

# Voters Face Important Issues: Special Election December 12

## Conser Serves On Citizens Committee To Inform Electorate

To My Fellow Employees:

I am serving on a citizens committee which is endeavoring to bring some facts to the attention of the voters about propositions to be voted on December 12. All of them have something to do with the quality of life in our city. Some of them will affect your pocketbook and some will not.

I hope that bringing this information to you through a special section of the Westerner will be helpful to you in deciding how to vote on December 12.

The information in this section tells you exactly **where** the money will be spent and **what** it will buy. I'm sure you'll find it interesting.

Rod Conser — 741



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## The Proposals

On December 12, 1967, in a special election, the citizens of Omaha will be asked to vote on proposals which will appear on six separate ballots, as follows:

- Ballot 1 Merger of the University of Omaha with the University of Nebraska.
- Ballot 2 \$4,000,000 Police and Fire Training Bonds.
- Ballot 3 Charter Amendment Authorizing an Increase in the Tax Levy Millage to Pay for Additional Police Personnel and Equipment.
- Ballot 4 \$4,500,000 Street and Highway Bonds.
- Ballot 5 \$2,650,000 Parks and Recreation Bonds.
- Ballot 6 \$1,500,000 Sewer Bonds.

The chairman of the Citizen's Committee to inform the public about the issues has made the following statements: "Each of the improvements included in these proposals is vital to the future and prosperity of the citizens of Omaha. To obtain a favorable vote, the voter must mark the **YES** box on each ballot. The results are based on a **simple majority of those voting** on the particular proposal."

## The Effect on Your Taxes

It is important to note the effect on your taxes as follows:

1. Ballots 2, 4, 5, and 6, **will not result in any increase in taxation.** The reason is that the Bonds to be issued for these ballots will be issued when an approximately equal value of bonds already issued are retired. The city is currently retiring \$3 to \$3.5 million in bonds each year. The issue of the bonds will therefore be distributed over the next three years. Yes, this means we will keep spending our tax money at the same rate we have in recent years.
2. Ballots 1 and 3 are off setting thus causing a **net decrease in taxation by approximately one-half mill.** The reason for this is that Ballot 1 will decrease taxation by two mills and Ballot 3 will increase taxation one and one-half mills.

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT EACH BALLOT

## Merger of the University of Omaha with the University of Nebraska (BALLOT 1)

1. If approved, the University of Nebraska at Omaha will be effective July 1, 1968.
2. Lower tuition — All Nebraska residents would pay a \$15 per credit hour fee. City residents now pay \$18 and non-city residents paying \$28 per credit hour.
3. The tax levy on property within the Omaha city limits will decrease two mills.
4. The Nebraska Legislature has provided that existing programs at the University of Omaha will be maintained and appropriately developed to meet our growing needs.
5. The State Legislature has already appropriated over \$4 million for the University in the 1968-1969 fiscal year, in event the merger is approved by your vote. This amount would equate to about six mills of taxes for Omaha property owners if they were to provide the funds. \$1 million is for a much needed classroom and office building.
6. The University will receive \$625,000 in Federal funds to add three stories to a new science building.



## Police and Fire Training Bonds (BALLOT 2)

1. Police Headquarters to replace old building at 11th and Dodge streets. Built in 1921 for a 264 man police department serving a population of 192,000; the same building today houses a 500 man force and serves a population of 365,000. The building is entirely inadequate for today's law enforcement requirements. Visit it at 101 South 11th street and see for yourself.
2. Fire training facilities — The only training facilities available are a small drill tower at 30th and Hanover built in 1931 now in a residential area with insufficient space to maneuver modern equipment now a part of the force, and a small two-story smoke building on unpaved ground at 13th and Boyd. With these facilities, training can only be done in summer months, weather permitting. Poor drainage at both locations prevents use of large volumes of water. Our fire problems today are more complex because of the use of plastics, exotic chemicals, windowless buildings, etc., and modern fire equipment used to combat these fires.
3. How well firemen are trained has a partial effect on your fire insurance rates. The proposed training school facilities and year round training will enable the Fire Division to comply with the specifications for a modern fire department laid down by the American Insurance Association.

## Charter Amendment Additional Police Personnel and Equipment (BALLOT 3)

1. A majority YES vote will amend Omaha's Home Rule Charter to authorize the City Council to increase the appropriation for police personnel and equipment approximately \$1 million annually and to change the tax mill levy limit from sixteen mills to seventeen and one-half mills.
2. The 1966 F.B.I. Uniform Crime Report indicated that in cities over 250,000 population there were 2.7 police department employees per 1,000 population. In Omaha there were 1.4 police department employees per 1,000 population in 1966. Adding 100 policemen to the force would bring the force size to 630; a ratio of 1.7 police department employees per 1,000 population. The police department estimates that 100 men is the maximum number that could be recruited and effectively trained in 1968. The records of the Omaha Police Division for 1966 show a 66% increase in serious crimes over 1960.

The following comments of the Omaha Public Safety Director, Mr. L. K. Smith, are pertinent to the subject:

"An incomprehensible picture has emerged of more and more crime in ever larger cities; police forces, insufficient in size, over-extended and spread thin, attempting to cope with a multitude of serious problems, with little, if any, proportionate increase of police personnel over the past seven years.

"When this coupled with the fact of greater sophistication in techniques of the criminal and the necessity of achieving a balance between individual rights of the citizens and the right of society to safety, peace, and order, it is abundantly clear why police professionalization and substantially larger numbers of police officers are essential.

"New laws are enacted and existing laws reinterpreted, and the police must constantly adjust to the changing needs of a changing society.

"An inevitable result of manpower deficiency is the lack of crime and accident prevention through a preventive patrol and a continuing in-service training program. Police assignments accumulate and priorities must be assigned on the emergency nature of the occurrence. The response to calls for assistance is slowed and public confidence and support of the police force deteriorates."

## Street and Highway Bonds (BALLOT 4)

Passage of this ballot will enable Omaha to obtain substantial State and Federal matching funds to provide for street and freeway construction programs in all parts of the City.

The planned projects are:

**Abbot Drive** — from Florence Boulevard and Read Street to 20th Street East and Carter Boulevard.

**Ames Avenue** — from 52nd to 40th Street construction to four lanes. This will extend the recently completed 72nd to 52nd Street projects on to 40th which will provide four lanes all the way to Florence Boulevard.

**Jackson** — from 15th to 17th Street.

**Pacific** — from 74th to 96th right-of-way acquisition for four lane construction. A sanitary and improvement district is now preparing to construct a four lane roadway from 96th Street to Interstate 680 in 1969.

**60th** — construction from North West Radial to Ames Avenue.

**84th** — construction from Interstate 80 to West Center Road for four lane roadway.

**28th and Dodge** — interchange to provide for construction of the connection of Interstate 480 interchange with the North Freeway and West Freeway.

**North Freeway** — construction from California Street to Hamilton Street.

**West Freeway** — construction from 30th to 31st Streets.

**Miscellaneous Street Improvements** — include intersection widening, pedestrian overpasses and a variety of small constructions on major streets to provide temporary improvement in traffic movement and traffic safety until major construction projects can be completed.

## \$2,650,000 Parks and Recreation Bonds (BALLOT 5)

This bond issue provides for more recreation facilities for all areas of Omaha. It anticipates acquisition and development of parks and recreational facilities to benefit Omahans in 100 locations throughout the City.

These funds will give the people of Omaha \$2 of purchasing power for every dollar invested because the Federal Government will add a dollar for every dollar obtained from this bond issue.

The proposed park and recreational improvements provided by these Bond Funds are:

1. A major softball field in Benson Park.
2. Lighted baseball field in Fontenelle Park.
3. Development of recreation facilities on school grounds at 30 schools.
4. Acquisition and development of 50th and "C" park and playground in South Omaha (50% matching funds).
5. Development of Dodge Park — North Omaha, including construction of roads, installation of utilities, excavation of a 25 acre lake, development of picnic grounds, ball field development and bridle trail development. This is a major step in the development of a family park and recreation area.
6. Rebuilding of Hanscom Park Greenhouse — Present greenhouse is in need of major improvements.
7. Purchase of park lands throughout the City with Federal-State matching funds.
8. Construction of pavilion-type outdoor artificial ice skating rink — West Omaha — A community-wide facility.
9. Construction of Community Centers at 37th and "P" — Christie Heights and one other site to be selected.
10. Tennis court construction at Spring Lake Park, Roberts Park, Kountze Park, Pipal Park, and resurfacing of concrete courts at Dewey and Hanscom Parks.
11. Development of new parks at — 84th and Grover (Conoco Park), 95th and Center (West Center Park) and 105th and Hascall (Prairie Lane Park); and improvements for family use at approximately 25 of our present parks throughout the City.
12. 3 new swimming pools — A 50 meter pool at Hitchcock Park in South Omaha, and pools in the Near North Area and in West Omaha.
13. Golf course improvements at Miller, Elmwood, Fontenelle and Spring Lake Parks. Includes water system and improved tees and greens at Elmwood, new greens and general improvements at Miller, Fontenelle and Spring Lake Park. Improving parking facilities at Benson Park.
14. Construction of City-wide Garden Center available to all citizens at a location to be selected.

This is the first major park acquisition, improvement and development program for Omaha in many years.

## \$1,500,000 Sewer Bonds (BALLOT 6)

These bonds will finance storm and flood relief sewer programs which were classified as urgent as long ago as 1952.

The 1968 sewer program would benefit all areas of the city, eliminating chronic backup problems, and basement and street flooding. These sewer projects are included in the \$1,500,000 1968 program:

**17th and Ames Avenue** — flood relief sewer for an area generally bounded by 16th Street, 20th Street, Ames Avenue, and Fort Street.

**26th and "Y" Street** — to 30th Street and Upland Parkway flood relief sewer.

**Fort Street** — flood relief sewer, 24th to 27th Streets.

**Storm sewer east of 90th Street** — between Blondo and Cass. Without sewers, streets in this area cannot be paved.

**Deer Park Boulevard** — I 80 area sewers. A sanitary and storm sewer has been constructed from Deer Park Boulevard to the Missouri River, and will be connected to existing sanitary sewers as well as new sanitary sewers after the storm and sanitary sewers are separated. This will be the first major sewer separation completed in Omaha. The city share is estimated at less than 50% of the cost.

**Storm sewers** — for paving and flood control. For work in advance of special assessment street construction.