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OTOC leaders to rally opposition to Initiative 424

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Omaha Together One Community leaders will seek to rally and mobilize opposition to Initiative 424, a proposal to ban race- and gender-based affirmative action in Nebraska, when the organization has its fall convention Sunday.

OTOC leaders will argue against the ballot initiative to amend the Nebraska Constitution and ask the expected assembly of 150 people attending to distribute fliers arguing against Initiative 424.

"OTOC has always been interested in diversity and doing whatever we can to encourage diversity," said Carol Beaty, an OTOC leader and member of First United Methodist Church in Omaha. "Clearly this initia-

On Omaha.com

Find links to more information about OTOC and Initiative 424.

tive is going to have a negative impact on diversity."

Speakers at the meeting will focus on what Beaty said would be unintended consequences of adopting the initiative.

Also on the convention agenda are discussions on reducing Omaha street violence and a report card on a survey of candidates for the Learning Community Coordinating Council. The meeting is scheduled for 3 p.m. Sunday at Omaha Public Schools headquarters, 3215 Cuming St. in Omaha.

The membership of the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, which describes itself as

multi-ethnic and interfaith, comprises about 30 congregations and other institutions from around metropolitan Omaha.

Beaty said OTOC leaders' stand against Initiative 424 generally reflects members' views.

"If people just think they don't like affirmative action, so they'll vote for (the initiative), they will be missing the point," she said. "The minimal effect is on affirmative action."

Noting that the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce is among groups opposing the initiative, Beaty said it would hurt the local economy by harming Nebraska's ability to recruit businesses that value diversity. She said it would make it harder to fill such labor market needs as nurses and to address student achievement gaps. And it would

lead to costly legal challenges, Beaty said.

OTOC has printed 3,000 fliers making those points and others, and listing opponents of the initiative. Leaders plan to take the case to voters in a door-to-door walk next Saturday.

The director of the Nebraska Civil Rights Initiative, Doug Tietz, called the arguments "the same rhetoric we've heard for the last year and a half."

He said the initiative is aimed at government, not private businesses. He said similar measures that have passed in California and other states have not hurt those states' business recruitment efforts, nor have they halted programs to attract women to science careers.

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