



August 14, 2008

**NU FOOTBALL
SUCCESS = BETTER
STATE ECONOMY**

We know the state doesn't need another reason to get excited about the University of Nebraska starting its 2008 football season with a 6 p.m. game against Western Michigan on Saturday, Aug. 30, but we're going to give it to you anyway.

The Platte Institute will release a report next week comparing the success of the Huskers on the football field and the per-capita personal net earnings and employment opportunities in Nebraska the following calendar year. The findings will surprise you and will give you even more reason to hope Bo Pelini's first season as the head coach is successful.

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**PLATTE
CHAT**

**JOHN STOSSEL HEADLINES INSTITUTE'S
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY CONFERENCE**

Roger Lempke, executive director of the Platte Institute for Economic Research, led a press conference this week on the steps of the State Capitol during which the line-up for the Institute's Transparency Conference was announced.

"Heightened citizen awareness from greater transparency in government has proven successful in achieving better accountability in other states. It can happen in Nebraska, too," said Lempke. "Nebraska's Unicameral legislature is an efficient form of governing. But we must never forget that it relies on citizen vigilance instead of partisanship to be successful."

The conference is scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2008 at the Nebraska Union in Lincoln. The luncheon keynote speaker will be ABCNEWS correspondent and 20/20 co-anchor John Stossel, who has received 19 Emmy Awards and is a New York Times best-selling author. Nebraska State Treasurer Shane Osborn, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Professor Charlyne Berens, PhD, author of *Power to the People* and *One House*, also will present during the conference. Another highlight of the conference will be a presentation by Platte Institute Senior Policy Analyst Nicole Barrett, JD, on the unveiling of the Institute's website [Unicameral Votes Online](#), which will give citizens an opportunity to better track happenings in the Unicameral.

To obtain a copy of the conference brochure, please click [HERE](#).

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THANK YOU.

A LOOK AT NEBRASKA SENATORS' ATTENDANCE RECORDS

*Nicole Barrett, JD
Platte Institute*

Have you ever wondered how often your state senator shows up for work? What about showing up on time? It's only natural for employees to take a sick or vacation day once in awhile. And who among us hasn't had that inevitable morning that we've abused the snooze alarm, been stuck in traffic, or just plain found ourselves running late? It happens to the best of us. Even state senators. The question is, how often?

The Platte Institute took a look at the roll call for each working day during the 2007 Legislative Session – there were 90 of them – to see how often our representatives showed up for work. We thought you might be interested in a synopsis of the results.

With near perfect attendance, first-term Senator Pete Pirsch (R, 4) was “excused until he arrived” on only one morning in 2007 – Monday, April 2nd to be exact. Pirsch resides in Omaha and has a 57-mile commute to the capitol. With a three-way tie for the second place attendance ribbon are Senators Adams (R, 24), Aguilar (R, 35), and Pahls (R, 31). Each were “excused until they arrived” on just two mornings during 2007. Of the three, term-limited Senator Aguilar has the longest commute – 92 miles from his home in Grand Island. Both Adams and Pahls were in their first term during 2007 and had a commute of just over 50 miles.

On the other end of the spectrum, term-limited Senator Pedersen (R, 39) was absent for roll call on 53% of the legislative days in 2007. He was “excused until he arrived” on 28 mornings and 3 afternoons. He was “excused” on 15 mornings and 5 afternoons. From Elkhorn, Pedersen has a 48-mile commute to the capitol.

It's important to note that these statistics do not reflect votes missed, which is arguably a more important gauge of how diligent our elected officials are about representing their constituents, or attendance at committee meetings. But it's interesting nonetheless.

Some other interesting statistics come from Senators Harms (R, 48), Avery (D, 28) and Flood (R, 19). From Scottsbluff, Senator Harms lives the furthest from the capitol with a 417-mile commute. He tied for sixth-place in the ranking being “excused until he arrived” on

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three afternoons. Senator Avery lives the closest to the capitol in the Near South Neighborhood of Lincoln only 7½ blocks away. He tied for twelfth-place being “excused until he arrived” on two mornings and three afternoons. With a 126-mile commute from Norfolk, Speaker Flood landed in the middle of the pack at #35. He was “excused until he arrived” on 11 mornings and 7 afternoons.

All of this data and more will be available on the Platte Institute’s upcoming website [Unicameral Votes Online](#). Continue to watch for details about the unveiling of this premier website at our November Transparency Conference.

www.platteinstitute.org

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