

Nebraska Term Limit Ballot Proposal Advances

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — A proposal that would allow Nebraska voters to extend legislative term limits inched closer to the November ballot on Thursday, with supporters arguing that the current maximum has made lawmakers less effective.

Lawmakers granted first-round approval to a proposed constitutional amendment that could allow them to serve a maximum of three back-to-back terms in office — a total of 12 years. A constitutional amendment approved in 2000 limited lawmakers to two consecutive terms, or eight years.

Holdrege Sen. Tom Carlson, who is sponsoring the new proposal, said voters in 2000 were denied the opportunity to specify how many terms lawmakers should serve. Carlson has said he supports term limits, but questioned whether the eight-year window gives lawmakers enough time to learn what they need to govern effectively.

Omaha Sen. Steve Lathrop said the two-term limit stifles debate on complex policy issues, because lawmakers often lack the experience to challenge their colleagues. Lathrop said adding a third term would give lawmakers time to learn more by serving on additional

legislative committees.

Many conservative lawmakers have said they support term limits, but some described a struggle to learn the intricacies of public policy that accumulate with years of experience. Supporters of the current two-term limit say new lawmakers have adapted well, despite a sharp learning curve.

Lawmakers rejected an attempt by Omaha Sen. Brenda Council to eliminate term limits altogether. Council said the push for term limits failed to account for Nebraska's one-house Legislature, which, unlike other states with term limits, prevents lawmakers from seeking office in another legislative chamber.

"We didn't appreciate the distinction accorded us as a Unicameral," Council said. "There is no right clearer under our democracy — and fewer more important — than the right of the people to choose the ablest and best men and women in government."

Nebraska voters enacted term limits in 2000. It was the fourth time the issue appeared on the ballot, but past efforts were struck down in court. Advocates for term limits said they prevent lawmakers from becoming career politicians and guarantee a steady supply of fresh faces and new ideas.

S.D. Robotics League Enduring After Fatal Crash

BY KRISTI EATON
Associated Press

SIoux FALLS — Robyn Swets and Cindy Anderson are keeping alive their husbands' dream of making science fun for kids.

The women's husbands, Dan Swets, 47, and Kevin Anderson, 50, were passengers in a twin-engine Cessna airplane that crashed shortly after takeoff in December in Sioux Falls. They were headed to Rapid City for a meeting of the FIRST LEGO League, a youth robotics competition. Another league volunteer, Joshua Lambrecht, 30, also was killed, as was the plane's pilot, Brian Blake, 54.

Dan Swets and Kevin Anderson were heavily involved in the LEGO League program, starting as coaches and eventually transitioning to administrative duties for the South Dakota chapter, Robyn Swets said. Shortly after the crash, she and Cindy Anderson announced they would continue their husbands' work in the league.

The FIRST LEGO League is an international science competition for elementary and middle school students featuring teams of students who build, design and program robots using LEGO blocks. The teams compete in several dif-

ferent events and are judged by a panel.

"It's hard, but it gives you something to strive for and something to work on. That's something they would want," said Robyn Swets of Sioux Falls.

On Saturday, about 500 students from 62 teams across the state will gather for the league championship at Augustana College in Sioux Falls. The event is the finale of this season's league. A video tribute created by the league's national organization to honor Dan Swets, Kevin Anderson and Lambrecht will be played during the opening ceremonies.

A computer science professor at Augustana College before his death, Dan Swets noticed fewer students were studying science because they believed it was too hard and not fun. His goal was to show young kids that the subject could be enjoyable, Robyn Swets said. He initially joined the organization as a coach for his daughter's team when the local chapter was started in 2007.

"Dan was just so passionate about making them realize science is fun," she said. "I mean, he thought science was fun. He loved the discovery and the hands-on learning — the figuring out the solution after working for hours. He wanted to get other people involved in that."

Both women had helped their husbands coach teams in the past and said they were inspired by their devotion to the kids and to science. The Andersons' 15-year-old son participated in the league and is involved in a high school version of the program, Cindy Anderson said.

"Kevin saw how much fun the kids had without realizing it was science they were working with. They'd get so energetic over the littlest thing and that's what drew Kevin to it," Cindy Anderson said of her husband, who worked as a computer programmer at the Sioux Falls School District.

Lambrecht joined the organization about two years ago, said Alan Swanson, the founder of the South Dakota chapter. Losing the three men is like a football team losing its head coach, defensive coach and offensive coach right before the Super Bowl, he said.

Still, Swanson said the program will persevere with the help of Cindy Anderson, Robyn Swets and other LEGO League volunteers from around the country, and eventually grow to include more students and teams.

"It's going to continue on even stronger," Swanson said.

Nebraska High Court Grants Stay Of Execution For Ryan

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Nebraska Supreme Court on Thursday put on hold the execution of a death row inmate condemned to die for two 1985 cult-related slayings at a farm near Rulo.

Michael Ryan had been scheduled to be executed March 6. His attorney, Jerrie Soucie, with the Nebraska Commission on Public Advocacy, had filed a motion with the state's high court last week asking for a stay of execution while a lower court considers his request to have Ryan's sentence commuted to life in prison.

The state supreme court granted Soucie's motion on Thursday, noting that Ryan's postconviction filing in Richardson County District Court was reason enough to put the execution on hold.

Ryan was convicted of torturing and killing James Thimm at a southeast Nebraska farm near Rulo in 1985, and for the beating death of the 5-year-old son of a cult member.

Messages left Thursday for Soucie and the Nebraska Attorney General's office seeking comment

were not immediately returned.

In his motion before the lower court, Soucie said Ryan's sentence should be commuted in part because the state used questionable tactics to obtain a scarce drug slated to be used in the execution.

His motion points to an assertion by the drug's Swiss manufacturer, Naari AG, that the supply of the drug sodium thiopental that Nebraska bought from a source in India was only supposed to be used for testing and evaluation as an anesthetic in Zambia. The drug

is no longer manufactured in the United States and is in scarce supply worldwide.

Using the drug in Ryan's execution would violate his constitutional right to due process and equal protection, Soucie said.

Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning has previously said claims that the state's purchase of the lethal injection drug was illegal are baseless. His office has also said that Ryan has presented no evidence of his innocence nor a credible assertion for postconviction relief.

Congratulations on a Great Season Yankton Miracle Hockey Teams!



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Yankton Miracle Squirt Hockey 2011-12

Front: Goalies Isaac Nedved and Reid Dutrow. Sitting: Zach Roesler, Elijah Berry, Zach Rohde, Glenn Andersen, Tyler Johnson, Cody Larson, Chris Sternhagen, Keith Schenkel, Tim White, Christian Curran. Standing: Isaac Klimisch, Christian Budig, Nick Lehl, Cole Withrow, Tom Stewart, Jace Kapla, Anna Lyman, Baylee Prather, Ryan Eichacker, Grant Nelson, Kyle Withrow, Elijah Berry. Coaches: Kyle Rohde, Sue Stewart, Doug Budig, Darrell Schenkel and Tom Curran. Not pictured: Cayden Peterson.



Yankton Miracle Bantam "A" Hockey 2011-12

Goalies: Christian Slate and Tyler Wenande. Kneeling: Sam DiVito, Lincoln Megard, Austin Barger, Patrick Weinandt, Colby Benson. Standing: Coaches Brad Wenande and Scott Cameron, Ben Cameron, Charlie Stephenson, Jacob Hubbs, Ethan Klimisch, Coaches Rob Stephenson and Lee Baldwin.



Yankton Miracle Bantam "B" Hockey 2011-12

Goalies: Hunter Cameron and John Craig. Kneeling: Jacob Doyle, Steven Tacke, Jameson Mitchell, Lucas Scheetz, Cody Perakslis. Standing: Coaches Brad Wenande and Scott Cameron, Brady Taggart, Tim Cross, Sean Baumeister, Cody List, Coaches Rob Stephenson and Lee Baldwin.



Yankton Miracle Girls JV Hockey 2011-12

Goalies: Renee Cross and Kirsten Monaghan. Sitting: Mckayla Bouska, Alysha Watzel, Kendra Nelsen, Hope Logue, Dani Gill, Carrie Vitek. Standing: Coach Josh Klonoski, Angel Schild, McKenna VanWinkle, Elizabeth Rueppel, Ilesley Stone, Helena Pokorny, Erica Westerman, Katelyn Stewart, Coach Michael Freeman.



Yankton Miracle Boys Varsity Hockey 2011-12

Sitting: Andrew Kotalik, Tyler Johnson, Goalies Austin Davis and Isaac Althoff, Mitch Vavra, Landon Withrow, Austin Reining. Standing: Tony Wiener, Luke Trefitz, Tyler Stoll, Coach Mike Stoll, Dawson Johnson, Logan VanWinkle, Adam Spencer and Logan Megard.

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