

THE NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE'S
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UPDATE

New children's services department proposed

A bill that would create a new state agency responsible for all child welfare programs in Nebraska was considered by the Health and Human Services Committee Feb. 1.

LB821, sponsored by the committee, would create a 26-member commission charged with creating a statewide strategic plan to reform child welfare programs and services in Nebraska. The Nebraska Children's Commission would comprise representatives of the three branches of state government and members of the general public including:

- guardians ad litem;
- prosecuting attorneys;
- foster and biological parents;
- children's services providers;
- child advocacy organizations;
- foster care review board members;

- court-appointed special advocate volunteers; and
- youth currently or previously in foster care.

Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell, who introduced the bill on behalf of the committee, said children currently are

being served by a fragmented system that is dysfunctional and difficult to navigate. The result, she said, is that many vulnerable children's needs are not being met.

"We need a strategic plan," Camp-

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The Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee.

Funds sought for University research, nursing facilities

In October, the state Economic Forecasting Advisory Board predicted tax revenues would continue to grow into 2013, improving the state's general fund by nearly \$113 million.

In response to the anticipated growth, three bills were introduced to the Legislature's Appropriations Committee Feb. 2 that would appropriate one-time general fund transfers to the University of Nebraska to expand its facilities.

LB1089, introduced by Omaha Sen. John Nelson, would appropriate \$50 million for the construction of a new cancer research facility at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC).

Nelson called the proposal a "dynamic opportunity" to

invest in Nebraska with a public and private partnership that would create 1,200 new jobs and nearly \$100 million in salaries and benefits. Furthermore, he said, it creates important opportunities for collaboration that would benefit cancer patients in need of new and innovative treatments.

LB1055, introduced by Kearney Sen. Galen Hadley, would appropriate \$19 million for the construction of a new facility for the Kearney Division of UNMC's College of Nursing and the School of Allied Health Professions.

Hadley said 74 Nebraska counties have fewer nurses than the national standards. Students who are educated in rural Nebraska are much more likely to stay in rural

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New children's services department proposed

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bell said.

Under the bill, the commission would be required to collaborate with the Health and Human Services Committee and the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to prepare legislation for introduction in 2013 to create the state Department of Children's Services (DCS).

The DCS would be responsible for all child welfare service programs in Nebraska including behavioral health, developmental disabilities, public health and Medicaid as those programs apply to children. The department also would assume responsibility for duties currently assigned to the Office of Juvenile Services and the DHHS division of children and family services.

In addition, the bill would require the department's CEO to have broad experience with child welfare reform in complex systems and specialized skills in financial oversight and information management.

The department would begin providing services on July 1, 2013.

Campbell said the committee's study of child welfare reform in Nebraska made clear that the state needs to provide integrated, solution-based

interventions using evidence-based programs and practices.

"We continue to look for how all of these component pieces fit together to reach that objective," she said.

Carolyn Rooker, executive director of Voices for Children in Nebraska, testified in support of the bill, saying it would provide a strong base for reforming service provision to the state's children. The commission would be a mechanism to monitor the state's existing array of services and identify gaps, she said.

"It will require the collaboration and cooperation of all of those who have the power to change and impact the system," Rooker said.

Jennifer Carter of Nebraska Ap-pleseed also supported the proposal.

The bill would help solve existing problems of poor coordination, service gaps and cost shifting, Carter said, adding that it was especially important to include a broad range of stakeholders on the commission.

Adoptive parent Casie Lanning spoke in favor of the bill, saying she had been shuffled between divisions at DHHS and remains frustrated in her efforts to obtain services for her adoptive son.

"I think my story shows why there is

a need for a separate agency to address the needs of children," she said.

Kerry Winterer, DHHS chief executive officer, testified in opposition to LB821, particularly the bill's mandate to create a separate department for children's services.

Winterer said the commission should be allowed to study the issues and offer the best solution, rather than requiring them at the outset to implement a particular solution. He suggested that "less dramatic" alternatives be considered, including developing a coordinator position within DHHS to focus on children's services within each existing division.

A new agency would result in fragmentation of services, Winterer said, noting that a child's eligibility for many existing programs is determined by family income. In addition, he said, a clear line of demarcation does not exist between programs that serve children and those that serve other family members.

"Many of the issues that impact children involve the entire family and support system," he said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill. ■

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Funds sought for University research, nursing facilities

(continued from front page)

areas after college, he said, so collaborating with UNMC to create a Kearney Division would help address the nursing shortage in rural areas throughout the state.

LB1065, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Tony Fulton, would appropriate \$17 million for the construction of a new facility for the Lincoln Division of UNMC's College of Nursing.

Fulton said the state faces a nursing shortage of nearly 4,000 nurses by the year 2020. Despite that, Fulton said, UNMC turns away 60 percent of its nursing applicants due to a lack of space and sufficient resources.

"If [the Legislature] neglects to fund this, we need to have a good reason for not doing so," Fulton said.

Proponents of the bills agreed that the state's nursing shortage and increasing aging population must be addressed by expanding these facilities to bring more health care workers into the state and to keep younger generations in rural areas.

J.B. Milliken, president of the University of Nebraska, testified in support of the bills, saying health care issues will arise if the state "falls short" of providing these professions. Raising private funds for nursing facilities is difficult, he said, so without the state's commitment for funding they would be difficult to accomplish.

"We became aware of nursing shortages over recent years and have not been able to address that in past years because of the state's budget shortfall," Milliken said. "[These bills] provide a tremendous opportunity to meet some critically important needs in the state."

Kenneth Cowan, professor at UNMC Eppley Cancer Center in Omaha, testified in support of LB1089, saying a new cancer research tower would bring world-class scientists to Nebraska. This could potentially make UNMC Eppley one of only 40 NCI Designated Cancer Centers in the nation and would increase research funding, he said.

Jeff Shelton, CEO of Harlan County Health System in Alma, testified in support of LB1055, saying students from rural areas who are educated in urban areas are 70 percent less likely to return to rural communities to work. The ability to fill vacated positions in rural health care facilities is becoming nearly impossible because rural communities are losing highly skilled young adults, he said.

Nicole deWit, UNMC nursing student in Lincoln, testified in support of LB1065, saying conditions are crowded at the university's current nursing facility in Lincoln. These conditions create an environment that students want to "escape" and will go off campus to work, she said, so their quality of education is affected.

"I want to advocate for future nursing students so they do not encounter the same issues," she said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bills. ■

**"If [the Legislature] neglects to fund this, we need to have a good reason for not doing so."
-- Sen. Tony Fulton**

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MEET THE SENATOR

Seiler positive about the past and future

After serving in the military, the Nebraska National Guard and on numerous boards, Sen. Les Seiler is no stranger to public service.

But when asked who his political role model is, Sen. Seiler responded without hesitation: “Dennis Utter.” He tells a story as an illustration:

In 2008, Seiler—an attorney—decided he wanted to take the next step in his life and become a state senator. So Seiler said his first step was to seek the help of his good friend, Dennis Utter.

As it turns out, Seiler said with a smile, Utter also had decided to run for the legislative seat and was seeking out help with his campaign.

Seiler said he returned to the office and broke the news to his law firm partner. “I am not running against Utter,”

he told him.

Utter went on to win election and served in the Legislature three years. He died Dec. 27, 2011 due to health complications.

Seiler said Utter’s death was “a tremendous loss” for the state and he will serve with “the same diligence, determination, and responsibility” as Utter did.

Having joined the Legislature after session was underway, Seiler said he is not afraid to ask questions of his peers.

“I find the legislators very helpful,” he said. “They are more than happy to give me their advice, and I do appreciate that.”

But the warm welcome he has received in the State Capitol is not the only thing Seiler is grateful for.

“I’ve done almost everything I have ever wanted to do, from hunting and fishing to traveling with friends,” he said. “Just about everything I have ever thought about doing, I have had the opportunity to.”

And because of that, Seiler said he has no regrets.

“I wouldn’t change anything in my life, to the woman I have married to the kids I have raised,” he said.

Seiler has been married to his wife Joann for 46 years and they have three children: Stephanie, Gregory and Bradley.

Before attending law school at the University of Nebraska, Seiler graduated from Wayne State College with a minor in education. He taught economics at Omaha Central High School, where he gained significant exposure to the school system.

“I believe that education is the future of our district and state,” he said. “There is no second chance, so we need to get it right.”

The experience will serve him well as the newest addition to the Legislature’s Education Committee. Seiler also sits on the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. ■



Sen. Seiler (left) talks with Sen. Bob Krist in the George W. Norris Legislative Chamber.

Agriculture

Commercial breeding bill advances

A bill that would implement stronger restrictions on commercial dog breeders advanced from general file Feb. 1.

LB427, introduced by Bellevue Sen. Abbie Cornett, originally would have created an outstanding breeder designation.

“We are doing this so animals can live healthier lives and people can have healthier pets,” Cornett said, acknowledging that many breeders in the state already do a good job.

An Agriculture Committee amendment, adopted 38-0, replaces the original bill and would establish new licensure requirements that a breeder:

- groom dogs to ensure very little of their coats are matted;
- maintain individual animal health records;
- publish an updated facility plan annually;
- provide daily exercise and socialization opportunities;
- offer an exercise area at least three times the size of the primary living area;
- identify all animals with a microchip;
- provide sanitary flooring; and
- has a veterinarian conduct a hands-on physical and dental exam once every three years.

A breeder meeting these benchmarks would be listed on the department’s website as an outstanding breeder and would receive a certificate indicating that designation.

Breeders would be required to report serious injuries or medical conditions to

veterinarians and would be prohibited from performing surgeries on animals.

Finally, the state Department of Agriculture could deny licensure to any breeder who has had his or her license revoked or has been accused of animal cruelty in another state.

An amendment introduced by Holdrege Sen. Tom Carlson, adopted 37-0, establishes an appeal process for breeders whose license has been revoked due to animal cruelty or neglect allegations. The amendment would temporarily exempt nursing or injured dogs from the daily exercise provision.

Senators voted to advance the bill to select file on a 36-0 vote.

Updates to food and weed statutes proposed

Two bills that would make changes to state Department of Agriculture statutes were advanced from general file Feb. 2.

Under LB771, introduced by Holdrege Sen. Tom Carlson, provisions of the 2009 Food Code would be incorporated into the Nebraska Pure Food Act. Carlson said enacting the new regulations would ensure a safe food supply.

“We have the safest, best food supply in the world,” Carlson said. “We want to keep it that way.”

Provisions of the Food Code to be added to the Nebraska Pure Food Act would:

- require that the person in charge of a food establishment demonstrate knowledge of food safety risks and mitigation;
- provide a consumer advisory regarding risks of consuming raw or undercooked meat;

- establish standards for preventing food contamination by hand;
- establish time and temperature standards for cooking animal foods; and
- require that new dishwashers be equipped with automatic detergent and sanitizer dispensers.

Senators voted to advance the bill to select file on a 38-0 vote.

LB770, also introduced by Carlson, would clarify the definition of noxious weeds used in the Nebraska Seed Law.

The bill would remove the specific names of noxious weeds and instead would refer to the “seeds of noxious weeds, as noxious weeds are designated in the Noxious Weed Control Act.” Carlson said the change would limit confusion about which noxious weeds fall under the act when the list is updated.

“This allows changes to be made without each one having to be listed,” Carlson said.

Senators voted to advance LB770 to select file on a 34-0 vote.

Bill would create agricultural literacy task force

Addressing the inclusion of agriculture in current K-12 standards and curricula would be the focus of a task force proposed by a bill heard Jan. 31 by the Agriculture Committee.

LB884, introduced by Cedar Rapids Sen. Kate Sullivan, would establish the Agricultural Literacy Task Force. Sullivan said students need to have a thorough understanding of agriculture’s impact on their daily lives.

“Agriculture is much too important to our state to only be taught to a small number of students who may already be considering agricultural careers,”



Sen. Abbie Cornett



Sen. Tom Carlson



Sen. Kate Sullivan

Sullivan said.

The seven-person panel would evaluate current standards and curricula and provide a report of recommendations to the Legislature. The task force would be disbanded on December 31, 2012.

Supporters of the bill cited an increasing disconnect between producers and consumers. Ellen Hellerich, former Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom coordinator, said the availability of food in the United States has contributed to the problem.

“We pay less than 10 percent of our income on food, the lowest in the world,” Hellerich said. “Most people have no idea where their food comes from.”

Brian Halstead, representing the Nebraska Department of Education, testified in opposition, saying there is no need to create a task force. He suggested proponents of the bill work with the department during the standards revision process.

“Work with us to integrate this into our standards,” Halstead said. “Why create another task force?”

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

New restrictions proposed for reporting animal abuse

A bill that would tighten requirements for animal abuse reporting was discussed in an Agricultural Committee hearing Jan. 31.

LB915, introduced by O’Neill Sen. Tyson Larson, would shorten the window of time people could report animal abuse or cruelty to 12 hours. Larson said he wrote the bill to address the issue of animal activists who hold documentation of abuse for



Sen. Tyson Larson

days before reporting it to authorities.

“Animal activist groups routinely use images of abused animals in their fundraising materials,” Larson said. “Members of these groups are responsible for reporting these instances instead of using them for their own gain.”

A person submitting a report of animal abuse would be required to include all documentation including video, photographs or audio that is evidence of the alleged abuse. Failing to report the abuse would be a Class IV felony.

A second provision of the bill would create a crime of obtaining employment at an animal facility with the intent to disrupt the normal operations of the facility. Violations would be a Class IV felony.

Alan Peterson, representing ACLU Nebraska, testified in opposition, saying the vague wording of LB915 could lead to problems in the future.

“For someone to be charged with a major felony because they had an ‘intent to disrupt’ - without any specific definitions - is pretty dangerous,” Peterson said.

Jack Cheloha, representing the city of Omaha, testified in a neutral capacity. He said classifying the offenses as felonies would have significant consequences for law enforcement.

“It raises our protocols in terms of investigation,” Cheloha said. “It could lead to an increase in reports due to misunderstandings.”

No one testified in support of the bill and the committee took no immediate action.

Appropriations

Bill seeks funds for developmental disability waiting list

The Appropriations Committee heard testimony Jan. 30 on a bill that

seeks to fully fund community-based services for Nebraskans with developmental disabilities.

LB901, introduced by Omaha Sen. Steve Lathrop, would allocate funds for services for individuals with developmental disabilities who were on the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) waiting list and past their date of need for such services on Nov. 14, 2011.



Sen. Steve Lathrop

Lathrop explained that the list is, in part, a means for DHHS to plan for future service needs. An individual is placed on the list with an anticipated date of need for services, he said, usually when he or she graduates from high school.

Approximately 2,600 people currently are on the waiting list, Lathrop said, and over 1,700 of them are past their date of need for services. The gap is the result of inadequate funding, he said.

In 2009, the Legislature appropriated \$15 million to address the problem, Lathrop said, and an additional 900 people are receiving services as a result.

“The waiting list would now be around 3,500 if funding had not been provided in 2009,” he said. “We need to move forward and follow through on the commitment made by the Nebraska Legislature.”

Marla Fischer-Lempke, executive director of the Arc of Nebraska, testified in support of the bill, saying Nebraskans with developmental disabilities have a right to a good quality of life.

“A significant number of Nebraskans have been waiting far too long for services which support those rights,” she said.

Terry Kruse, whose son was a resident of the Beatrice State Developmental Center, also testified

in support of the bill. He said the state's failure to fund services for the developmentally disabled in their communities forces families to consider institutional placements.

"You have families in this state that are making critical decisions about placement," said. "To come to that decision is heart-wrenching for a parent."

Don Wesely, testifying on behalf of the Nebraska Association of Service Providers, also supported LB901.

He said the waiting list was not an issue in the past because lawmakers and administrators agreed that forcing the developmentally disabled to wait for services was "immoral." In the 1990s, he said, only children indicating a need for services in the future were on the list.

Returning the waiting list to its original purpose would require a long-term funding commitment from the Legislature, Wesley said.

"This is an ongoing expense," he said. "You've got to have a long-range view."

No one testified in opposition and the committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Bill would expand agricultural research facilities

The Appropriation's Committee heard testimony on a bill that would expand the University of Nebraska's agricultural research facilities Feb. 2.

LB1066, introduced by North Platte Sen. Tom Hansen, would appropriate \$5 million for the planning and design of a new veterinary diagnostic laboratory facility for the Veterinary Diagnostic Center at the University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.



Sen. Tom Hansen

Hansen said many of the state's diagnostic labs were shut down due to budget cuts and the only remaining lab is facing issues with accreditation. Many producers throughout the state heavily rely on the lab to care for their livestock, he said.

Tanya Storer, a member of Nebraska Farm Bureau, testified in support of LB1066, saying Nebraska ranks number one in the production of commercial red meat. A new facility is needed to assist the state Department of Agriculture in disease surveillance, she said.

"If our livestock industry were to experience a disease outbreak and a rapid response was hampered, it could be devastating to the state and the agricultural industry," Storer said.

Kristen Hassebrook, member of the board of directors for the Nebraska Cattlemen, also testified in support of LB1066, saying that many of Nebraska's animal products are exported to other countries. Much of the regulatory testing for those exports is done at the diagnostic center, Hassebrook said, so there is a lot of revenue at stake.

Lee Simmons, chairman of the Omaha Zoo Foundation, testified in support of the bill, saying Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo relies heavily on the expert advice and rapid response time from the diagnostic center.

"No zoo or humane society can afford the type of expertise that we get from the diagnostic laboratory," Simmons said. "This is really critical for us."

No opposing testimony was given on the bill.

Scott Taylor, assistant division administrator for Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, provided neutral testimony on LB1066. He said having a diagnostic lab is important for the state's wildlife surveillance programs.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Financial literacy bill advances

Senators gave first-round approval Feb. 3 to a bill aimed at increasing financial literacy among Nebraska youth.

LB269, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Danielle Conrad, would increase licensing fees for delayed deposit service providers, also known as payday lenders. Under the bill, renewal fees would increase from \$150 to \$500 for a main office location and from \$100 to \$500 for each branch office location.



Sen. Danielle Conrad

The bill also would create the Financial Literacy Fund to receive funds from the fee increase, which would be used to provide financial literacy education to K-12 students in Nebraska.

A Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee amendment, adopted 28-0, would move administration of the fund from the state Department of Insurance to the University of Nebraska. The amendment also specified that only the increased portion of the licensing fees would be diverted to the fund rather than the entire fee.

Conrad said the bill represents a compromise between consumer advocates and the financial services industry on the often contentious issue of payday lenders. She said the bill would help Nebraska's youth learn to make responsible financial decisions.

Omaha Sen. Beau McCoy supported the bill, saying it had broad support from those interested in the payday lending issue.

"We've never really hit upon some-

thing that could be done to address this issue in a positive manner that the two sides ... could agree upon," he said.

The bill advanced to select file on a 30-0 vote.

Additional deposit placement services proposed

A bill designed to authorize state and local political subdivisions use of deposit placement services advanced to select file Feb. 1.

Boys Town Sen. Rich Pahls, sponsor of LB836, said current law allows state and local political subdivisions to invest in certificates of deposit and time deposits through the Certificate of



Sen. Rich Pahls

Deposit Account Registry Service (CDARS) program or similar programs.

Under the bill, state and political subdivisions would be allowed to use additional programs to redeposit public funds invested in an interest-bearing money market deposit account at multiple insured institutions in amounts up to the FDIC deposit insurance coverage limit.

"The mechanism stays the same," Pahls said. "We are only being asked to authorize an additional investment vehicle."

Following adoption of a technical amendment offered by the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee, LB836 advanced to select file on a 31-0 vote.

Education

Community college funding bill advances

A bill that would establish a new funding formula for state aid to

community colleges advanced from general file Jan. 30.

LB946, introduced by York Sen. Greg Adams, would establish a formula for appropriating funds to the state's community colleges. Adams said the formula proposal was the result of the hard work and determination of all six community colleges.



Sen. Greg Adams

"This is literally the culmination of three years of hard work to find a compromise," Adams said. "In the final analysis, we arrived at this proposal."

Funds would be distributed based on a number of factors under the bill. The initial amount of appropriated state aid - up to \$87.8 million - would be allocated based on the proportionate share of aid received by each community college for fiscal year 2012-13.

Funds in excess of the \$87.8 million - up to \$500,000 - would be appropriated to the Nebraska Community College Student Performance and Occupational Education Grant Fund. The six schools could apply for any portion of that money. An appointed committee would determine how that money would be allocated.

Any funds remaining after the first two allocations have been made would be distributed as follows:

- 25 percent divided equally among the six community colleges;
- 45 percent based on each school's average full-time enrollment numbers; and
- 30 percent based on each college's average reimbursable educational units.

Beginning in FY2013-14, community colleges also would be granted aggregate levy authority of 11.25 cents per \$100 of taxable valuation.

Norfolk Sen. Mike Flood sup-

ported the bill, saying it would enable community colleges to focus on doing what they do best.

"Community colleges are providing opportunities that make real differences in the lives of Nebraska families," he said.

Senators advanced the bill on a 40-1 vote.

Bill would extend compulsory school attendance

Public school students would be legally required to remain in school until age 18 under a bill discussed in an Education Committee hearing Jan. 30.

Currently, a student can unenroll from high school at age 16 with the notarized consent of a parent or guardian. LB996, introduced by Lexington Sen. John Wightman, would extend the requirement by two years.



Sen. John Wightman

Wightman said allowing students to drop out of high school early is an obsolete mechanism that is no longer needed.

"Perhaps allowing a 16-year-old to drop out of school was acceptable 50 years ago when we had a more agrarian society," Wightman said. "However, the era where a high school dropout can earn a living wage is no more."

The provisions of the bill would apply only to students enrolled in public schools. Students who earn a high school diploma before turning 18 also would be exempt.

Chad Denker, Seward High School principal, supported the bill. He said the bill would help schools fulfill their mission.

"Schools want students to receive a high school diploma," he said. "We understand the number of doors that

opens for them.”

Melanie Williams-Smotherman, Family Advocacy Movement executive director, testified in opposition saying the bill was simply another example of the Legislature unnecessarily intervening in families’ private business.

“Whenever our Legislature creates more laws that strip parents of autonomy, we oppose them,” she said. “We respect the rights of parents to raise their own children.”

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Executive Board

Measures would extend term limits, define one-half term

The Legislature’s Executive Board heard testimony Feb. 1 on two proposed constitutional changes that would be placed on the November 2012 general election ballot.

LR358CA, introduced by Holdrege Sen. Tom Carlson, would extend the current limit of two consecutive four-year terms for state senators to three consecutive four-year terms.



Sen. Tom Carlson

Since term limits were enacted in 2000, Carlson said, there has been a large turnover of state senators. Term limits can be a good thing, he said, but a lack of experience could cause legislators to become too reliant on the executive branch and lobbyists for information.

“I am convinced that the people of Nebraska would be better served by allowing senators to serve three consecutive terms,” Carlson said.

Ron Sedlacek, representing the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce, testified in support of the resolution.

“[The chamber] believes term limits

should be repealed,” Sedlacek said. “But we would support this [measure] because a longer limit is a step in the right direction.”

No opposing testimony was given.

LR372CA, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Tony Fulton, would define “one-half of a term” as service in the Legislature from the first day of a 90-day session until the first day of the next 90-day session.

Fulton was appointed to serve in the Legislature in 2007 to replace Sen. Mike Foley halfway through Foley’s term. After receiving two different interpretations of “one-half of a term” from the secretary of state and the state attorney general’s office, Fulton said he was unsure whether he could serve another term in the Legislature.

“My experience has informed me of the need to provide clarity for Nebraskans going forward,” Fulton said.

Assistant Attorney General Dale Comer testified in support of the bill, saying one calculation had defined the length of term based on calendar years and the other calculation was based on the start date of one legislative session to another.

“Ultimately, defining this in the constitution resolves the problem and it will not have to be litigated down the road,” he said.

No opposing testimony was given on LR372CA and the board took no immediate action on either proposal.

Bill would establish career academies

A bill that would allow school districts to establish career academies for students in grades seven through 12 was discussed in an Education Committee hearing Jan. 30.

LB1144, introduced by Omaha Sen. Brad Ashford, would allow school districts to partner with community colleges or educational service units to provide career-focused academies. Ashford

said these academies would provide an alternative educational environment for students who are unsuccessful in the traditional classroom.



Sen. Brad Ashford

“A young person won’t be happy where they are if they’re not being stimulated,” Ashford said. “A focus school gives them an identity and a peer group that encourages success.”

Students seeking a career-focused education would be recruited to attend the academies. The curriculum provided at career academies would focus on mathematics, science and technology in addition to job and skills training.

Ashford said a key component of the bill would encourage career academies to establish partnerships with local businesses to provide internships.

Union Pacific public relations director Brenda Mainwaring testified in support, saying the bill would help satisfy a desperate need for skilled workers.

“This year we will fill 500 jobs,” Mainwaring said. “Over half of those will not require a college degree.”

Kent Rogert, representing the Omaha Learning Community, testified in a neutral capacity. He said the bill would address an important need and asked that it receive the necessary financial support.

“If you’re going to implement a program like this, make sure it is properly funded,” Rogert said.

No one testified in opposition to the bill and the committee took no immediate action.

General Affairs

Bill would decrease required time limit between Keno games

The General Affairs Committee

heard testimony Jan. 30 on a bill that would amend the five-minute time limit required between Keno games.

LB1067, introduced by Wilber Sen. Russ Karpisek, would allow a county, city or village conducting a keno lottery to designate a time limit between games of less than five minutes, but not less than one minute.



Sen. Russ Karpisek

Shortening the amount of time between keno games would give municipalities an opportunity to increase their revenue from the games, Karpisek said.

Omaha City Council President Thomas Mulligan testified in support of the bill.

“The equality that the bill could provide to local communities, if they so chose, is to put keno operations on the same playing field as other gambling operations in Nebraska,” Mulligan said.

Gary Krumland, assistant director of the Nebraska League of Municipalities, also testified in support of the bill.

He said 26 percent of Nebraska’s cities and villages have keno games, and the bill would give those communities local control.

Dave Wimmer, a business owner and member of Gambling with the Good Life, testified in opposition to the bill, calling it “unfair” to other businesses in the state.

“I find it hard to believe that if my business was declining, [the Legislature] would try and figure out a way for me to increase my business,” Wimmer said.

Loretta Fairchild, a retired economics professor, also testified in opposition to the bill, saying the current 5-minute limit is meant to let gamblers reconnect with their surroundings and think

about their losses. Less time between games makes it harder to reflect on the consequences of gambling, she said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Measure would allow Legislature to authorize casino gaming

The General Affairs Committee heard testimony Jan. 30 on a proposed change to the Nebraska Constitution that would allow the Legislature to authorize and regulate casino gaming in Nebraska.

LR375CA, introduced by Columbus Sen. Paul Schumacher, would place a proposed constitutional amendment on the November 2012 general election ballot that would allow the Legislature to authorize and regulate any game of chance, lottery or gift enterprise.



Sen. Paul Schumacher

The amendment would authorize the Legislature to enter into a compact that would allow a bordering state to share its gaming revenue with Nebraska in proportion to its population. In exchange, the Legislature would not authorize casinos in Nebraska to be located within 60 miles of the bordering state.

Three Iowa casinos located near Nebraska’s border earn \$428 million annually, Schumacher said, and \$321 million of that revenue comes from Nebraskans who travel across the border to play casino games.

The amendment would not authorize slot machines to be located within the state, he said, but would give the Legislature the authority to do so. More importantly, Schumacher said, the change would allow the Legislature to seek another revenue source.

“This is a revenue matter more so than a gaming matter,” he said.

No proponent testimony was provided on the bill.

Al Riskowski, executive director of the Nebraska Family Council, testified in opposition to LR375CA, saying he was concerned about allowing the Legislature to regulate gaming in the state.

“Our largest contention is the fact that it takes the power from the people and puts it in the hands of the majority of the state legislature,” Riskowski said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Creation of tourism commission proposed

A bill that would create the Nebraska Tourism Commission was discussed during a Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee hearing Feb. 2.

Under LB1053, introduced by Ellsworth Sen. LeRoy Loudon, all powers and duties of the travel and tourism division of the state Department of Economic Development would be transferred to the newly formed commission. Loudon said he introduced the bill to encourage more focus on tourism.



Sen. LeRoy Loudon

“The reason I introduced this is to grant the travel and tourism division independence from the Department of Economic Development,” Loudon said. “It will allow the commission to work more closely with the tourism in-

dustry and better promote Nebraska.”

The commission would consist of one representative from each of the state’s tourism regions. Members would be appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Legislature. All current employees of the travel and tourism division would become employees of the commission.

Andy Licht, representing the Nebraska Hotel and Motel Association, testified in support of the bill, saying the change would have a positive impact on the state’s third-largest industry.

“This bill opens new horizons for tourism,” Licht said. “It could greatly enhance the stature of tourism and lodging in Nebraska.”

Catherine Lang, director of the department, testified in a neutral capacity. She asked the committee to wait for the results of an interim study on the current status of tourism in Nebraska.

“The strategic plan, presented in September, will positively impact the entire industry,” Lang said. “Let the plan finish before making any drastic changes to the current structure.”

No one testified in opposition to the bill and the committee took no immediate action.

Bill calls for government consolidation committee

Senators gave first-round approval Feb. 1 to a bill regarding the potential consolidation of government services in Douglas County.

As introduced, LB344, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Brad Ashford, would have provided a process for consolidating governmental subdivisions in counties that contain a city of the metropolitan class. Currently, Omaha is the state’s only metropolitan class city.



Sen. Brad Ashford

A Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee amendment, adopted 28-0, replaced the provisions of the bill.

As amended, LB344 would require creation of an interjurisdictional planning commission within 90 days of the bill’s passage. The commission would review and plan for the possible merger of governmental services and report their findings to the Legislature.

An amendment offered by Lincoln Sen. Bill Avery and adopted 28-0 would require that a merger plan be developed and approved by the commission by July 1, 2013.

The commission would include two members selected by the mayor of Omaha, two by the Omaha City Council, four by the Douglas County board and one by each of the other municipalities within Douglas County.

Ashford said current state law allows for such a merger and that the state has a compelling interest in encouraging the city and county to explore options for reducing redundant services and becoming more efficient.

“If we adopt that common sense approach to government we can move forward quicker and be a better partner for the rest of the state,” Ashford said. “I think we’re at a point in our history where I think we need to encourage this discussion.”

Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell supported the bill. She said Lancaster County and the city of Lincoln have a long history of joint departments, commissions and task forces that have saved taxpayers a great deal of money.

The Legislature should support efforts to encourage other local entities to explore consolidation, she said.

Sen. Paul Schumacher of Columbus also supported the bill, saying the Omaha metropolitan area should not attempt to function 40 years from now with the same governmental structures in place today.

Omaha Sen. Bob Krist expressed concern that the bill focused solely on Omaha and Douglas County. Other areas of Nebraska also contain political subdivisions that must coordinate with cities and counties regarding government services, he said.

“I would feel much better if this [bill] would include all counties in Nebraska,” Krist said. “This is not just an Omaha problem.”

The bill advanced to select file on a 30-0 vote.

Merger of state agencies proposed

The state Department of Labor would be merged with the state Department of Economic Development under a bill discussed in a Government Military and Veterans Affairs hearing Feb. 2.

Under LB971, introduced by Scottsbluff Sen. John Harms, the Department of Economic Development would absorb the Department of Labor. Harms said the proposal to merge the agencies is about efficiency, not money.



Sen. John Harms

“One of the lessons of these tough economic times is that state government cannot conduct business as usual,” Harms said. “It’s not about saving money or staff reductions, but efficiency in delivering services.”

Under the bill, all existing Department of Labor programs, employees and contracts would be moved to the Department of Economic Development. The bill does not call for any cuts in personnel or services. Current Economic Development Director Catherine Lang would continue in her position.

Lang testified in support of the bill, saying that while change can be difficult, the merger is the next logical step.

“We’ve been coordinating together for years,” Lang said. “This merger just formalizes an already existing relationship.”

Deb Cottier, representing the Nebraska Economic Developers Association, testified in opposition to the bill, saying its vague wording leaves too much open to interpretation.

“We cannot afford to jeopardize Nebraska’s standing on a proposal with no clear plan of how it will be implemented,” Cottier said.

Bruce Bohrer, executive vice president of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, testified in a neutral capacity. He said the chamber supported the bill but hoped to be involved going forward.

“We want to be involved constructively in the future,” Bohrer said. “We are very confident in the talents and leadership of Director Lang.”

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Health & Human Services

Changes to public benefit system proposed

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony Feb. 1 on a bill that would provide legislative oversight of ACCESSNebraska, the state’s public benefit management and delivery system.

LB1041, introduced by Omaha Sen. Tanya Cook, would adopt the Department of Health and Human Services Delivery Improvement and Efficiency Act. Cook said the goal of the bill is to improve the delivery of public benefits in Nebraska and relieve the current



Sen. Tanya Cook

burden on department employees.

Implementation of the ACCESS-Nebraska system has resulted in excessive wait times on phone calls, lost documents and a lack of personal contact with caseworkers, Cook said.

“One of the biggest issues before the Legislature and this committee is the need to reform the ACCESSNebraska system,” she said.

Among other provisions, LB1041 would require to the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to:

- align verification procedures across various public benefit programs;
- expand the use of federal, state and commercial databases to verify eligibility;
- collect and report data regarding access to public benefit programs and case closures;
- renew programs simultaneously and prevent closings for reasons other than ineligibility;
- coordinate public benefit renewals by using the longest eligibility period allowable under federal law;
- allow information used to determine eligibility for one program also to be used for other programs; and
- eliminate asset limits to the extent currently applied to eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Former DHHS caseworker Jim Celer testified in support of the bill, saying it would help solve many of the problems he observed with ACCESSNebraska. After the new system was implemented, Celer said, he and his coworkers spent most of their time performing paperwork tasks assigned by computer rather than connecting personally with clients.

“With ACCESSNebraska there’s no way to have that kind of connection,” Celer said.

James Goddard of Nebraska Appleseed also testified in support of LB1041, saying it would maintain the integrity of the state’s public benefit programs while making them more efficient.

DHHS’s efforts to streamline public benefit service delivery has resulted in more technology and fewer caseworkers, Goddard said. One result is a 25 percent phone call abandonment rate, he said, meaning that one in four people who call the ACCESSNebraska system hang up before having their issue resolved.

Scot Adams, DHHS interim director of children and family services, testified in opposition to LB1041, saying the department already is achieving the bill’s goals. For example, he said, individuals currently can apply for multiple benefit programs simultaneously.

“Many requirements we think are already in place and used by the department,” Adams said. “I assure you that we’re doing what we can to streamline, smooth out and make easier the application and renewal process.”

Vivianne Chaumont, director of the DHHS Medicaid division, also testified in opposition. She said changing Medicaid eligibility from six months to 12 months could result in a cost of approximately \$41 million to the state.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Bill would allow older foster youth to continue services

State wards who have aged out of the foster care system could voluntarily continue to receive services until age 21 under a bill heard Feb. 2 by the Health and Human Services Committee.

LB1150, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Amanda McGill, would allow eligible youth to



Sen. Amanda McGill

enter into a voluntary foster care agreement with the state Department of Health and Human Services for extended services, including:

- Medicaid;
- post-secondary education assistance;
- continued guardianship or adoption assistance payments;
- placement in a foster home, institution or independent living; and
- continued case management to help access additional supports.

To qualify for the program, an applicant would need to be:

- employed for at least 80 hours per month;
- enrolled in an institution that provides postsecondary or vocational education;
- completing a secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential;
- participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment; or
- incapable of doing any of the above activities due to a medical condition.

McGill said research shows that youth who continue to receive services until age 21 have improved chances of success when they transition from foster care. As a result, she said, an increasing number of states are allowing youth to retain services or return to foster care after they reach the age of majority.

Currently, youth age out of the foster care system at 19, which is the state's age of majority. McGill said the transition period from 19 to 21 can be very difficult for young people to navigate without assistance.

"Most of us were fortunate enough to have parents helping us in our early 20s," she said.

Nadia Draper testified in favor of the bill. Adopted from Russia at age 12, she entered the foster care system

at 17 and aged out at 19, she said.

Draper said she shuttled between homes, staying with friends and a youth pastor as she struggled to find stability after leaving the system. She received some monetary assistance as a former ward, she said, but would have benefitted from having a caseworker to help her make decisions.

Ashley Gustafson also supported the bill, saying she aged out of the Missouri foster care system at age 21 and benefited from the additional years of assistance.

Gustafson said she had the same caseworker throughout her time in foster care and was able to transition smoothly to adulthood as a result. After graduating from college, she moved to Nebraska and now works with former state wards, she said.

"Foster care wasn't easy," Gustafson said. "But it truly saved my life. What foster care gave me was structure, support and hope."

Sarah Forrest of Voices for Children in Nebraska also testified in favor of the bill. The adolescent brain continues developing until age 25, she said, and extending support for states wards would assist with that development. Young people leaving foster care often lack the skills necessary to successfully enter adulthood, she said.

"We know that outcomes for youth aging out can be dismal," Forrest said.

No opposition testimony was given and the committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Bill would allow education to fulfill welfare work requirement

Senators gave first-round approval Jan. 31 to a bill that would expand educational opportunities under the Welfare Reform Act.

LB507, introduced by Scottsbluff Sen. John Harms, would allow an

applicant who is 21 years old or the head of a household to meet the state's self-sufficiency requirement by making satisfactory progress in certain educational pursuits.



Sen. John Harms

Harms said current work requirements often keep young people from also pursuing an education because they lack the time to do both.

Under the bill, an applicant would qualify for benefits if he or she maintains satisfactory attendance at a secondary school, a general education development (GED) program or equivalent or participates in education directly related to employment for an average of 20 hours per week.

The bill also would make the school and work requirements for 19-year-olds the same as those for applicants 18 or younger and would classify education directly related to work as a "core" activity for a person under 24 years old who is engaged in 20 hours per week of such education.

Harms said the state's current regulations make it difficult for young parents who receive welfare benefits to get an education and achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency.

"I've always had a very strong belief that education is the surest way out of poverty," he said.

The bill also stipulates that the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) may place reasonable limits on the number of applicants who can pursue education directly related to employment if work participation rates fall below 55 percent.

Harms said states are in compliance with federal regulations if 50 percent of recipients are successfully participating in a work activity.

A Health and Human Services

Committee amendment, adopted 36-0, clarifies that DHHS would be required to carry out the bill's provisions within the limits of its annual appropriation.

The amended bill also would allow the department to suspend the new educational allowance if the state's work participation rate does not exceed the target work rate by 10 percent in any given month.

Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell, chair of the committee, said the amendment was meant to ensure that the bill's provisions would not jeopardize Nebraska's federal funding by causing the state to fall below the required 50 percent work activity participation rate.

Lexington Sen. John Wightman supported the bill, saying a high school graduate earns approximately \$250,000 more over a lifetime than someone without a diploma.

"It does become important that we see these kids get as far as they can with their education," he said.

LB507 advanced to select file 36-0.

Minimum base rate for foster payments proposed

Nebraska would adopt a minimum base rate for foster care payments under a bill heard Feb. 2 by the Health and Human Services Committee.

LB926, introduced by Fullerton Sen. Annette Dubas would require the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to develop a base rate for foster care payments by July 1, 2012. The rate would be based on the cost of allowable expenses under the federal Title IV-E program, which includes provision of food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, personal



Sen. Annette Dubas

incidentals, insurance and travel for visitation with the biological family.

The rate also would provide additional compensation for children with special needs or circumstances and would take into account the family's geographic location in the state. Payments would be made directly to foster parents.

In addition, the bill would require the department to pay the base rate to relatives providing care for the first year of placement if the relative is pursuing foster care licensure.

Dubas said a 2007 study found that Nebraska has among the lowest foster care payment rates in the nation. In addition, she said, rates vary depending on whether foster parents work with DHHS, one of the state's lead agencies or a private agency.

The state needs a consistent method for calculating payments, Dubas said, so that foster parents are able to provide for the physical needs of state wards.

"These families are often the only constant in these child's lives," she said.

Sarah Forrest of Voices for Children in Nebraska testified in support of the bill.

Over 8,000 children are in out-of-home placements each year in Nebraska, Forrest said, and the state has an obligation to make sure that their basic needs are met. She said having a consistent, adequate base pay rate would make foster care less traumatic for children by facilitating retention of quality foster parents.

Forrest also supported the bill's provision to pay relatives caring for state wards the same rate as other foster parents. Relatives often have fewer resources than traditional foster parents, she said, yet children placed with relatives experience less trauma than those placed with strangers.

Karen Authier, executive director of Nebraska Children's Home Society and vice president of the Children and

Family Coalition of Nebraska, also supported the bill. She said LB926 would improve the state's foster care system, but suggested that payments continue to be made through agencies rather than directly to foster families.

Agencies incur significant expenses for recruiting, training, supporting and licensing quality foster parents, she said, and payments should reflect the contributions agencies make to the system.

Foster parent Leigh Esau testified in support of the bill, saying it would help ensure that foster children's basic needs are met.

She said a national report indicated that foster parents should receive over \$600 a month to meet those basic needs. The average rate in Nebraska is \$226 a month according to the same study, she said, which must cover a wide range of expenses that often include extensive travel for medical appointments and visitation with a child's biological parents.

"This is what a child must have in order to have a fighting chance for success," Esau said.

Melanie Williams-Smotherman of the Family Advocacy Movement testified in opposition to the bill, saying it reinforces the state's focus on prioritizing the foster care system over keeping children with their biological families.

Funds paid to foster parents to care for children who did not need to be removed from their homes would be better-spent supporting struggling biological families, she said.

Scot Adams, interim director of DHHS's division of children and family services, testified in a neutral capacity.

Adams said the department originally had concerns about the bill's provision to make payments directly to foster parents, but did not object to the bill without that provision.

The committee took no immediate action on LB926.

Judiciary

Bill creating transfer of death deed advances

Senators advanced a bill from general file Feb. 3 that would provide an asset specific mechanism for the nonprobate transfer of land.

LB536, introduced by Lexington Sen. John Wightman, would permit individuals with interests in real property to enable the owner to pass the property to a beneficiary on the owner's death simply, directly and without probate.



Sen. John Wightman

Under the bill, the owner would identify a beneficiary who would succeed to the property upon the owner's death. During the owner's lifetime, the beneficiaries would have no interest in the property and the owner would retain full power to transfer the property or revoke the deed.

"It really is bringing real estate in line with how other investments are handled," Wightman said. "This is just another tool for a lawyer to use if someone comes in prior to death and wants to transfer their house or small amount of assets."

A Judiciary Committee amendment would require a Request for Withdrawal of Application form to be accompanied by a death certificate when a transfer of property occurs by way of a transfer on death deed, a joint tenancy deed or the expiration of a life estate.

Omaha Sen. Brad Ashford, committee chairperson, said the intent of the change was to give the counties additional notice beyond what they normally would receive for a transfer.

Omaha Sen. Burke Harr said the

amendment improved the original bill but he still had concerns.

"A transfer on death is cheap estate planning," Harr said. "This could occur by individuals who may not understand the ramifications of their actions ... and I worry we are going to end up with unintended consequences."

Norfolk Sen. Mike Flood opposed the amendment and the bill, saying he was wary of estates being transferred through processes other than a will.

A transfer on death deed is a pretty powerful instrument used to transfer an estate, Flood said, and it could allow someone to sign his or her assets away without credible witnesses.

"What you really have to protect is the person's ability to know what they are doing," he said.

Wightman agreed to discuss the concerns before select file.

The amendment was adopted 29-0 and the bill advanced from general file on a 36-0 vote.

Assaults on health care professionals discussed

Senators advanced a bill from general file Feb. 1 that would extend minimum sentences for persons convicted of assault on a health care professional.

Under LB677, introduced by Omaha Sen. Steve Lathrop, a person who is convicted of assault on a health care professional while the health care provider is engaged in his or her official duties, would serve a mandatory minimum sentence of:



Sen. Steve Lathrop

- six months imprisonment for third degree assault;
- one year imprisonment for second degree assault; and
- two years imprisonment for first degree assault.

Lathrop said health care providers work in unique environments where many patients and family members are coping with stressful issues that can cause people to become violent. More than 2,000 assaults were reported by registered nurses in 2009, he said.

"Health care providers are vulnerable to these assaults because they are in close proximity to the assailant," Lathrop said.

The Judiciary Committee offered an amendment to the bill that would require a health care professional to have been assaulted while performing their official duties at a hospital or health clinic for the mandatory minimum sentence to be applied.

The amendment also would require hospitals and health clinics to display signs informing patients of the mandatory minimum sentence for assault on health care professionals.

Fullerton Sen. Annette Dubas spoke in support of the amendment and the bill. By virtue of the oath that health practitioners take, she said, they do not have the luxury of choosing whether or not to put themselves in these types of situations.

"[Medical practitioners] are, by nature, required to put any concern for their own personal safety aside and offer the services that they are obligated to," she said.

Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell also spoke in support of the bill, saying violence has become an increasing problem for hospitals.

The state currently faces a nursing shortage, Campbell said, and in some cases nurses have indicated that they are leaving their careers due to assault injuries that they have sustained on the job.

"That, to me, is part of the reason why this bill before us is so important," she said. "We have to make these facilities a safe place for all of us to go."

Omaha Sen. Brenda Council spoke in opposition to the bill, saying it would

create different classes of individuals in health care facilities. If an aide at a clinic is a victim of such an assault, she said, this provision would not apply to them.

"I quite frankly do not see the need for the bill," Council said. "If the assault rises to the level of a first degree assault, the person committing the assault would be charged regardless of whether or not the victim falls within the definition of a health care provider."

Lincoln Sen. Colby Coash opposed the amendment and the bill, saying people who are being violent will not change their behavior based on a sign about increased penalties.

"I think we will send a message to health care workers that we are protecting them, when [this bill] does nothing to protect them," Coash said. The amendment was adopted 29-3 and LB677 advanced from general file on a 34-4 vote.

Natural Resources

Changes to uranium mining permits advanced

The permit process for in-situ mining operations would be streamlined under a bill advanced from general file Feb. 1.

LB498, introduced by Ellsworth Sen. LeRoy Loudon, would establish regulations related specifically to in-situ mining, which Loudon said is not covered adequately under current regulations. In-situ mining is a method of extracting uranium deposits from underground. Oxidized groundwater is injected into boreholes and dissolves the uranium for removal.

"This is a huge economic driver in northwest Nebraska," Loudon said.

An Agriculture Committee amend-



Sen. LeRoy Loudon

ment, adopted 32-0, replaced provisions of the bill and addresses the amended permit process used for in-situ mining companies.

Currently, a permit could be amended unless it would increase daily peak withdrawal or annual volume by more than 25 percent from the amounts allowed in the original permit.

The amended bill would add an exception to this language for a permit amendment to increase the daily peak withdrawal or annual volume to levels authorized under a state Department of Environmental Quality permit.

Senators adopted a Loudon technical amendment 32-0 and advanced the bill to select file on a 33-0 vote.

Lower electricity rate proposed for new and expanding businesses

Businesses looking to move to Nebraska could receive an economic development rate on electricity under a bill discussed in a Natural Resources Committee hearing Feb. 1.

LB1043, introduced by Schuyler Sen. Chris Langemeier, would provide a five-year economic development rate to incent businesses to move to the state. Local businesses looking to expand their operations also would qualify for the new rate, he said.

Langemeier said Nebraska currently produces more electricity than can be used by its citizens. Rather than selling the excess on the open market, that electricity can be used for new businesses.

"We want to look at things that don't cost our citizens money but encourages businesses to come to Nebraska," Langemeier said. "It allows us to take out uncertainty for businesses



Sen. Chris Langemeier

looking to move."

Jane Berry, Aurora city administrator, testified in support of the bill, saying Nebraska is in a unique position to bring in new companies.

"We have the unrivaled opportunity as the only public power state to entice businesses to build here," Berry said. "This will elevate Nebraska's sophistication in economic development."

Ken Winston, representing the Nebraska Sierra Club, testified in opposition to the bill, saying it would be unfair to offer a lower rate to businesses than to residential customers.

"Is this consistent with public power's legal responsibility to provide energy at the lowest possible cost to all customers?" Winston asked. "If you're going to use incentives and lock in a rate, maybe you should lock in a rate for all customers."

LB1043 was advanced to general file on an 8-0 vote.

Revenue

Tax exemption proposed for nonprofit clinics

Nonprofit health clinics would be exempt from paying sales and use taxes under a bill advanced from general file Jan 31.

Under LB40, introduced by Kearney Sen. Galen Hadley, clinics must meet two requirements to qualify for the tax exemption. First, the clinic must be owned by one or more hospitals operating the clinic as a nonprofit. Second, the health clinic must be licensed under the Health Care Facility Licensure Act.

Hadley said the bill would resolve a long-standing issue.



Sen. Galen Hadley

"It is certainly not our intention to tax nonprofit health care," Hadley said.

Schuyler Sen. Chris Langemeier voiced his support for the bill, saying the nonprofit clinics provide an important service to many people.

"I believe this [exemption] is a priority that many Nebraskans have demonstrated they have," Langemeier said.

Boys Town Sen. Rich Pahls said he had some reservations about supporting a new tax exemption in the current economic climate.

"I know that this is an important bill in a lot of peoples' eyes," Pahls said. "We need to remember these exemptions add up."

Senators advanced the bill to select file on a 37-0 vote.

Wind energy incentive considered

Wind energy producers would be eligible for tax credits under a bill discussed in a Revenue Committee hearing Feb. 1.

Under LB1033, introduced by Bellevue Sen. Abbie Cornett, companies building wind energy farms would be eligible for sales and use tax refunds if 25 percent of their expenditures are spent in Nebraska. Cornett said the refunds are necessary to keep Nebraska competitive.

"The amount of wind electricity has tripled in Nebraska," Cornett said. "This bill puts Nebraska in a competitive position with other states and creates an economic development climate that's attractive for new businesses."

Wind energy projects totalling \$75 million or more would be eligible for:

- a 75 percent refund of sales and use taxes on property; and



Sen. Abbie Cornett

- a 25 percent refund of sales and use taxes on expenditures related to the project.

Wind energy projects less than \$75 million would be eligible for:

- a 50 percent refund of sales and use taxes on property;
- a 25 percent refund of sales and use taxes on expenditures related to the project; and
- a 25 percent refund of sales and use taxes on expenditures if the taxpayer is a Nebraska resident or business owned by at least 25 percent Nebraska residents.

Ross Knott, Petersburg State Bank president, testified in support of the bill, saying that wind energy has had a positive impact on his community.

"I've seen the tremendous economic impacts on my community," Knott said. "We've gone from barely surviving to thriving."

Chris Dibbern, representing the Nebraska Power Association, also supported the bill, saying it was necessary to bring new business to the state.

"It sends a message that the state supports renewable energy," Dibbern said. "This bill creates a greater incentive to invest and operate renewable technologies."

No one testified in opposition to the bill and the committee took no immediate action.

Transportation & Telecommunications

Bill creating license plates for special interest vehicles advances

Senators advanced a bill from general file Jan. 31 that would allow owners of collector vehicles to use a special motor vehicle interest plate.

LB216, introduced by Lincoln

Sen. Colby Coash, would create special interest license plates that would be available to car club members who own motor vehicles that are unaltered from original specifications and are collected, preserved, restored or maintained for leisure.



Sen. Colby Coash

Under the bill as introduced, one special interest license plate would be issued to a qualified applicant to be affixed to the rear of a vehicle. The additional fee for a special interest plate fee would be \$50.

Coash said special interest vehicles currently are required to have license plates on the front and rear of the vehicle. Some collector vehicles are not manufactured to display front license plates, he said, so drilling holes into the front of such a vehicle could damage its integrity and decrease its value.

A Transportation and Telecommunications Committee amendment, adopted 38-0, replaced the original provisions of the bill and would allow the state Department of Motor Vehicles to design license plates to identify special interest motor vehicles. The plates would be alphanumeric and include the words "special interest."

Under the amended bill, the special interest vehicle could be driven only on public streets and roads for occasional transportation, public displays, parades and related pleasure or hobby activities. Violations would be a Class V misdemeanor.

Boys Town Sen. Rich Pahls offered an amendment that would have allowed all vehicle owners the option to display only one license plate on any vehicle for an additional fee of \$70. Many states do not require vehicles to have two license plates, Pahls said, and Nebraska should be consistent with that trend.

Kearney Sen. Galen Hadley opposed the Pahls amendment, saying it would pertain to many more vehicles than the bill intends.

“This is a significant leap to take without having a full [committee] hearing again,” Hadley said.

Pahls later withdrew the amendment.

Senators adopted a technical amendment and advanced LB216 to select file on a 26-0 vote.

Bill would terminate passenger rail compact membership

The Transportation and Telecommunications Committee heard testimony Jan. 31 on a bill that would repeal Nebraska’s membership in the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact (MIPRC).

The compact provides opportunities for Midwestern state leaders to advocate for passenger rail improvements.

Under LB747, introduced by Kearney Sen. Galen Hadley, the state would terminate its annual \$15,000 membership.

The state joined the compact in 2001 to promote passenger rail services in the Midwest, Hadley said, but the Legislature has not appropriated funds for membership costs for at least four years. The Legislature should either pay its current dues and begin to advocate for passenger rail services or withdraw from the compact, he said.

Monty Fredrickson, director of the state Department of Roads, testified in support of the bill, saying the membership and projects associated with MIPRC can be costly for the state.

One of the proposed passenger rail



Sen. Galen Hadley

lines being considered extends from Chicago to Des Moines and through Council Bluffs, Fredrickson said, but providing services west of Des Moines into Nebraska would require the state to supply significant funding for operating subsidies.

DiAnna Schimek, Lincoln City Council member and former commission member, testified in opposition to the bill, saying it is important to have an entity in the state that is paying attention to trends in other transportation areas besides roads.

“When the original bill passed [to join the compact] the cost was \$25,000 per year, with the promise that as more states joined the compact the membership cost would go down,” Schimek said. “And that has happened.”

“I really think that for that small price it is good for us to know what is going on nationally and in other states,” she said. “It forms a solid group to plan and make the contacts that need to be made.”

Bob Kuzelka, a Lincoln resident, also testified in opposition to LB747, saying passenger rail service has not been discussed this much since the state joined the compact.

“The purpose of this bill is not to discuss cost aspects, but whether Nebraska should be concerned about passenger rails in the future,” he said. “If we are concerned, we should be involved in the compact.”

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Taxicab application process scrutinized

The Transportation and Telecommunications Committee heard testimony Jan. 31 on a bill that would amend the Public Service Commission (PSC) requirements for taxicab permits.

LB889, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Bill Avery, would exempt taxicab

carrier applicants in cities of the metropolitan or primary class from a requirement to demonstrate a present or future public convenience or necessity during the application process.

The bill also would require the PSC to set a maximum rate fare for taxicab carriers. Carriers would not be restricted from advertising, promoting, billing or charging a lesser rate for services.

Avery said problems arise when taxicab operators seeking permits must spend thousands of dollars on legal fees to prove their services would be a public convenience and necessity. Operators tend to drop out of the application process at that point, he said, which perpetuates a lack of competition for taxicab services at a time when Lincoln is “on the brink of an economic takeoff.”

To add to the frustration, Avery said, the only cab service available in Lincoln has rates that are higher than cities up to three times its size.

“I brought this bill to correct what is a rather serious problem in Lincoln with the absence of cab services,” Avery said.

Bruce Bohrer, Lincoln Chamber of Commerce executive vice president, testified in support of the bill.

“A lot of businesses have talked to us about this issue,” Bohrer said. “People that come [to Lincoln] for large events that go on for weeks are surprised that we do not have a cab service that is reliable and fairly priced.”

DiAnna Schimek, Lincoln City Council member, testified in support of the bill, saying the council has received “numerous complaints” from Lincoln residents who have been unable to rely on taxicabs.

“Lincoln’s need for taxicab services has apparently risen above the services that are currently being provided,”



Sen. Bill Avery

she said.

Jeff Altman, instructor at the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually impaired, testified in support of the bill, saying transportation is one of the biggest challenges for blind people. The commission wants blind people to be able to be employed and function in society, he said, but a lack of transportation options has made it more difficult for them to do so.

Hobert Rupe, executive director of the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission, also testified in support of LB889, saying reliable taxicab services are needed for consumer safety. The certified server training program offered by the commission encourages servers to arrange a taxicab for customers who appear over-intoxicated, he said, but servers have stated they cannot rely on taxicabs to pick up their customers.

“[The commission] believes that adequate taxicab services are a part of safely delivering alcoholic beverages,” Rupe said.

Don Bellino, manager of Cornhusker Cab in Papillion, testified in opposition to the bill.

The application process to be a Lincoln carrier was initially “cumbersome,” Bellino said, but it assures that taxicab operators are safe and financially fit. Companies that are not willing to make initial investments could be “cutting corners” and would be less safe, he said. Steve Mason, an insurance agent, also testified in opposition to the bill, saying smaller taxicab companies may not be able to maintain higher insurance limits. Any time the general public is transported by professionals there are higher standards, he said.

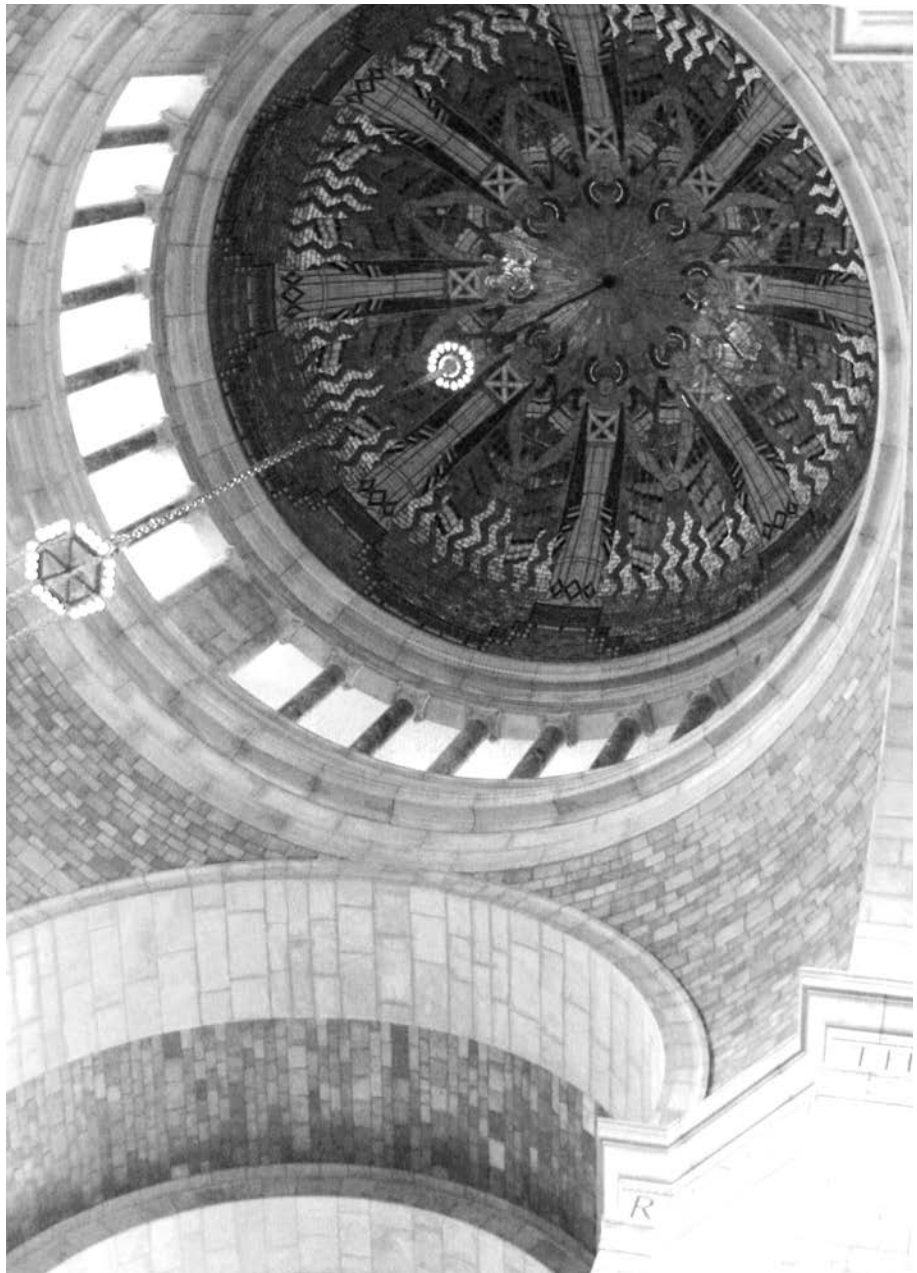
“Changing regulations could result in more cabs on the street, but with insufficient [insurance] coverage,” Mason said.

Kirby Young, owner of Capital Cab in Lincoln, testified in opposition to the bill. In May of 2011, he said, 25 workers were laid off because Lincoln did not have a great enough need for transportation services. Furthermore, he said, a significant wait time for a taxicab is common throughout the country.

PSC executive director Mike Hybl provided neutral testimony on the bill.

The purpose of the current standard is to eliminate discrimination and undue advantages, Hybl said. He added that seven recent applications currently are pending for taxicab services wanting to operate in Lincoln.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill. ■



Dome of the State Capitol's rotunda.

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Monday, February 6

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1015 (Conrad) Change the child care reimbursement rate
LB1017 (Conrad) Transfer funds to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund
LB960 (Heidemann) To state intent relating to certain transfers of funds
LB981 (Ashford) Appropriate funds for renovation of certain living units at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center-Kearney

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1143 (Cornett) Change and eliminate provisions relating to stacking of insurance coverages
LB984 (Krist) Increase requirements for uninsured and underinsured motor vehicle liability coverage
LB1003 (Schumacher) Change motor vehicle liability insurance and financial responsibility requirements

Business & Labor

Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.

LB959 (Janssen) Provide immunity to employers for job references
LB997 (Wightman) Change provisions relating to high voltage conductor safety
LB1005 (Lambert) Include state emergency response teams under the Volunteer Emergency Responders Job Protection Act
LB1058 (Carlson) Change the Employment Security Law and the New Hire Reporting Act
LB1152 (Lathrop) Provide job training programs for recipients of unemployment insurance benefits

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Bishop, Riko - Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education
Appointment: Davis, Karen - Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education
Appointment: Simmons, Joyce - Coordinating Commission for Postsecond-

ary Education

Appointment: Zink, Carol - Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

LB1079 (Mello) Provide grants for educational bridge programs for low-income adults

LB1034 (Nordquist) Adopt the College Choice Grant Program Act

LB954 (Fulton) Change provisions of the college savings plan

LB1104 (Adams) Change the Postsecondary Education Act

General Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Hinrichs, Jon - Neb. Arts Council

Appointment: Price, Pamela - Neb. Arts Council

LB789 (Haar) Change the State Electrical Act relating to electrical inspections

LB978 (Karpisek) Prohibit sales of alcohol or beer for consumption off the premises at less than cost

LB987 (Karpisek) Create the Liquor Control Enforcement Division within the Neb. Liquor Control Act

LB1130 (Coash) Provide for entertainment district licenses under the Neb. Liquor Control Act

Nebraska Retirement Systems

Room 1525 - 12:10 p.m.

LB867 (Karpisek) Change employer contribution provisions under certain county retirement plans

LB1082 (Karpisek) Name and change provisions of the Police Officers Retirement Act

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1040 (Schilz) Change provisions relating to snow removal on state highways and encroachments and regulation of state rights-of-way

LB1052 (Christensen) Change provisions relating to maintenance of drainage facilities on county roads

LB1112 (Flood) Change provisions relating to state highway system plans

LB1155 (Lathrop) Change penalties relating to operating a motor vehicle

while under orders not to operate a motor vehicle

LB1030 (Hansen) Change provisions relating to obligations of drivers

Tuesday, February 7

Agriculture

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB905 (Carlson) Change the Neb.

Wheat Resources Act

LB1057 (Carlson) Change the Neb.

Corn Resources Act

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

LB958 (Howard) Provide for appropriations to the Nursing Faculty Student Loan Act

LB1048 (Howard) Increase an appropriation for nurse visitation services as prescribed

LB1146 (McGill) Appropriate funds to carry out the Neb. Prostitution Intervention and Treatment Act

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB882 (Nordquist) Require certain cancer treatment insurance coverage

LB1129 (Coash) Provide requirements for insurance coverage of autism spectrum disorders

LB1100 (Wightman) Create a legislative advisory committee to study and report regarding health care services and health care insurance

LB810 (Gloor) Prohibit insurance policy provisions relating to fees for dental services

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB990 (Fulton) Change flag display provisions for schools and require recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance

LB991 (Krist) Provide for a study relating to countywide school districts

LB1074 (Schilz) Provide duties for the State Department of Education relating to the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

LB1105 (Adams) Change and eliminate provisions relating to schools

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Executive Board

Room 2102 - 12:00 p.m.

LR373CA (Lautenbaugh) Constitutional amendment to change annual legislative salaries to thirtytwo thousand dollars
 LB1059 (Avery) Adopt the State Officers Compensation Act
 LR377CA (Avery) Constitutional amendment to terminate legislative compensation provisions and provide for creation of a compensation commission for state constitutional officers and members of the Legislature
 LB761 (Heidemann) Change requirements for acquisitions of certain real property by the state

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB893 (McGill) Provide for Neb. Armed Forces Pride Plates and distribution of fees
 LB894 (McGill) Provide for issuance of certain license plates to spouses of veterans
 LB1095 (Larson) Provide for Beef State license plates

Urban Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1115 (Flood) Authorize construction and operation of natural gas pipeline facilities by jurisdictional utilities
 LB1137 (Mello) Adopt the Nebraska Municipal Land Bank Act
 LB1121 (Lambert) Change signature requirements for recall petitions for sanitary and improvement districts

Wednesday, February 8

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB827 (Dubas) Require mediation for budget disputes between a county board and a county officer
 LB1101 (Wightman) Change provisions relating to election of county assessors
 LB1094 (Harms) Provide for an election in certain counties to require elections by mail
 LB936 (Karpisek) Change provisions relating to termination of the township board

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB949 (Legislative Performance Audit) Require reports and a strategic plan by the Division of Children and Family Services of the Dept. of Health & Human Services
 LB925 (Fischer) Provide duties for the Dept. of Health & Human Services relating to contracts with providers under Budget Program No. 514, Health Aid
 LB1158 (Krist) Provide requirements for medical assistance behavioral health managed care contracts
 LB1160 (Health & Human Services) Require Dept. of Health & Human Services to develop an information system and provide for reports and an evaluation

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB919 (Schilz) Change court fees, sheriff's fees, and handgun certificate fees
 LB1021 (Schilz) Change provisions relating to actions involving motor vehicle collisions with domestic animals
 LB1049 (Cornett) Create and change provisions relating to the purchase of certain metals
 LB1107 (Pirsch) Change provisions relating to the movement of vehicles and other property after an accident and provide immunity
 LB1120 (Karpisek) Limit liability for bucking bull activities

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB732 (Mello) Provide procedures for the use of eminent domain by cities and villages for trails
 LB857 (Larson) Provide for repayment of certain grants from the Neb. Environmental Trust Fund as prescribed

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB976 (Nordquist) Exempt social security benefits from state income taxation
 LB977 (Mello) Adopt the Property Tax Relief Act
 LB1061 (Heidemann) Change provisions relating to valuation of agricultural land
 LB1102 (Wightman) Change inheritance tax rates and exemption amounts

LB1117 (Cornett) Change income tax calculations relating to the federal alternative minimum tax

Thursday, February 9

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1014 (Conrad) Authorize the Auditor of Public Accounts to conduct a performance audit of the Dept. of Roads
 LB944 (McCoy) Prohibit campaign expenditures for personal services of elective officeholders
 LB1157 (Larson) Change late filing fee provisions under the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act
 LB1025 (Avery) Prohibit accepting gifts and contributions by Public Service Commission members

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Jirak, James - Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
 LB1028 (Cook) Require Dept. of Health & Human Services to apply for a grant relating to long-term care services
 LB1063 (Cook) Adopt the Children's Health and Treatment Act
 LB1083 (Bloomfield) Clarify permitted practices under the Nurse Practice Act
 LB1122 (Bloomfield) Change the Medical Assistance Act with respect to certain home health services

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB844 (Hadley) Change child support, medical support, and parenting time provisions
 LB935 (Smith) Change grandparent child visitation provisions to person with a legitimate interest
 LB1172 (Pirsch) Provide an additional ground for termination of parental rights
 LB1086 (Lautenbaugh) Provide an additional ground for seeking grandparent visitation

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB796 (Avery) Adopt the Outdoor Outfitters and Guides Registration Act

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB902 (Harr) Redefine a term relating to property tax exemptions and change provisions relating to a sales tax exemption for purchases by the state or a governmental unit

LB1050 (Cornett) Provide a sales and use tax incentive for procurement processing companies

LB1085 (Harr) Adopt the Tourism Development Act and provide for the transfer of state sales tax revenue

LB1097 (Pirsch) Exempt purchases of nonprofit mental health centers from sales and use tax

LB1108 (Pirsch) Change provisions relating to a sales and use tax exemption for manufacturing machinery and equipment

***9:30 a.m. Hearings Rescheduled from Friday, February 3**

Monday, February 13

*Government, Military & Veterans

Affairs

Room 1507 - 9:30 a.m.

LB765 (Krist) Change bidding requirements relating to contracts with providers of certain health and social services as prescribed

LB1159 (Krist) Provide additional requirements and duties relating to state contracts for services valued at twenty-five million dollars or more

LB792 (Mello) Change provisions relating to personal services contract review and approval duties of the Director of Administrative Services

LB858 (Avery) Change requirements and exceptions for certain state contracts for services

*Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 9:30 a.m.

LB995 (Heidemann) Change provisions relating to county medical facilities and public hospitals

LB1047 (Howard) Require safe injection practices as prescribed

LB1077 (Howard) Require certain health care facilities to offer vaccinations to residents and patients

LB1042 (Campbell) Authorize nurse

practitioners to sign death certificates

*Judiciary

Room 1113 - 9:30 a.m.

LB993 (Ashford) Change provisions relating to child abuse and neglect teams and child advocacy centers

LB917 (Cornett) Change truancy provisions for absences relating to military employment activities

LB933 (Ashford) Change provisions relating to truancy

LB1165 (Fulton) Change provisions relating to truancy and excessive absenteeism

*Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 9:30 a.m.

LB1087 (Nordquist) Adopt the Compressed Natural Gas Innovation Act

*Revenue

Room 1524 - 9:30 a.m.

LB1128 (Schumacher) Adopt the New Markets Job Growth Investment Act and provide tax credits

LB752 (Avery) Provide an income tax credit relating to grape growing and wine producing

LB962 (Pahls) Change provisions relating to tax expenditure reporting and name the Tax Rate Review Committee

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB982 (Harr) Provide for the removal of improper or fraudulent liens

LB1026 (Avery) Change the Uniform Disposition of Unclaimed Property Act to change provisions relating to confidential records

LB1054 (McCoy) Exempt ancillary product contracts from state insurance laws and authorize the sale of such contracts in conjunction with motor vehicle service contracts

Business & Labor

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Spray, J. L. - Commission of Industrial Relations

LB1072 (Business & Labor) Provide for payment of claims against the state

LB1073 (Business & Labor) Deny pay-

ment of certain claims against the state AM1782 to LB1073

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1156 (Carlson) Exempt non-equalized schools from expenditure limits in the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act

LB947 (Hadley) Change averaging adjustment and a certification date under the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act

LB913 (Adams) Change base limitation provisions and certain dates relating to the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act

General Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB824 (Karpisek) Define "flavored malt beverage" under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act

LB829 (Louden) Create alcohol impact zones

LB992 (Fulton) Prohibit the presence of minors on premises of certain liquor licensees and provide a penalty

LB1078 (Lautenbaugh) Require manager of a liquor licensee to complete training as prescribed

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB715 (Fischer) Change regulation of boundaries for telecommunications services

LB833 (Krist) Change provisions relating to surcharges for 911 services

LB847 (Sullivan) Change the Enhanced Wireless 911 Services Act

LB1091 (Fischer) Adopt the Prepaid Wireless Surcharge Act and eliminate certain charges on prepaid wireless service

Tuesday, February 14

Agriculture

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB927 (Louden) Authorize cattle brands as official identification as prescribed

LB907 (Carlson) Change provisions relating to agricultural tractor permitting and a sales tax exemption

LB1123 (Council) Adopt the Nebraska

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Healthy Food Financing Initiative Act

**Transportation & Telecommunications
Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.**

Appointment: Wacker, David - Board of Public Roads Classifications and Standards

Appointment: Figard, Roger - Board of Public Roads Classifications and Standards

Appointment: Wootton, Edward - Board of Public Roads Classifications and Standards

Appointment: Tagge, Darold - Board of Public Roads Classifications and Standards

Appointment: Weander, Timothy - Board of Public Roads Classifications and Standards

Appointment: Gerrard, LeRoy - Board of Public Roads Classifications and Standards

LB1167 (Lautenbaugh) Require certain provisions in highway and bridge construction and maintenance contracts

Urban Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1126 (Christensen) Provide and change extraterritorial jurisdiction of a village

LB1132 (McGill) Change the Community Development Law

LB1001 (McGill) Create the Building Code Advisory Committee and change and eliminate state agency building code compliance requirements

LR376CA (Mello) Constitutional amendment to change provisions relating to redevelopment projects

Wednesday, February 15

**Government, Military & Veterans Affairs
Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB1141 (McGill) Change provisions relating to reimbursement of travel expenses for Neb. National Guard members

LB819 (Price) Provide for the treatment of military medals as unclaimed property

LB999 (Price) Authorize the display of an honor and remember flag at public buildings

LB795 (Avery) Change provisions relating to applying for membership in veterans homes

LB1023 (Avery) Provide for the waiver of education-related fees for dependents of veterans

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB842 (Harms) Change the termination date relating to self-sufficiency activities under the Welfare Reform Act

LB938 (Nelson) Require a uniform reimbursement rate for adult day services

LB1010 (Nordquist) Change eligibility provisions relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

LB1136 (Mello) Create and provide for a wage subsidy program

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB950 (Christensen) Change crediting provisions relating to reimbursement of certain assistance to natural resources districts as prescribed

LB1125 (Christensen) Change provisions relating to natural resources district occupation tax

Nebraska Retirement Systems

Room 1525 - 12:10 p.m.

Appointment: DeFusco, Richard - Neb. Investment Council

Appointment: Simpson, Stuart - Public Employees Retirement Board

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB897 (Pahls) Change provisions relating to the completion of tax lists

LB967 (Schumacher) Change an interest rate relating to delinquent taxes and special assessments

LB1069 (Wightman) Change provisions relating to tax sales to collect delinquent property taxes

LB1093 (Hadley) Change provisions relating to foreclosure proceedings for delinquent real estate taxes

LB1109 (Brasch) Provide for classification of flooded agricultural land as inundated land

Thursday, February 16

**Government, Military & Veterans Affairs
Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB953 (Fulton) Create state fleet card programs and a fund

LB813 (Karpisek) Prohibit counties, cities, and villages from imposing credentialing requirements

LB869 (Janssen) Change provisions relating to the State Athletic Commissioner and change membership of the Athletic Advisory Committee

LB880 (Pahls) Provide duties relating to reducing costs and adopting modern methods of state and local records management

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Johnson, Julie - Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

LB1032 (Wightman) Change advertisement and display of credential provisions under the Uniform Credentialing Act

LB1103 (Wightman) Provide access to deceased family member's medical records

LB1142 (Nordquist) Adopt the Health Care Transparency Act

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB845 (Sullivan) Provide reclamation requirements under the Oil Pipeline Reclamation Act

LB1161 (Smith) Provide for study and evaluation of routes for proposed oil pipelines

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB855 (Fulton) Change sales and use tax collection fees

LB956 (Ashford) Authorize an increase in city sales tax rates

LB986 (Dubas) Exempt repair or replacement parts for commercial agricultural machinery and equipment from sales and use tax

LB1098 (Council) Repeal the Build Nebraska Act and change distribution of sales and use tax revenue ■

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