorable mention.

The top prize for undergraduate students was \$7,500.

One of last year's winners from UNL, Watkins returned as a workshop speaker.

Watkins was a business major and dancer for UNL's Scarlets team. She took third prize for her dance studio business idea.

Watkins said her award money was not necessarily vital to the launching of her dance studio.

"I was going to do it," she said. "I didn't care whether (anyone else) liked it or not."

But the cash was definitely helpful, she said, as she budgeted \$60,000 to get the studio up and running.

She now has a flourishing operation, Nebraska Dance, located near 114th and Dodge streets in Omaha, where she instructs more than 200 students a week in jazz, tap, ballet and dance team dancing.

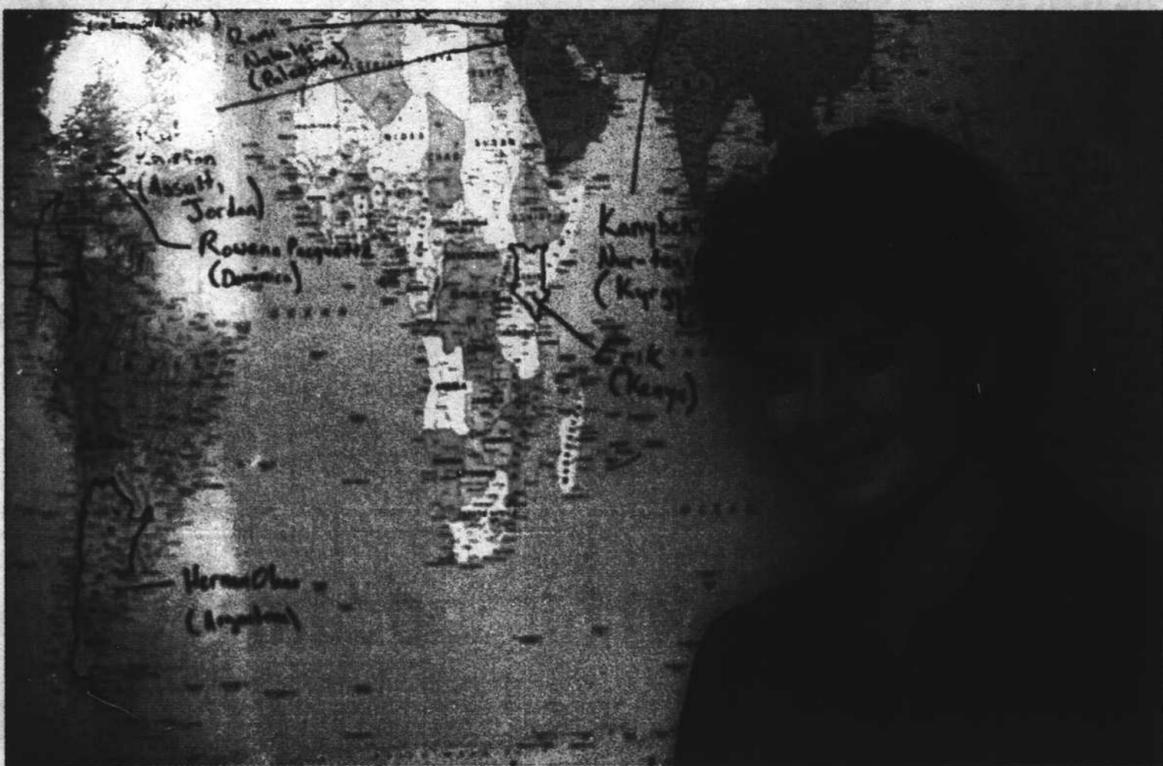
She has one other teacher at the studio who teaches hip-hop dance classes.

The studio was originally to be called The Edge Dance and Fitness Company, she said. She changed the name to Nebraska Dance.

"I wanted to name it after Nebraska because when we go to competitions, I want our name to be recognized as from Nebraska," she said.

Watkins said it was hard for her to believe her business had become such a success.

"It's crazy to think that last year at this time I was here competing," she said.



Nate Wagner/DN

Government for the people

ASUN candidate seeks to eliminate an elite-run government

BY GEORGE GREEN

Angela Clements, NUForce presidential candidate, might need to get a bulldozer.

She'll need the heavy machinery to break down barriers she said put the student government into the hands of an elite few.

In fact, Clements said the university's bastion of "untapped diversity" prompted her to run for the student government's highest perch.

"The student government historically has been dominated by elite groups on campus," she said.

And each year, candidates have to cater to the dominant groups if they want to win, she said.

But this year, Clements said she was "going to open up the process" to all university students.

With more people participating, Clements said candidates could take home victories without pandering to entrenched groups like fraternities and sororities.

Clements, though, said she didn't have a beef with the greek system; she just wanted to open more doors of

opportunity for non-greek students.

Specifically, Clements said she wanted to enfranchise off-campus students, minority groups and others caught outside of the loop by adding more seats to the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska Senate.

Under Clements' plan, ASUN would allocate seats to minority groups on campus such as the Afrikan People's Union.

Erick Kinyungu, NUForce's first vice presidential candidate, said Clements was dedicated to reaching out to people.

Kinyungu said Clements' penchant for incorporating others was most apparent when she visited with people one-on-one.

"Her ability to relate to people is a big thing," he said.

Clements started talking with others as soon as she landed on campus by nabbing a seat on the student advisory board for the College of Arts and Sciences.

From that point on, Clements said, she also began to notice how much diversity the campus had.

An interest in diversity issues landed Clements' mug on the front pages of papers across the state last year when initiative 416 hit the ballot.

The initiative, which passed overwhelmingly, explicitly banned marriage between people of the same gender.

Clements formed and led a group, United Students Against 416, to battle the initiative.

Even though the initiative passed, Clements said her experience with the issue was good.

"It was very inspiring," she said.

The ballot proposal dropped her into the thick of state government and gave her first-hand experience in forming coalitions among different people, she said.

These skills will be valuable in shaping a new governing body, if elected, she said.

But a taste of bureaucratic business wasn't the best thing she received from her battle against the initiative, Clements said.

Rather, she said watching other students ban together was the greatest reward for her work.

"It was good to see students getting excited about something they believe in," she said.

Clements' work on 416 also gave her the chance to learn how to survive political battle wounds, a lesson that has proven valuable over the last week, she said.

When Clements' campaign watched its second vice presidential candidate get axed in a scandal over signatures, Clements said she had to remember how to take bad news.

And more importantly, she realized she needed to stay focused on the important things, she said.

"In both cases (416 and the campaign scandal), the vision and the fundamental aspects of what we were trying to achieve still remained intact," Clements said.

In her campaign, Clements cited beefing up the authority of advisory boards and grassroots groups as part of the vision she keeps in the front of her mind.

Clements believes these smaller groups - not just elected students - are

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Malaysian night brings culture's traditional dance, fashion to the union



David Casen/DN

Baratha Natyam performs an Indian classical dance Sunday night at Malaysian Night 2001.

BY LISA BEHRNS

Smoke pours onto the stage. The crowd roars and cheers as men pose in their native dress.

Senior Keith Leong takes center stage and smiles, posing in a traditional Chinese costume.

The women parade into the fashion show swishing their long, colorful skirts. They dance moving down the long red carpet.

The mood changes slightly, and Keerun Kamble takes the stage.

Her gold jewelry jangles. Her head-

piece glitter shines, and the smile never leaves her face. Her body moves precisely with the music, and the bells on her ankles mark her step.

The women dressed in formal gowns and the men in suit and tie create an atmosphere like a big party.

The annual Malaysian night is well under way in the Nebraska Union Centennial Ballroom.

Organized by the Nebraska University Malaysian Student Association, the event, held Sunday, is a long standing tradition.

"We hope to educate and entertain

by showing our identity here," said Yow Lian Tay, president of NUMSA. "We want to help the community understand that we are part of this community and we have something to share."

For many students, this was their opportunity to shine.

For Leong, a senior management information systems major from Penang, and Mary-Ann Ee, a junior finance major from Kuala Lumpur, this performance is a time to unite with other Malaysians.

"It's a chance to meet new people in a form of reunion," Leong said. "There

is a great spirit of community that comes from this night."

Ee enjoyed the diversity of the occasion.

"We are all from different places," Ee said. "But we combine and are able to cultivate others' talents."

Each person brings a different style of dance.

Kamble, a sophomore biology and pre-med major, has been involved in the festivities for the past three years.

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