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HEADLINE: **Game-day politicking ban put on hold** The NU regents may examine policies limiting campaign activities on campus. UNL's position

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LINCOLN -- Nebraska regents may weigh in on whether Memorial Stadium -- or for that matter an entire campus -- is the right place for political campaigning.

Regent Randy Ferlic of Omaha criticized Friday a new University of Nebraska-Lincoln policy banning campaign activity at Cornhusker football games.

"I look at this as an abridgment of the expression of free speech," Ferlic said. Ferlic said he will initiate a discussion of the issue at next Friday's regular Board of Regents meeting.

In the face of strong reactions from the two major political parties and questions by some regents, Chancellor Harvey Perlman decided Friday to delay enforcement of the policy until it can be fine-tuned.

Before the delay, politicians had been told to keep their literature, buttons and balloons away from today's season-opening game against Western Illinois.

"Our effort was to try to create a game-day environment that was focused on football, not politics," Perlman said.

But the issue goes beyond stadium politicking.

The new UNL policy, adopted by Perlman in April, has created a "public forum" area on each Lincoln campus, essentially banning political activity everywhere else.

Such campaigning areas -- commonly called "free-speech zones" -- have been met with opposition elsewhere in the country.

First Amendment advocates have contended that entire campuses should be free-speech zones.

"We hardly think it is reasonable to take what used to be acceptable at 99 percent of the public areas on a campus and restrict it to 5 percent of the campus," said David French, president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a public advocacy group in Philadelphia.

At three universities, French's group has assisted in legal challenges to such restrictions. In all three cases, he said, the universities have avoided court by making their policies less restrictive.

Still, said French, more and more campuses are limiting where campaigning and protesting can occur.

"At the major state universities in this country, such restrictions are the rule rather than the exception," French said.

Perlman said UNL's policy change is an attempt to manage the campus in an organized way.

"We are trying to manage a campus and still assure that students are engaged with the issues of the day," Perlman said.

Political campaigners have at times clogged areas where crowds are moving, Perlman said. They have been asked to move and have done so.

The new policy, Perlman said, will be changed to include restrictions on other activities, such as soliciting and passing out business-related literature. It also will spell out how the stadium can be used.

Perlman caused a minor stir in June when he denied use of the stadium for a religious event planned by Ron Brown, a former Nebraska assistant coach.

Ferlic said the regents should discuss the entire policy on political expression on campus.

The regents currently require balanced debate on campuses, a policy adopted in 1978 when anti-war activist Jane Fonda came to the Lincoln campus.

The issue gained public exposure last month when a student group planned to spend \$ 40,000 in student fee money to bring in Bush antagonist Michael Moore for a pre-election speech.

University administrators told the group that it also must hire a conservative speaker to adhere to the balanced-debate requirement.

The issue fizzled when it was discovered that Moore had a conflict on the scheduled date.

"We are trying to encourage people to become more involved in the political process and to vote," Ferlic said. "I think we should be encouraging these political discussions."

UNL's position Campaign policy: University buildings and grounds, except those buildings authorized by Board of Regents policy or areas designated as public forums, may not be used by any person to distribute campaign literature materials, or to post or display campaign signs or material in support of or opposition to (1) any candidate for any local, state or federal public office, or (2) any ballot question in a local, state or federal election. Campus areas designated as public forums: Broyhill Fountain Plaza, north side of the Nebraska Union. Sidewalk on the north side of the East Campus Union.

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