

Nebraska

Tense Session Nearing An End

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska lawmakers have a list of accomplishments to look back on as the Legislature lurches toward adjournment, but the session could be remembered as much for confrontations with the governor as for legislative action.

With three days left in the 60-day session, lawmakers have finished most of their priorities, including new investments in university medical research, an overhaul of child welfare services, and a tax-cut package aimed at low- and middle-income Nebraskans.

But in nearly every major policy decision this year, lawmakers have openly challenged Republican Gov. Dave Heineman, and he's often responded strongly to their complaints.

Several times this session, Heineman has singled out individual state senators for criticism, most notably last week when he held a news conference to criticize Speaker Mike Flood, a Republican from Norfolk. If Flood gets his way, Heineman complained the session could be tarnished by tax increases and giveaways to illegal immigrants.

After repeated confrontations with lawmakers, Heineman was clearly exasperated last week by two bills that lawmakers passed over his objections. He said he was "extraordinarily disappointed" with Flood for supporting both measures, one of which would extend prenatal care to pregnant women in the country illegally, and another allowing cities to raise sales taxes with voter approval.

In his weekly address to Nebraskans, Heineman repeated his opposition to the prenatal care bill and urged residents to contact their local lawmakers.

"If an illegal immigrant is residing in one of

the 36 states that do not offer benefits to illegals, this will incent and encourage illegal immigrants to come to Nebraska — forcing you, the hard-working, legal citizens of our state, to pay for public benefits for them," he said. "That is not fair and it is not right."

Heineman said the Nebraska Department of Labor has stopped more than \$1.9 million in taxpayer dollars from going to illegal immigrants who tried to file for state unemployment benefits. More than half of the claims were filed in the last two years, which saved \$632,000 last year alone, he said.

Omaha Sen. Heath Mello, a Democrat and frequent Heineman critic, said lawmakers took the lead this year on the session's most pressing issues: Funding for University of Nebraska medical center projects, an overhaul of privately managed child services, reimbursement for unpaid child welfare providers, prenatal care coverage for illegal immigrants, and the governor's tax-cut package.

"You have five key issues where the Legislature has ultimately stepped in," Mello said. "In the previous four years I've been here, we've never seen so many significant issues where the Legislature has differed from the governor and ultimately took the lead."

A message left Friday with Heineman's office was not returned.

Mello said lawmakers offered less resistance to the governor in the past because of term limits, which started forcing seasoned lawmakers out of office in 2006. He said new lawmakers, including himself, have since gained experience and were more willing to challenge the governor on his early plans for a deeper tax cut, which many senators viewed as unaffordable.

Heineman's original tax package called for \$327 million in tax relief over a three-year period, but lawmakers stripped it down to \$97 million.

"I think most people, including myself, would agree that we don't have the acrimony that Washington has when it comes to trying to solve the state's problems," Mello said. "And this year, when there were disagreements, the Legislature moved forward in the way that people felt we needed to move forward."

Legislators also approved child welfare bills that would limit caseloads for state workers, increase pay for foster parents and create a state Children's Commission, among other steps.

Lawmakers also proposed new medical construction projects for the University of Nebraska, which Heineman initially opposed.

The approved state budget package includes \$50 million from the cash reserve for a University of Nebraska Medical Center cancer research tower, and \$15 million for a nursing college in Kearney. It also spends \$6.1 million in general-fund dollars for a Veterinary Diagnostic Center in Lincoln.

"It's been a tough session," said Valentine Sen. Deb Fischer, a Republican who agrees with Heineman on both the sales tax and prenatal care bills. "It's been an emotional session. We've had a lot of big issues, regardless of whether they passed or not. We've had a lot of late nights, and people's nerves are on edge."

Flood declined to comment about his relationship with the governor, saying he would only speak about state policy. He said he has always tried to stay civil with fellow policy makers when they disagree.

"It doesn't mean I agree with what they're doing on a bill, but there are senators in there who are doing what they think is right," Flood said. "This places works best when you respect that."

Ads Credited With Cutting Drunk Driving Deaths

BY JOHN HULT
Argus Leader

ST. LOUIS FALLS — Boosters of a six-year-old campaign designed to battle drunken driving among teenagers during prom and graduation season say that the program has helped save lives in South Dakota.

Darcy Jensen, head of Prairie View Prevention Services, said Lincoln County hasn't had an alcohol-related traffic fatality since 2006, and there was only one last year in Minnehaha County.

Jensen says the numbers point to success of the "Parents Matter" campaign, which uses about

\$200,000 in Department of Public Safety money each year to produce a series of radio and television ads aimed at encouraging parents to talk to their teens about drinking and driving.

The information produced each spring is distributed throughout school districts in the state as well.

In 2005, the year before Parents Matter began, there were 13 alcohol-related fatalities in Lincoln and Minnehaha counties.

"We think (the change is) because of parents sitting down and talking to their kids," Jensen said.

This year's theme, announced Friday at the Law Enforcement Center in Sioux Falls, is "Have the

Talk." Ads in the past have used testimonials from parents who lost children and young people who survived alcohol-related crashes but sustained debilitating injuries.

This year's ads feature two parents who explain how they began conversations about drinking with their own children.

Surveys taken of South Dakota youth as part of the marketing push showed that 42 percent of teens who were given a zero-tolerance message by their parents abstained from using alcohol altogether, Jensen said.

Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead appears in the ad campaign as well and spoke at the

campaign kickoff.

"We know that parents play a vital role in the safety of their children," he said.

Tom Lorang, superintendent of Sioux Falls Catholic Schools, said he's been impressed with the campaign's results, crediting the personal stories attached to the ads. He has been looking for ways to deal with the issue of teen drinking since 1971.

"Sometimes it feels like you're shooting a BB gun against a steel wall, but we've been pleased," Lorang said.

Every public school district in South Dakota will use the materials this year, Jensen said.

Parents Question

Neb. District's Release Of Student Info

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A small group of parents are questioning Lincoln Public Schools' practice of releasing students' names and addresses to outside groups.

Dan Jenkins told the *Lincoln Journal Star* that he asked the school board to re-examine the practice after a church obtained his daughter's information for its mailing list.

A federal law allows schools to distribute student information if parents don't request it to remain private.

Jenkins says he thinks it's OK for the district to release some information, such as the names of honor roll students or to groups that offer student programs. But, he says, religious organizations shouldn't be allowed to contact children at home.

Assistant superintendent Marilyn Moore says attorneys have cautioned the district against discriminating against particular organizations who request student information.

OBITUARIES

Garrett Hans

HARTINGTON, Neb. — Garrett M. Hans, 29 of Hartington, Neb., died Saturday, April 7, 2012, in a one-vehicle accident a mile west of Wynot, Neb.

Mass of Christian Burial is at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday at Holy Family (Sacred Heart) Catholic Church, Wynot, officiated by the Rev. Eric Olsen. Burial will be in the Sacred Heart Cemetery, Wynot.

Visitation is 4-8 p.m. Tuesday with a vigil service at 8 p.m. at the church. Visitation resumes one hour prior to services on Wednesday at the church.

Wintz Funeral Home, Hartington, is in charge of arrangements.

Marie Schuch

WESTMINSTER, Colo. — Marie A. Schuch, 95 of Westminster, Colo., died Sunday, April 8, 2012, at Covenant Village, Westminster.

Arrangements are pending under the direction of Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home and Crematory, Yankton.

Larry 'L.J.' Somer

Larry "L.J." Somer, age 89, of Yankton, South Dakota, died Thursday, April 5, 2012, at Avera Sister James Care Center in Yankton.

A memorial service will be 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, April 10, 2012, at First United Methodist Church in Yankton with Reverend Ron Johnson officiating. Inurnment will be in the Garden of Memories Cemetery in Yankton with military honors provided by the SD National Guard and the Ernest Bowyer VFW Post 791.

Visitation with viewing is from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. with family present from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. and a prayer service and video tribute at 7:00 p.m. at the Wintz & Ray Funeral Home in Yankton. Cremation will follow the visitation for the memorial service at the church on Tuesday.



Somer

Honorary pallbearers will be his grandchildren: Jody Templeton, Ryan Templeton, Jason Templeton, Robin Templeton, Tara Newcomb, Bryce Somer and Rebecca Somer.

Lawrence "L.J." Somer was born September 7, 1922 on the family farm in rural Niobrara, Nebraska to Joseph and Millie (Liska) Somer. He grew up on the farm and attended country school in rural Niobrara. He graduated from Niobrara High School in 1940 and a few years later joined the United States Army serving in Europe during World War II. He married Naomi Jewell on July 20, 1947 in Creighton, Nebraska.

After their marriage, L.J. attended Yankton College graduating with a Bachelor of Arts

Degree in Business. He began working for First Dakota National Bank in Yankton and continued working for them in various positions for 40 years until retiring in 1987.

L.J. was a member of First United Methodist Church in Yankton, where he served on the Finance Council and Evangelism Committee. He was also a member of the Yankton VFW, Yankton Kiwanis Club, Yankton Elks Lodge #994, Yankton Historical Society, Yankton Baseball Association, and the Yankton Chamber of Commerce, where he also served as Treasurer. He enjoyed sports and always had an interest in cars. He was a wonderful dad and grandpa and loved attending the sporting events and activities of his children and grandchildren.

Survivors include his wife, Naomi Somer of Yankton; two children: Sandi (Darrell) Temple-

ton of Middletown, Ohio and Hal (Cindy) Somer of Yankton; seven grandchildren: Jody (Sheryll) Templeton, Ryan (Kristin) Templeton, Jason (Jessica) Templeton, Robin (Brian Ressler) Templeton, Tara (Andrew) Newcomb, Bryce Somer, and Rebecca Somer. He is also survived by four great grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

To send an online sympathy card, please visit wintzrayfuneralhome.com.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
April 9, 2012

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A social group of widows/widowers of all ages that meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month in the Hospitality Center on the grounds of Wintz & Ray Funeral Home.

Wednesday, April 18th • 6pm
Potluck Dinner • 6:45pm Speaker
(Julie Perakslis with Keep Yankton Beautiful)

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HONORING THEIR MEMORY
Our Thoughts And Prayers Are With Them

Our care and concern does not end with the funeral service. This week we remember with family and friends the anniversary of the deaths of:

Clara Schaefer
who passed away on
April 13, 2011

Joe Hlavac
who passed away on
April 9, 2009

Edward Kronaizl
who passed away on
April 14, 2000

This remembrance is brought to you free of charge. If you have a loved one you would like remembered, contact us at Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home & Crematory. Guiding and serving families with compassion and trust.

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