**For Release Wednesday, March 8, 2023**

**Capitol View**

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**Senator’s Filibuster Antics Hurting Legislature’s Image**

It has been 35 years since members of the Nebraska Legislature had a pay raise and 17 years since term limits took effect.

If lawmakers are wondering why, they simply need to check the actions of some of their colleagues. Omaha Senator Machaela Cavanaugh told fellow senators and a TV audience she was "going to be mean" because a fellow Omaha senator introduced a bill (restricting transgender surgery) she doesn't like.

But it’s not just the one anti-transgender bill she doesn't like, she's going to oppose every one of that senator's proposals. No, wait a minute, now she says she’s going to oppose every bill that comes up. The filibuster queen.

How juvenile. Act like an adult. If you don't like a bill, gather information supporting your case and share it through proper channels outlined in the rules of the Legislature.

Recently, Omaha Senator Meghan Hunt proposed an amendment that would prohibit Nebraska kids from going to church camp. She said she’d add it to a controversial bill she didn’t like. That move received national attention.

We’ve seen your giggles and your pats on the back during floor debate senators. You’re really going to show somebody what you’re made of. And it’s not just the two lawmakers I have mentioned.

But, back to that pay raise and those term limits. You wonder why the public doesn't support your desire to have those increased? It’s because they see and hear and read about your petty antics. Believe me, I’ve seen my share of those over the years.

But this isn’t new territory for Senator Cavanaugh. Back in 2021, during the second week of a special session to deal with redistricting, several women of the legislature put the male-dominated Unicameral on notice. Instead of talking about redrawing maps, Machaela

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Cavanaugh gave up her office at the Capitol out of anger and her commitment to the working moms of Nebraska.

That incident stemmed from the overthrowing of the mothers’ room at the state capitol. A male staffer seemingly took over the room to make it his own office. The former mothers’ room, a quiet and private space, consisted of four chairs for soon-to-be and breastfeeding moms.

“It is devastating, disappointing, and disheartening. Pro-life state, my butt, if you can’t support working mothers in this building. Man, it’s like talking out of both sides of your mouth,” Cavanaugh said.

Recently, Cavanaugh said of the bill she despises, “If LB574 gets an early floor debate and moves forward, it will be very painful for this body. And if people are like, ‘Is she threatening us?’ Let me be clear: Yes I am.”

Taking cues from the Ernie Chambers playbook, Cavanaugh is filibustering a bill that has the same sponsor as the one she hates. Ernie would often attack a bill on the agenda that was up for debate before the bill he disliked. But certainly not every bill.

We’ll see how long this current Cavanaugh tactic lasts. Lincoln Senator Danielle Conrad suggested just skipping over the current bill.

“We don’t need to dig in here. This is not going to set some sort of terrible precedent. This is commonplace in our body to say, ‘We’ve hit a roadblock,’” she said. “This gives us a chance to remove the roadblocks — let other business proceed.”

Cavanaugh agreed to the idea. But senators voted against the compromise, 32-10.

At one point, Rules Committee Chairman Sen. Steve Erdman of Bayard said he was ready to file a motion to adjourn sine die which would end the session for good. That would also leave the state without a budget and pass over a number of measures favored by the Governor.

But Cavanaugh said she’s not done yet.

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“Take your names off that piece of poop LB574. Talk to the speaker — demand good governance. Be better. Be who the children of Nebraska deserve because they do not deserve this,” she said.

I appreciate people who are passionate about their work, especially if they’re rational. I can’t begin to understand what motivates the senator, but I do have some timely advice from the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg.

“Fight for the things you care about but do it in a way that will lead others to join you,” she said.

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*J.L. Schmidt has been covering Nebraska government and politics since 1979. He has been a registered Independent for more than 20 years*.