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UPDATE

Funds sought for early childhood services



Sen. John Harms responds to committee questions about LB190.

The Appropriations Committee heard testimony March 4 on a bill that seeks funding for early childhood services in Nebraska.

LB190, introduced by Scottsbluff Sen. John Harms, would appropriate \$10 million annually from the state's general fund to the Early Childhood Education Endowment Cash Fund in fiscal years 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Harms said the funds would expand high quality early childhood services to more infants and toddlers across Nebraska who are at risk of failing in

school. Funds invested by the state are matched at the local level, he said, in public-private partnerships involving the state Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services and local community partners.

Focusing funding on early childhood would result in more stable communities and future reductions in crime and welfare dependency, Harms said.

"The priorities that we set financially drive this state in the direction that we want it to go," he said.

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Local juvenile services could replace YRTCs

The Judiciary Committee heard testimony March 7 on a bill that would eliminate the Office of Juvenile Services and would close the youth rehabilitation and treatment centers (YRTCs) located in Kearney and Geneva by Jan. 1, 2015.

LB561, introduced by Omaha Sen. Brad Ashford, would create the Office of Juvenile Assistance that would include juvenile probation services, diversion programs, detention alternatives and aid assistance for community-based services. Providers of such services would qualify for social impact bonds to finance approved projects and the Legislature would appropriate \$10 million to fund community-based assistance programs.

Under the bill, the Office of Juvenile Assistance would implement a statewide project that would:

- collaborate with the courts, juveniles justice entities and providers to treat and rehabilitate juveniles rather than detain them;
- establish standardized guidelines for referrals and treatment based on a juvenile's needs rather than the availability of services;
- provide community-based services to keep juveniles in their homes, schools and communities;
- provide transition treatment programming for juveniles who

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Funds sought for early childhood services

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Jen Goettemoeller of First Five Nebraska testified in support of the bill. Nebraska faces a statewide problem of children lacking the necessary skills to succeed when they start school, she said, and that segment of the population is growing.

“Thirty-nine percent of all children [ages] birth to five across the state are at risk of failing in school,” she said.

Katie Kjolhede, a graduate of the Young Parent Program in Crete, also testified in support of the bill.

She said the program, which utilizes endowment fund grant dollars, helped her understand the importance of interactive play with her son in terms of his social and intellectual development.

Jim Krieger, testifying on behalf of the Omaha and Nebraska chambers of commerce, said the type of skills taught in programs like the one Kjolhede attended are essential to economic and workforce development in the state.

A child who enters school lacking language and social skills continues to be at a disadvantage in learning, he said, and one result is that 20 percent of Nebraska’s workforce is functionally illiterate.

“Once this begins, there’s a compounding impact,” Krieger said. “If you start behind, you don’t typically catch up.”

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

MUSIC EDUCATION WEEK AT THE CAPITOL



Musical performances were given by school children in the Capitol’s rotunda March 4-8 to mark Music Education Week, sponsored by the Nebraska Music Educators Association.

Local juvenile services could replace YRTCs

(continued from front page)

are placed outside the home and their families to assist with reintegration into their communities;

- promote the use of telehealth services for juvenile behavioral health; and
- provide a standardized instrument to screen for mental health, trauma, education, treatment history, family resources and risk factors to be utilized when a juvenile initially enters the system. Such information would be tracked electronically by the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and used throughout a juvenile's treatment and rehabilitation.

Ashford said Nebraska has the third highest youth incarceration rate in the nation. The current system is inadequate and is failing the state's children and communities, he said, so the bill would reform the state's juvenile justice system to treat and rehabilitate at-risk children rather than punish them.

"We are going to move forward with substantial reform towards a treatment-based system from an overly involved court system and utilize evidence-based

practices to keep children out of the juvenile justice system," he said.

Eleventh Judicial District County Court Judge Kent Turnbull testified in support of the bill, saying that YRTC admission criteria is unclear and inconsistently applied throughout the state.

Seventy percent of the YRTC's offenders are considered low-risk and should not be housed with high-risk offenders, he said, but because the state's smaller towns lack community-based services, the YRTCs sometimes are the only option.

Thomas Pristow, director of DHHS Children and Family Services, testified in support of the bill. Creating community-based services would be less intrusive and restrictive for juveniles, he said, which would better meet juveniles' needs and alleviate stress on the current system.

Anne Hobbs, director of the University of Nebraska at Omaha Juvenile Justice Institute, also testified in support of the bill, saying it would provide statewide youth equal access to diversion programs and prevent them from becoming state wards. Only about half of Nebraska counties currently offer a diversion program,

she said, so many convicted juveniles are prosecuted in adult courts and have an adult criminal record as a result.

Much of the opposition to the bill was focused on the closing of the YRTCs.

Araceli Morales, who was housed at the Geneva YRTC from 1999 to 2003, testified in opposition to the bill, and said the community-based services she received prior to being placed at the YRTC were ineffective. The center provides necessary counseling and treatment for drug and alcohol addiction, she said, and closing it would be a mistake.

"I think Geneva [YRTC] was my lifesaving place," Morales said. "Without it, I would have ended up dead or in prison."

Nancy Lyon, a Geneva YRTC employee, testified in opposition to the bill, saying families and schools sometimes contribute to a juvenile's problems.

"What we do is we stabilize them," she said. "We eliminate the clutter out of their lives so they can work on their issues and take them out of their comfort zone, which allows them to work on personal growth and change."

Hall County Attorney Mark Young also testified in opposition to the bill, saying it would make counties financially responsible for youth services. County attorneys and judges may avoid necessary youth treatment due to the costs of such programs, he said.

"If we want a uniform system, then we need to make sure there are uniform services available everywhere," Young said. "It is really important to have a clear plan in the bill that outlines how services will be funded to make sure there is reasonable access to them."

The committee took no immediate action on the bill. ■



Sen. Brad Ashford said the bill would refocus youth services on rehabilitation.

MEET THE SENATOR

Life of public service culminates at the Capitol

Sen. Jim Scheer has called Norfolk home for all but a few years of his life, and public service has been a nearly constant part of that life.

Calling it his “last gig,” Scheer said the Legislature was the next logical step after serving over 30 years on local school boards, as mayor of Norfolk and most recently as a member of the State Board of Education.

Scheer said he decided while serving on the state board that the Capitol was where he needed to be in order to have a real hand in shaping public policy.

“To have a lasting, meaningful impact,” Scheer said, “this is where you have to be.”

Scheer said the dynamic of the Uni-

cameral is unique in his experience in public service.

Most organizations – including school boards and even the state board of education – meet periodically, he said, which means that it takes time to cultivate connections with colleagues.

“You develop relationships here much faster,” he said. “This is probably the most enjoyable public service experience that I’ve had.”

Scheer said finding work that you love was something he and his wife Kristi stressed to their children: Keeli, who lives in Omaha with her husband and is expecting her first child soon; Rachel, who teaches design part-time at UNL; and John who currently is jug-

gling the demands of graduate school and twin daughters.

“I told them that if they hate going to work every day, their lives are going to be miserable,” Scheer said, adding that he is fortunate enough to have been fulfilled by all of his roles in public service.

Scheer said that he also received some good advice from his predecessor, Mike Flood, former speaker of the Legislature. Flood told him that if you disagree with your colleagues on one issue, it doesn’t mean that you won’t find common ground on the next issue, he said.

“Legislating is an exercise in commonality,” Scheer said. “But it’s also

a matter of tenacity” – a trait that the senator recalled displaying early on.

A talkative student, Scheer said his 4th grade teacher creatively attempted to quiet him.

“First she moved my desk to the back of the room away from the other kids,” he said, “then closer and closer to the closet. And when I still insisted on talking to my classmates, she finally put my desk inside the closet and shut the door.”

“That just meant that I had to talk louder,” he laughed. ■



Sen. Scheer, his wife, Kris, and son, John, upon the birth of John’s twin daughters Sloan and Delani.

Appropriations

Funds sought for hydroelectric dam study

The state would spend \$2 million to conduct a comprehensive study of the feasibility of building a hydroelectric dam on the Platte River under a bill heard March 5 by the Appropriations Committee.

Omaha Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh, sponsor of LB122, said the funds would be used to study the possible benefits of a hydroelectric dam and the various recreation and tourism benefits of constructing a lake in the Platte River valley near Interstate 80.



Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh

Lautenbaugh said the state needs power to attract high-paying jobs that will keep young people from leaving Nebraska.

"We've got some hard choices coming regarding our energy future and our economic future," he said.

Bing Chen, electrical engineering professor at the University of Nebraska, supported the bill, saying a comprehensive feasibility study would encourage "buy in" from those who would be impacted by building a lake in the Platte River valley.

Creating a major recreational resource in eastern Nebraska would help the state attract business, Chen said, much like has happened in Austin, Texas and an area known as the research triangle in North Carolina.

"If we are serious about economic development in the future," he said, "eastern Nebraska is going to have to think about a serious water resource."

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

Request to expedite cultural preservation fund transfers considered

The Appropriations Committee heard testimony March 4 on a bill that would modify the schedule of general fund transfers to the state's cultural preservation fund.

Current law authorizes a transfer of \$500,000 from the general fund to the Nebraska Cultural Preservation Endowment Fund on Dec. 31 of each year through 2018. The transfers are contingent upon documentation of dollar-for-dollar matching funds from private sources.

Under LB193, introduced by Omaha Sen. John Nelson, the transfers would be modified as follows:

- \$1 million in 2013;
- \$500,000 in 2014; and
- \$750,000 in 2015 and 2016.

The bill would eliminate transfers for the years 2017 and 2018.

The John W. Carson Foundation recently expressed an interest in donating to the endowment, Nelson said, but the current transfer schedule does not allow the donation to be matched this year.

"LB193 would allow the state to fully match the \$1 million private contribution in 2013," he said.

Pamela Hilton Snow, executive director of the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, testified in support of the bill, saying it would facilitate cultural and artistic programs across the state.

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

History museum improvement funds requested

The Appropriations Committee

heard testimony March 5 on a bill that would provide \$7.1 million for improvements to the Nebraska History Museum.

LB519, introduced by Omaha Sen. Bob Krist, would appropriate \$3.5 million per year in fiscal years 2013-14 and 2014-15 to the Nebraska State Historical Society for capital improvements at the museum.



Sen. Bob Krist

Krist said the Nebraska History Museum, which was built in 1967, hosts thousands of visitors each year. Three engineering studies have revealed life safety, electrical and plumbing code shortcomings as well as compliance issues with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), he said.

"The building stands in need of renovation," Krist said.

Michael Smith, director and CEO of the Nebraska State Historical Society, testified in support of the bill.

The building was not originally a museum, Smith said, and lacks the electrical system needed to display exhibits properly. In addition, he said, the elevators and bathrooms do not meet ADA requirements.

Lincoln High history and government teacher J.P. Caruso also supported the bill, saying the museum provides invaluable experiential learning opportunities for Nebraska students and should be invested in.

Caruso noted a recent trip to the museum's exhibit on the history of the Ku Klux Klan in Nebraska. Students were able to see the fabric of a Klan robe, he said, and posters inviting Lincolniters to a rally at the state fair grounds.

"The exhibit captivated my students," he said.

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

Education

Financial aid suggested for independent colleges

The Education Committee heard testimony March 4 on a bill that would provide additional financial aid to residents who attend independent Nebraska colleges and universities.

LB465, introduced by Omaha Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh, would create a program to increase financial aid to students attending schools that are not part of the state university system. Lautenbaugh said Nebraska's independent colleges award more than 41 percent of the state's bachelor degrees and serve 33,000 students. Those students, however, receive only 0.3 percent of state aid allocated to colleges and universities in Nebraska.

The bill would direct aid to students demonstrating substantial financial need, meaning their families are expected to contribute less than \$5,500 to the annual cost of the student's education.

Fred Ohles, president of Nebraska Wesleyan University, supported the bill, calling the state's potential contribution to these students a "solid investment."

"In Nebraska, college enrollment and completion efforts must be focused on low-income and first generation students to meet our state's ambitious goals," he said.

Representing Creighton University, James Cavanaugh also supported the bill.

"We've regressed as a state with regard to student financial aid," Cavanaugh said. "It's not good for the state and it's indefensible public policy."

Marshall Hill, executive director of

the Coordinating Commission on Postsecondary Education, opposed the bill. He said it would be a mistake to shift funding from one student to another.

"If you want to provide more support for students of the independent colleges and universities, put more money into the Nebraska Opportunity Grant," he said. "This would rise the tide that raises all boats."

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Scholarships for technical education proposed

The Education Committee heard testimony March 4 on a bill that would earmark scholarship funds to students enrolled in technical education programs.

LB478, introduced by Papillion Sen. Jim Smith, would require that at least 25 percent of all funds awarded through the Access College Early Scholarship Program be directed to students enrolled in skilled and technical sciences programs. Smith said it is important not to limit the state's focus to traditional four-year programs.

"Ensuring a technically skilled workforce – including those who choose to be skilled in a trade – is important to bringing new businesses to the state," he said.

Dennis Baack, executive director of the Nebraska Community College Association, supported the bill, saying the need for technically skilled workers is evident in today's job market.

"There are some really good job opportunities for community college graduates," Baack said. "Anything we can do to get back to emphasizing careers and technical education is a step in the right direction."



Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh



Sen. Jim Smith



Sen. Bob Krist

Marshall Hill, executive director of the Coordinating Commission on Postsecondary Education, opposed the bill. He said allocating money for specific students is bad public policy.

"I question the wisdom of setting aside a pot of money for a specific class of students," he said. "As a state, we've generally stayed away from that with policy in the past."

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

General Affairs

Problem gambling bill advanced

Lawmakers gave first-round approval March 4 to a bill that would make several changes to the utilization of gaming funds for services to the state's problem gamblers.

LB6, introduced by Omaha Sen. Bob Krist, would establish the Nebraska Commission on Problem Gambling within the state Department of Revenue. The nine-member commission would be required to develop operational standards for a Gamblers Assistance Program – also created by the bill – and would oversee the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund.

Members, appointed by the governor from lists supplied by the General Affairs Committee, would include members of the medical and mental health care fields, as well as representatives from the banking and finance industry, education and consumers of problem gambling services.

Members would serve three-year terms and would be reimbursed for expenses. The commission would:

- appoint the director of the Gamblers Assistance Program;

- evaluate the scope of problem gambling in Nebraska;
- contract with treatment providers for services; and
- create public awareness and outreach programs.

Krist said problem gamblers and their families have expressed concerns about the services currently available from the State Committee on Problem Gambling, which is located within the Division of Behavioral Health at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

The bill is similar to recent legislation revamping state oversight of the foster care system, Krist said, and is intended to provide the same type of oversight to the state's problem gambling program.

Citizens were clear when they approved gaming in Nebraska that part of the revenue should be spent helping problem gamblers, he said.

"LB6 provides for restoration of appropriate services for Nebraska problem gamblers and their families," Krist said.

Sen. John Harms of Scottsbluff asked if issues within the problem gambling program could be resolved without moving it to another state agency.

"It's a shame that we have to do this," he said.

Krist said discussions regarding where to house the new commission would continue between general and select file, but that DHHS so far has not fulfilled its obligation to use gaming revenue to properly address the issue of problem gambling in Nebraska.

A General Affairs Committee amendment, adopted 34-0, made several technical changes to the bill and senators advanced LB6 on a 33-0 vote.

Certification for alcohol servers requested

A bill requiring that retail liquor

license holders employ only individuals who are certified to sell or serve alcohol was heard by the General Affairs Committee March 4.

LB444, introduced by Omaha Sen. Bob Krist, also would require that an employee or authorized representative of the licensee who is 21 years or older be on the premises at all times. Licensees in violation would have their license suspended, canceled or revoked.

The current minimum age requirement to sell or serve alcohol is 19 years old.

Krist said 19-year-olds who sell alcohol often are pressured to sell to their underage friends. If they are going to be allowed to serve alcohol, he said, they must be required to have the proper training.

The bill would create a standardized program statewide that would hold all alcohol sellers accountable, Krist said.

Hobert Rupe, executive director of the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission, testified in support of the bill, saying that proper training and enforcement are the most effective ways to regulate alcohol sales.

Matt Stinchfield, owner of Ploughshare Brewing Company in Lincoln, also testified in support of the bill, saying it would improve public safety by reducing alcohol-related incidents resulting from minors selling alcohol to their underage peers. Standardized training should be required for the entire beverage industry, he said.

Jim Moylan, representing the Nebraska Licensed Beverage Association, testified in opposition to the bill. There currently are 80,000 alcohol servers statewide, he said, and the commission may not be able to handle certifying such a large number of people.

Kathy Siefken, executive director of the Nebraska Grocery Industry Association, testified in opposition to the

bill, saying it would limit the pool of people eligible to work at grocery stores. Many retail outlets employ people who are not involved with alcohol sales, she said, and if the bill passed some of those employees would require certification.

Tad Fraizer, representing the Updowntowners in Lincoln, also testified in opposition, saying it could affect the nonprofit corporations' ability to conduct fundraising events such as festivals and street dances. Some festivals have hundreds of volunteers who would be required to become certified to sell alcohol, Fraizer said, which would be cumbersome and could deter people from volunteering for events.

Special events and festivals are important to enhancing economic development, Fraizer said, and the revenue generated from alcohol sales typically pays the costs of hosting such events.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Beer tax increase could fund law enforcement

The General Affairs Committee heard testimony March 4 on a bill that would increase the beer tax by 5 cents per gallon.

Hyannis Sen. Al Davis introduced LB653, which would increase the beer tax from 31 cents to 36 cents per gallon. Half of the increased beer tax revenue would be distributed to the Nebraska State Patrol Cash Fund and half to counties for law enforcement purposes based on sales reports filed by wholesalers.

Alcohol consumption contributes to many crimes committed in the state, Davis said, as 27 percent of the 83,455 arrests in 2012 were due to alcohol-related charges.



Sen. Al Davis

The bill would provide revenue generated from alcohol purchases to offset the law enforcement costs associated with alcohol-related offenses, he said.

Jason Payne, president of the Nebraska Craft Brewers Guild, testified in opposition to the bill. Nebraska has 18 craft breweries and that number is growing, he said.

“The tax increase would be a detriment to Nebraska’s growing brewery economy,” Payne said, adding that Nebraska already has the highest beer tax rate of any of its neighboring states.

Matt Stinchfield, owner of Ploughshare Brewing Company in Lincoln, also testified in opposition to the bill. In addition to paying an excise tax, he said, brewers also must pay federal, state, local, employment and property taxes and licensing fees and bonds.

“On an income versus tax basis, Nebraska brewers contribute more to state and local tax coffers than any other type of business,” Stinchfield said, adding that beer taxes make it very challenging for breweries to be profitable.

Hobert Rupe, executive director of the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission, testified in a neutral capacity. The commission collects alcohol taxes but has never taken a position on what the appropriate beer tax rate should be, he said.

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

Historic horse racing debate begins

Lawmakers began debate March 6 on a measure intended to pave the way for wagering on historic horse racing in Nebraska.

LR41CA, introduced by Omaha Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh, would place a proposed constitutional amendment on the November 2014 general election ballot regarding historic horse racing. If

approved by voters, the amendment would allow wagering on the results of live, replayed and delayed horse races at licensed racetracks where live racing occurs by a pari-mutuel method.



Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh

An historic horse race creates a pari-mutuel pool via instant racing terminals from wagers placed on a previously held race at a licensed racetrack, Lautenbaugh said. Information is supplied regarding the jockeys, horses and track conditions, he said, excluding information that would allow an individual placing a wager to identify the specific race.

Lautenbaugh said he believes wagering on historic horse races to be legal under current Nebraska law, but introduced LR41CA to provide constitutional clarification for the horse racing industry.

“This would address the constitutional concern that has been raised year after year on this issue,” he said.

Calling the proposal a “Trojan horse,” Sen. Beau McCoy of Omaha offered a motion to recommit LR41CA to the General Affairs Committee.

The measure is not a stand-alone constitutional amendment, McCoy said, but rather enabling legislation for LB590 – another bill introduced by Lautenbaugh that would authorize the state Racing Commission to license and regulate pari-mutuel wagering on historic horse races.

McCoy said the resolution should be returned to committee and rewritten before being forwarded to Nebraska voters.

“It’s not my job to bring amendments to fix this legislation,” McCoy said. “Let’s get it right for the people of Nebraska.”

Scottsbluff Sen. John Harms supported the motion, saying lawmakers should be sure that a proposed constitutional amendment is in the best

possible form before being put to the people for a vote.

Sen. Russ Karpisek of Wilber, chairperson of the General Affairs Committee, opposed the motion to recommit the bill. He said the proposal was simple and straightforward and that the attempt to send the resolution back to committee was simply an attempt to keep it from coming back to the floor for debate.

“I don’t think there is anything wrong with LR41CA,” Karpisek said. “If it would come back [to committee], I don’t know what we would do differently.”

Lautenbaugh also opposed the motion, saying the two measures could be considered separately and that he would pull LB590 if lawmakers advanced the proposed constitutional amendment.

“If this amendment moves forward, it is not my intention to proceed with that bill,” he said.

During debate March 7, Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers filed a motion to bracket the measure until May 20, 2013. He said senators should not abdicate their duty to make public policy by forwarding the issue to voters.

The public is not informed on the issue, he said, and gaming interests would spend a great deal of money convincing voters to expand gaming in Nebraska in a way that would take advantage of individuals with a gambling compulsion.

“Some things are not to be determined by way of a popularity contest,” Chambers said.

Sen. Mike Gloor of Grand Island spoke in opposition to the bracket motion and in support of the underlying proposal. Racing long has been a part of Nebraska culture, he said, and is a source of family entertainment similar to a county fair.

After defeating Chamber’s bracket motion on a 14-24 vote, the Legislature adjourned for the week. McCoy’s motion to recommit the bill to committee is pending.

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Voter ID requirement proposed

The Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee heard testimony March 7 on a bill that would require voters to provide photographic identification before casting their ballot.

Under LB381, introduced by Fremont Sen. Charlie Janssen, all voters would be required to present a government-issued photographic identification card before voting in any election. Early voters or those casting a ballot in an election held by mail would not be required to show identification unless it is their first time voting.



Sen. Charlie Janssen

Janssen said his bill is strongly supported by a majority of Nebraskans.

“Voter ID would further protect the integrity and reliability of our elections,” he said. “This would ensure citizens’ confidence in our election process and that all voters’ rights are protected.”

The bill directs the state Department of Motor Vehicles to offer a state identification card at no cost to any voter if they indicate they are indigent. A voter who does not furnish a photographic identification card would be permitted to cast a provisional ballot.

Susan Gumm of Omaha testified in support of the bill. She said showing identification should be a basic requirement for secure elections.

“It’s not unreasonable to require photo identification to protect our most important privilege of citizenship,” Gumm said. “We must be proactive rather than reactive.”

Ken Mass, representing the Nebraska AFL-CIO, opposed the measure. He said current election laws that do not contain strict photographic identification requirements have proven to be effective.

“Impediments to voting rights cause massive disenfranchisement and voter suppression,” he said. “They threaten our democracy.”

Mark Vasina, president of Nebraskans for Peace, said the bill would unfairly target specific demographics unlikely to have current photographic identification.

“Laws such as this are being urged in state legislatures across the nation to suppress the votes of the young, elderly and poor — people who are more likely to vote for candidates who are not Republicans,” he said.

Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale said in written neutral testimony that while many Nebraskans identify voter fraud as a significant problem, he felt the provisions set forth in LB381 could be too restrictive.

“Since we have not experienced any systemic fraud in Nebraska, despite some occasional and isolated incidents, I’m not sure the strict standards of LB381 and the costs involved are necessarily the best answer for Nebraska,” he wrote.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Change to electoral vote process proposed

The Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee heard testimony March 6 on a bill that would change presidential election procedures.

Currently, the winner of Nebraska’s popular vote receives two electoral votes. The three congressional districts also award one electoral vote each based on its popular vote winner.

Maine is the only other state to use this system.

LB382, introduced by Fremont Sen. Charlie Janssen, would reinstate a winner-take-all system that would award all five electoral votes to the winner of the state’s popular vote. Janssen said the current system diminishes the state’s influence on the national stage.

“When we adopted the current system, there were claims that we would see an influx of presidential candidates and campaigns,” he said. “That has not happened and we’ve diminished our clout by not being able to offer five electoral votes.”

Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale testified in support of the bill. He said the winner-take-all system is the most efficient way to elect the president.

“If every state were to adopt our system, it would be highly unlikely in most circumstances that either candidate of either major party would get to the necessary 270 electoral votes,” Gale said.

Charlene Ligon of Bellevue opposed the bill, saying the state’s current system makes sure each vote counts.

“The concept of winner-take-all has been adopted by most states,” she said. “The practice, however, has little basis in representing the ideal of one voice, one vote.”

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Health & Human Services

Medicaid program changes proposed

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony March 6 on two bills that would make changes

to Medicaid provision in Nebraska.

LB261, introduced by Grand Island Sen. Mike Gloor, would adopt the Medicaid Insurance for Workers with Disabilities Act. Gloor said the goal of the bill is to assist people with disabilities to stay employed and independent while retaining Medicaid coverage under certain circumstances.



Sen. Mike Gloor

The bill would require payment of medical assistance on behalf of a person with a disability who is employed and has a family income of less than 250 percent of the federal poverty level.

Allowable assets for participation in the program would be:

- \$10,000 for a family of one;
- \$15,000 for a family of two; and
- \$15,000 for a family of three plus \$25 per additional individual.

For individuals and families with income at 100 percent of federal poverty guidelines, the bill would allow a premium to be established using a sliding fee of not more than 7 percent of a recipient family's countable unearned income plus 3 percent of earned income.

The state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) would be required to:

- provide training about the program to appropriate staff;
- conduct outreach and education about the benefits of the program;
- submit a report to the Legislature and governor on a biennial basis; and
- designate nonprofit employment networks that have benefit specialists that meet federal program requirements.

Gloor said the state's current program is underutilized and needs to be better understood by DHHS workers and recipients.

"We have a program; it's just poorly used," he said.

Becki Koehler of Goodwill Industries testified in support of the bill, saying it would reduce fears among individuals with disabilities that working will jeopardize their medical coverage.

"They strive to earn a paycheck and to find a purpose in life through work," she said. "[But] they still live with the fear that their life-sustaining Medicaid coverage will be cut."

Lynn Redding of Grand Island, who described herself as a person with a disability, said she turned down a promotion out of fear of losing coverage of her medication, which costs several hundred dollars a month.

"Medicaid is the only way that I can afford my medications," she said. "Working is important ... but my health is also important. I know the empowering effect that working has on people with disabilities."

No one testified in opposition to LB261.

Gloor also introduced LB338, which would amend the Uniform Credentialing Act and the Health Care Facility Licensure Act to prohibit discrimination by licensed health care facilities and licensed health care professionals against people eligible for medical assistance or covered by Medicaid.

Under the bill, a licensed health care facility or health care professional could be subject to disciplinary action if found to discriminate against a person with Medicaid coverage or eligibility. Such a finding would be the result of a complaint made to DHHS that is reviewed upon application for renewal of licensure.

A health care facility or health

care professional providing care as a patient-centered medical home would be exempt from the bill.

Gloor said the potential increase in Medicaid participants resulting from new mandates associated with federal health care reform – along with the expansion being considered by the Legislature – could increase discrimination against Medicaid patients by providers due to low reimbursement rates.

"My concern is that they are going to show up for the party and be told that there is no room, or that [they are] not welcome now," he said.

Kerry Winterer, CEO of DHHS, testified in support of the bill. He said the department expects an increase in Medicaid participants among newly eligible individuals and is concerned about a shortage of providers willing to serve them.

"All Nebraska citizens should be able to access quality health care," he said.

Hastings dentist Jessica Meeske testified in opposition to the bill, saying improved access for Medicaid recipients is more complicated than LB338 suggests.

Addressing the uneven allocation of Medicaid patients among providers must be addressed, she said, adding that greater collaboration between the Medicaid and public health divisions at DHHS also would help.

"It's not as simple as getting enough (providers) to see patients," Meeske said.

The committee took no immediate action on either bill.

Increase sought for aid to dependent children

The monthly payment for families qualifying for the Aid to Dependent Children Program (ADC) would increase under a bill heard March 5 by the Health and Human Services Committee.

Under LB508, sponsored by Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell, the payment for qualifying families would change from an amount not to exceed \$300 a month for a two-person family plus an additional \$75 per month for each additional family member, to a payment based on a percent of the standard of need.



Sen. Kathy Campbell

The percentages maximum would be:

- 60 percent for fiscal years 2013-14 and 2014-15;
- 65 percent for FY2016-17; and
- not less than 70 percent for FY2017-18 and thereafter.

The standard of need increases every two years by a percentage based upon the cost of living, Campbell said, but the maximum ADC payment as not changed in over 30 years. As a result, monthly ADC payments are “completely out of sync” with the actual cost of living, she said.

Campbell said she introduced the measure in an attempt to prevent the unnecessary entry of Nebraska children into the child welfare system, which she said often results from parents in poverty being unable to meet children’s basic needs.

“We want all Nebraska families to succeed,” she said.

Alicia Carter, a single mother of two children from Douglas County, testified in favor of the bill, saying an increase in ADC payments would relieve stress on struggling families and help them achieve self-sufficiency.

“I hate being on welfare,” Carter said.

Aubrey Mancuso of Voices for Children in Nebraska also testified in support of the bill. Nebraska’s ADC rates are among the lowest in the na-

tion, she said, and fall far below both the minimum wage and the federal poverty level.

“ADC has not been able to keep up with the needs of children in our state,” Mancuso said.

Thomas Pristow, director of the Division of Children and Family Services for the state Department of Health and Human Services, testified in opposition.

He said TANF – as the ADC program is known at the federal level – is a block grant and not an entitlement program. While acknowledging that an ADC increase would be a “best practices model,” Pristow said the department is concerned about the fiscal impact of such an increase.

“The general concept is to make sure the funding stream is sufficient to do the programming that I have,” he said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Bill would prohibit smoking in homes, cars used for licensed child care

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony March 7 on a bill intended to strengthen Nebraska’s Indoor Clean Air Act.

Under LB630, introduced by Omaha Sen. Rick Kolowski, smoking would be prohibited at all times in a private residence that is used as a place of employment licensed to provide child care.

Currently, smoking is prohibited in a licensed residence only when it is being used to provide child care and nonoccupant children are present.

The bill also would add a motor

vehicle as a place of employment at all times under the Indoor Clean Air Act if it is used to transport children for a licensed child care provider.

It can take up to 50 hours to clear cigarette smoke from newly constructed homes, Kolowski said, and residue from nicotine and other chemicals found in cigarettes – known as thirdhand smoke – accumulates in homes and can increase incidents of ear infections, asthma attacks and other ailments.

“Most parents, even the ones who smoke, do not want their children exposed to secondhand and thirdhand smoke,” he said. “This bill advocates for those working parents and their children to have a safe place to learn and to grow.”

David Corbin of the Public Health Association of Nebraska testified in support of the bill, saying children are more susceptible than adults to the dangers of secondhand and thirdhand smoke because of their exposure to the flooring and furniture in home day cares where toxic residue builds up.

“They have less developed defenses against environmental pollutants,” Corbin said.

Dave Holmquist of the American Cancer Society also supported the bill, but suggested that the protections sought by it might better be achieved through changing child care licensure rules and regulations.

Holmquist said exposing the Clean Indoor Air Act to further amendment during floor debate on LB630 ultimately could weaken the state’s strong protections for employees and others against secondhand smoke.

“It took two years to get it [passed],” he said, “and I don’t think that the dust has settled on it yet.”

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



Sen. Rick Kolowski

Judiciary

Probable cause suggested for taking custody of juveniles

The Judiciary Committee heard testimony March 6 on a bill that would require law enforcement to have probable cause before taking temporary custody of juveniles without a warrant.

LB320, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Amanda McGill, would allow peace officers to take juveniles into custody without a warrant only if they have probable cause to believe that the juvenile is at imminent risk of serious physical or emotional harm.



Sen. Amanda McGill

McGill said Nebraska children are removed from their homes at one of the highest rates in the nation. Children often are removed due to poverty conditions and not neglect, she said, adding that removal from their home can be more traumatic for children than neglect.

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

Additional juvenile court judge requested

A separate juvenile court judge would be added to counties with populations over 400,000 under a bill heard by the Judiciary Committee March 7.

Omaha Sen. Brad Ashford introduced LB463, which would add one judge to the Douglas County Juvenile Court.

The state Judicial Resources Commission recommended



Sen. Brad Ashford

the Legislature create and fund an additional juvenile court judge in Douglas County, Ashford said, which would change the number of Douglas County Juvenile Court judges from five to six.

Nebraska Supreme Court Chief Justice Michael Heavican testified in support of the bill. Douglas County has the largest number of child welfare cases, he said, which amounts to about 25 percent of the state's entire caseload.

"We will never solve the problem of juvenile justice if we do not have ample resources for courts," Heavican said. "This bill is a step in the right direction."

Melanie Williams-Smotherman, director of the Family Advocacy Movement in Omaha, testified in opposition to the bill, saying that she opposes any judicial appointments until critical issues in Nebraska's juvenile justice system are corrected. Nebraska criminalizes parents and children and forces them into the judicial system, she said.

"Children in the state are removed from their families at a rate at least double that of the national average," Williams-Smotherman said. "The answer is not to add more judges or caseworkers, but to stop adding unnecessary removals from the home."

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Juvenile court usage discussed

The Judiciary Committee heard testimony March 6 on a bill requiring that all charges against juveniles younger than 18 years old be filed in juvenile court.

Under LB464, introduced by Omaha Sen. Brad Ashford, cases could be transferred to adult court upon a motion by the prosecutor and a hearing before the juvenile court if the alleged law violation is a felony or if the alleged law violation is a misdemeanor and the

juvenile was 16 or 17 years old at the time the act was committed.

Ashford said it is important to consider the circumstances that lead juveniles to commit crime and to ensure they receive appropriate treatment for their age. Adult court does not take such factors into consideration, he said, but juvenile courts have programs that offer a chance for rehabilitation and reduced recidivism.

"The rate of incarceration for juveniles is far greater than what should be a reasonable standard in Nebraska," he said.

Sarah Forrest, policy coordinator for Voices for Children in Nebraska, testified in support of the bill, saying that adult courts are unable to meet the needs of vulnerable youth. Juvenile courts were created with an acknowledgment that there are significant differences between the needs of children and adults, she said, and they can better provide treatment for Nebraska youth.

Sarpy County public defender Dennis Marks also testified in support of the bill, saying the current process for juvenile cases is to file them automatically in adult court. Forty-five percent of juvenile cases are prosecuted in adult courts, he said, and 90 percent of those cases typically are for misdemeanor offenses.

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

Revenue

Tax investment plan proposed

The Revenue Committee heard testimony March 5 on a bill that would fund public roads projects with private investment.

LB82, introduced by Columbus Sen. Paul Schumacher, would allow taxpayers to pay extra taxes in return for a

future income tax credit. The revenue raised by the tax investments would be earmarked for highway construction projects.



Sen. Paul Schumacher

Schumacher said it is disheartening for people who work to save money and not have a productive place to invest it. The bill would provide an infusion of needed capital for roads infrastructure, he said, in return for an inflation protected, T-Bill rate of return in the form of a credit against future tax liability of the saver.

“This is an effort to bring together a lot of forces and try to accomplish something,” he said. “This basically allows taxpayers to invest in Nebraska.”

The bill would require taxpayers younger than 62 to wait five years before claiming the credit. The waiting period would be waived for those over 62. The credit would be adjusted for inflation with an interest calculation equal to the T-Bill rate of return.

Credits would expire, unless claimed, 20 years after the underlying payment. In the case of death of the taxpayer, the credits would expire in five years.

Former state senator Loran Schmitt testified in support of the bill. He said it was a unique proposal that would work for Nebraska.

“We can expect the cost of construction to continue to increase,” he said. “Having money available for projects in the future is a solid plan.”

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

School levy increase for school security proposed

The Revenue Committee heard testimony March 7 on a bill that would

allow schools to raise money for school security improvements.

LB346, introduced by Omaha Sen. Rick Kolowski, would allow school districts to levy a maximum one cent above their existing maximum levy for school security improvements, including cameras, identification cards and security officers. The levy increase would require a two-thirds majority vote by the school board.



Sen. Rick Kolowski

Kolowski said school security is an issue that affects both rural and urban schools.

“As an educator for over 40 years and a high school principal for 15 years, I know what kind of security it takes to run a school of over 2,000 students,” he said. “We need to provide our local school districts with the ability to make the security changes necessary to keep our students, teachers and parents safe without taking money away from the classrooms.”

If a school district exercises this option, the school board would establish a school security fund separate from the general fund. Any money in the school security fund could be used only for school security measures.

Fremont Public Schools superintendent Stephen Sexton supported the bill, saying that safety and security have become the center of attention in recent years.

“The nature of a school was originally intended to be an open, inviting environment,” Sexton said. “Unfortunately they can be an easy access target for those wanting to do harm. While there are no guarantees, some precautions can reduce the attractiveness of schools as a target.”

Ron Jensen, representing the National Rifle Association, also testified in support of the bill. He said that

while most people do not want schools to be fortresses, security measures are necessary.

“The most important thing to any parent or grandparent, at the end of the day, is that our children are safe,” he said.

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

Greater renewable energy tax credit proposed

The Revenue Committee heard testimony March 6 on a bill that would provide a new energy production tax credit.

A tax credit currently is in place for electricity generated by a new, renewable generation facility. The credit is awarded at \$0.0005 per kilowatt-hour and is capped at \$50,000 per year. LB411, introduced by Omaha



Sen. Jeremy Nordquist

Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, would end the current tax credit and create a new, broader credit.

Nordquist said providing the credit would mean more “clean, homegrown energy.”

“Nebraska has exceptional wind resources, but we must compete against our neighbors for economic development opportunities,” he said. “This would give Nebraska a substantial advantage in bringing the renewable energy industry to the state.”

The bill would increase the amount of the credit to:

- \$0.005 per kilowatt-hour for 2014;
- \$0.015 per kilowatt-hour for 2015 to 2017;
- \$0.075 per kilowatt-hour for 2017 to 2019; and

- \$0.005 per kilowatt-hour for 2019 onward.

The annual tax credits would be capped at \$2 million per taxpayer for up to eight years after the facility's operative date.

Representing Edison Mission Energy, David Levy testified in support of the bill. He said LB411 would make Nebraska and Oklahoma the only two states in the nation to offer the incentive.

"With the [energy] federal production cut ending, we will have to deal with a sharp drop in development," Levy said. "We already have the wind, great landowners and public power infrastructure in place. This would help put Nebraska at the top of the list."

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

Transportation & Telecommunications

Repeal of motorcycle helmet law proposed

The Transportation and Telecommunications Committee heard testimony March 5 on a bill that would repeal the state's current law requiring motorcyclists to wear protective helmets.

Under LB393, introduced by Hoskins Sen. Dave Bloomfield, motorcycle operators and passengers younger than 21 would continue to be required to wear a protective helmet, but those 21 and older would no longer be required to do so. All motorcyclists would be required to wear eye protection.



Sen. Dave Bloomfield

Bloomfield said many motorcyclists want the freedom to choose whether or not to wear a helmet and avoid riding through Nebraska because of its helmet requirement.

Kent Rogert, representing ABATE of Nebraska, testified in support of the bill, saying that universal helmet legislation imposes on individual rights and is ineffective.

"Individual choice, awareness promotion, education, training and eye protection are far more effective and proactive than mandating that all [motorcycle] riders wear a helmet," he said. "Helmets do not prevent accidents, but education and awareness will."

Robert Ailor, a motorcyclist from York, testified in support of the bill, saying that two of the states with the highest per capita health care costs have mandated helmet laws. If reducing health care costs is an argument for requiring motorcycle helmets, he said, then states with such requirements should have the lowest per capita cost.

Scott Lucey, a motorcyclist from Omaha, also testified in support of the bill, saying the current helmet requirement has resulted in a loss of Nebraska tourism revenue. The annual motorcycle rally held in Iowa attracts over 8,000 motorcyclists and generates over \$3 million in revenue, he said, but many riders avoid traveling through Nebraska or attending rallies here because of the state's motorcycle helmet requirement.

Patrick Lange, a Nebraska motorcyclist, testified in opposition to the bill. Lange said he was in a motorcycle accident in South Dakota—a state that does not require use of motorcycle helmets—that permanently injured him and killed his wife. Lange said his medical expenses from the accident totaled \$1.7 million.

"I have to question if someone would have required us to wear hel-

mets if I would have had to suffer through all of that," Lange said. "We should not think about the [tourism] money we could gain with this bill, but how many kids could lose a mom or a dad."

Joseph Stothert, a trauma surgeon at the University Nebraska Medical Center, testified in opposition to the bill, saying it sends the wrong message to children.

"Our children watch what we do as adults," he said. "Promoting dangerous behavior as a rite of passage encourages our young not to wear eye protection or use helmets to prove that they are adults."

Jason Kruger, a Lincoln doctor, also testified in opposition, saying that \$1.4 billion in health care costs could be saved if universal helmet laws were passed. States with helmet requirements have only a 12 percent motorcyclist fatality rate, he said, while the motorcycle fatality rate in states not requiring helmets is 79 percent.

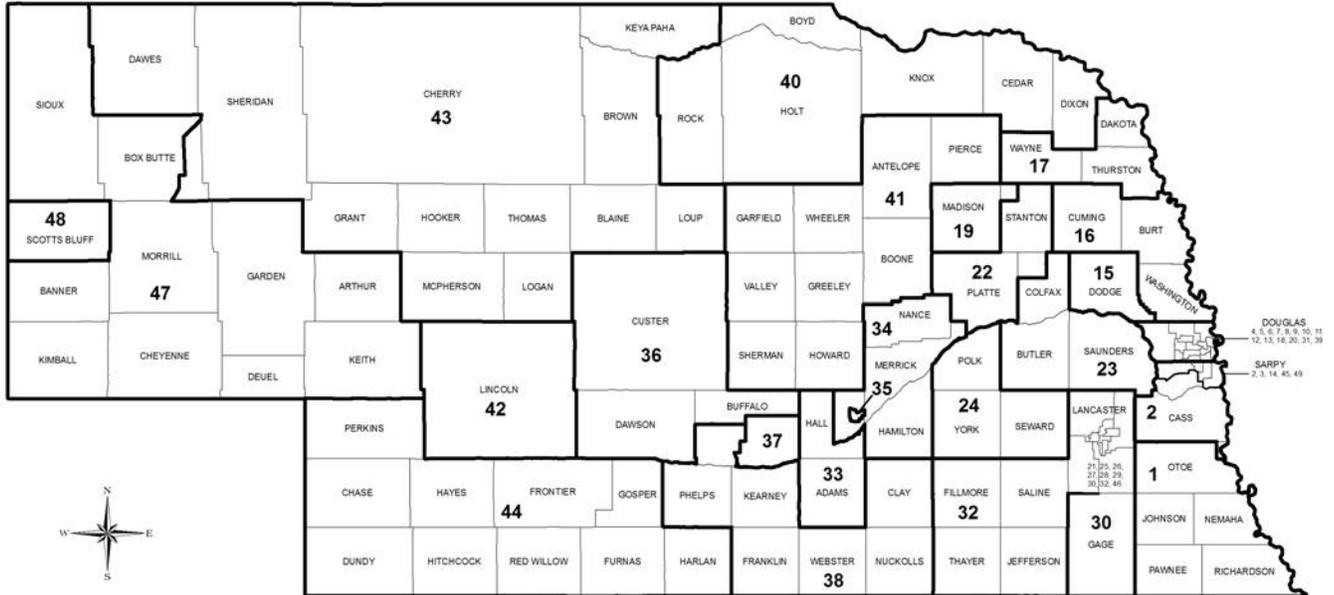
"This bill is a giant leap in the wrong direction," Kruger said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill. ■



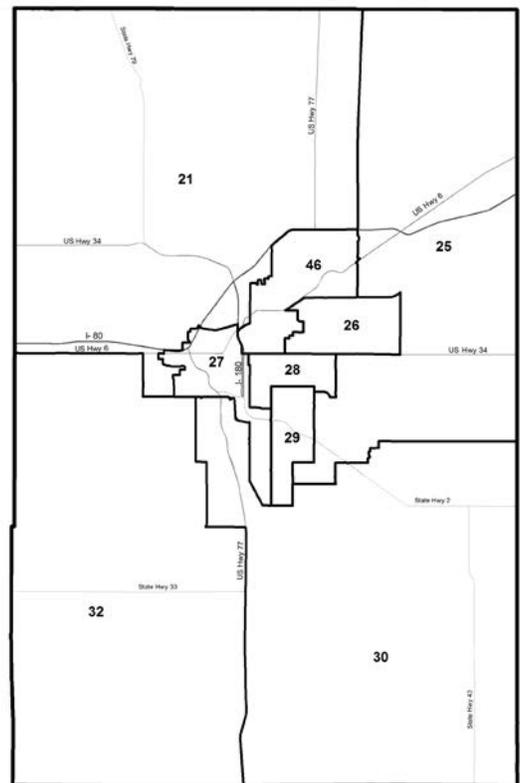
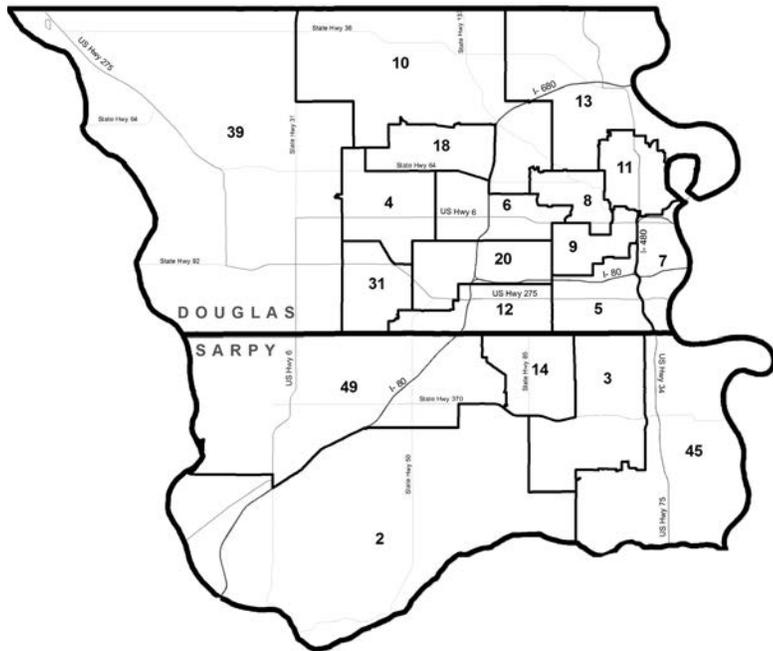
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OMAHA AND VICINITY

LINCOLN



COMMITTEE HEARINGS

*Current hearing schedules are always available at: http://nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar/hearings_range.php

Tuesday, March 12

Agriculture

Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.

LB339 (Schilz) Change fence dispute provisions

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB126 (McGill) Provide for grants from the Court Appointed Special Advocate Fund
LB569 (B. Harr) Appropriate funds to the Supreme Court for county court employees

Agency 5: Supreme Court

Agency 94: Commission on Public Advocacy

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Dinsdale, Kim - Neb. Educational Telecommunications Commission
LB460 (Krist) Require a booster meningococcal conjugate vaccine for students as prescribed

LB275 (Nordquist) Adopt the Nebraska Coordinated School Health Act

LB131 (Nordquist) Adopt the Tobacco-Free Schools Act

LB143 (Bloomfield) Authorize schools to adopt a child sexual abuse policy as prescribed

LB619 (K. Haar) Require instruction in sexual health education

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB589 (Watermeier) Change provisions of the One-Call Notification System Act
LB358 (Dubas) Redefine excavation for purposes of the One-Call Notification System Act

Wednesday, March 13

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

LB492 (Cook) Appropriate funds to carry out the Neb. Youth Conservation Program

Agency 29: Dept. of Natural Resources

Agency 31: Military Dept.

Agency 33: Game and Parks Commission

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Fiala, Ann - Board of Emergency Medical Services

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB543 (Chambers) Change a penalty from death to life imprisonment or life imprisonment without possibility of parole
LB462 (Ashford) Change provisions relating to contracts for joint law enforcement services

LB473 (Bloomfield) Authorize certain residency restrictions near parks under the Sexual Predator Residency Restriction Act
LB204 (Larson) Change and provide criminal sanctions regarding animals and animal facilities

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB439 (Gloor) Change cigarette and tobacco tax provisions

LB440 (Gloor) Adopt the Volunteer Emergency Responders Incentive Act and provide an income tax credit
LB474 (Krist) Change provisions relating to occupation taxes

LB488 (Revenue) Change provisions relating to municipal occupation taxes

LB150 (Nordquist) Change provisions relating to the sale of natural gas by metropolitan utilities districts and exempt certain purchases of energy and fuel from sales tax

Thursday, March 14

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 19: Dept. of Banking

Agency 22: Dept. of Insurance

Agency 87: Accountability and Disclosure Commission

Agency 65: Dept. of Administrative Services

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB240 (Harms) Change work activity requirements for self-sufficiency contracts under the Welfare Reform Act
LB276 (Nordquist) Change reimbursement provisions under the Early Intervention Act and require a medicaid state plan amendment

LB309 (Bolz) Adopt the Department of Health and Human Services Delivery Improvement and Efficiency Act

LB330 (Howard) Change eligibility provisions relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB485 (Conrad) Prohibit discrimination based upon sexual orientation as prescribed

LB385 (Nordquist) Prohibit certain bases for discrimination relating to child placement

LB380 (Howard) Provide for adoption by two adult persons jointly
LB498 (Brasch) Provide for declaratory judgment and injunctive relief against foreign defamation judgments

LR42 (Brasch) Urge Congress to pass the Parental Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution and submit it to the states for ratification

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB63 (Schilz) Change distribution of certain sales and use tax revenue

LB64 (Schilz) Change provisions relating to deductions of refunds from municipal sales tax receipts

LB159 (Schumacher) Provide and change sales tax provisions relating to gold, silver, and platinum and provide a tax amnesty
LB251 (Hansen) Change a fee relating to the rental of motor vehicles

Friday, March 15

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 12: State Treasurer

Agency 35: Neb. Liquor Control Commission

Agency 71: Neb. Energy Office

Agency 52: State Fair Board

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:00 p.m.

Appointment: Buhlke, Brian - Neb.

Rural Health Advisory Commission

Appointment: Kent, Mary - Neb. Rural Health Advisory Commission

Appointment: Schroeder, Rebecca - Neb.

Rural Health Advisory Commission

Appointment: Sides, Avery - Neb. Rural Health Advisory Commission

Appointment: Sitorius, Michael - Neb.

Rural Health Advisory Commission

Appointment: Wells, Roger - Neb. Rural Health Advisory Commission

LB535 (Lathrop) Adopt Prescription Monitoring Program Act and repeal pre-

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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scription monitoring provisions
LB236 (Howard) Appropriate funds to Dept. of Labor to establish an individual development accounts pilot project
LB427 (Howard) Adopt the Carbon Monoxide Safety Act

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB247 (Larson) Change Neb. Juvenile Code provisions relating to reimbursement by parents for costs of care and treatment
LB355 (Larson) Change the age of majority and certain age requirements
LB503 (Coash) Rename the Child Protection Act and provide for alternative response to a report of child abuse or neglect
LB580 (Johnson) Change certain condemnation procedures

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB282 (Pirsch) Exempt motor vehicle washing and waxing from sales taxation
LB175 (Smith) Change the persons authorized to represent Nebraska under the streamlined sales and use tax agreement
LB447 (Avery) Provide for sales tax on soft drinks, change the distribution of sales tax proceeds, and provide funding for projects to help children
LB516 (Carlson) Adopt the Nebraska Water Legacy Act

Monday, March 18

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB334 (Nordquist) Appropriate funds for the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Program
LB400 (Lautenbaugh) Appropriate funds for aid to community colleges
Agency 48: Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education
Agency 50: Neb. State College System
Agency 83: Community College Aid

Business & Labor

Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Cole, Charles - Boiler Safety Code Advisory Board
Appointment: Kasl, Martin - Boiler Safety Code Advisory Board
Appointment: Stewart, Kenneth - Boiler Safety Code Advisory Board
Appointment: Eberspacher, Kurt -

Boiler Safety Code Advisory Board
LB307 (Nelson) Change provisions of the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act
LB324 (Lautenbaugh) Change provisions of the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act
LB584 (Smith) Change Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act medical guidelines and independent medical examiner provisions
LB536 (Business & Labor) Approve claims against the state
LB537 (Business & Labor) Deny claims against the state

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB540 (Chambers) Prohibit rules and regulations requiring teachers to lead pledge of allegiance
LB575 (B. Harr) Provide for professional development training for school board and learning community coordinating council members
LB356 (Karpisek) Prohibit participation in extracurricular and co-curricular activities as prescribed
LB365 (Avery) Require instruction in certain emergency procedures as a prerequisite to high school graduation

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB84 (Schumacher) Change provisions relating to the operation of utility-type vehicles
LB223 (Janssen) Redefine utility-type vehicles
LB650 (Karpisek) Include asphalt crack filler trailers in the definition of trailer under the Motor Vehicle Registration Act

Tuesday, March 19

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB114 (B. Harr) State intent relating to an appropriation to the University of Nebraska at Omaha
LB184 (K. Haar) Appropriate funds for the Neb. Wind Applications Center
Agency 47: Neb. Educational Telecommunications Commission
Agency 51: University Of Nebraska System

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB566 (Karpisek) Create the Educational Technology Infrastructure Grant Program
LB511 (Scheer) Change allocation provisions relating to the Education Innovation Fund
LB495 (Sullivan) Change provisions relating to the Education Innovation Fund and early childhood grant reporting
LB496 (Sullivan) Change provisions relating to school reorganization incentive payments
LB497 (Sullivan) Change distribution and provide for a study of the Education Innovation Fund

Wednesday, March 20

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 24: Dept. of Motor Vehicles
Agency 40: Neb. Motor Vehicle Licensing Board
Agency 17: Dept. of Aeronautics
Agency 27: Dept. of Roads

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB395 (Conrad) Redefine the term "school-based health center" for purposes of the Medical Assistance Act
LB452 (Conrad) Require a medicaid waiver to provide coverage for family planning services
LR22 (Campbell) Provide the Health & Human Services Committee and the Banking, Commerce & Insurance Committee be designated to convene a Partnership Towards Nebraska's Health Care System Transformation

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB581 (Crawford) Change the sales and use tax collection fees
LB333 (Schumacher) Change the sales and use tax collection fees
LB618 (Karpisek) Create the Agricultural Land Valuation Task Force
LB414 (Schumacher) Change funding for the Municipal Equalization Fund
LB558 (Kintner) Change provisions relating to certain declaratory judgments and illegal taxes paid

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

*Current hearing schedules are always available at: http://nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar/hearings_range.php

Thursday, March 21

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

LB486 (Dubas) Appropriate funds to the Legislative Council to pay dues under the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact
 Agency 7: Governor
 Agency 9: Secretary of State
 Agency 10: Auditor of Public Accounts
 Agency 11: Attorney General
 Agency 14: Public Service Commission
 Agency 3: Legislative Council
 Agency 8: Lieutenant Governor

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB518 (Janssen) Change certain eligibility provisions of the medical assistance program
 LB526 (Howard) Change optometry licensure and certification to perform minor surgery and use pharmaceutical agents
 LB527 (Howard) Change optometry licensure and certification to use pharmaceutical agents

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LR2CA (Pirsch) Constitutional amendment to require that any bill that imposes or increases a tax be approved by a majority of the members of the Legislature plus four
 LB317 (Price) Change a duty of county assessors relating to real property valuation
 LB62 (Schilz) Change levy provisions for rural and suburban fire protection districts ■

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RECENT HEADLINES: [Bills introduced Jan. 11](#)

Governor gives the State of the State address

Published January 13th, 2011, in [Ceremonies](#)

With a vision of making Nebraska the ideal place to create jobs, build a business, obtain an education and have a family, Gov. Dave Heineman delivered his State of the State address to lawmakers Jan. 13. "Our state is in a position to make these goals a reality because of what we have accomplished together [Read more ...]

Economic forecasting board reduces revenue projections

Published October 29th, 2010, in [Appropriations](#)

The Nebraska Economic Forecasting Board met Oct. 29 to revise its forecast for the current fiscal year and adopt projections for the next biennium. The board provides an advisory forecast of General Fund receipts on which the Legislature crafts the state's budget. During its February meeting, the board projected that state revenues would amount to [Read more ...]

Bills introduced Jan. 13

Published January 13th, 2011, in [Ceremonies](#)

Lawmakers reconvened Jan. 13 to continue introducing new bills. Among the measures introduced were: LB348, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh,

Possible liquor law changes discussed

Published October 26th, 2010, in [General Affairs, Interim Studies](#)

The General Affairs Committee heard testimony Oct. 15 on possible changes to the

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