

Medicaid expansion proposal discussed

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony Jan. 29 on a bill that would provide a new option for Medicaid expansion in Nebraska. Debate on a similar proposal stalled during general file debate last session.

LB887, sponsored by Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell, would establish the Wellness in Nebraska Act (WIN). Campbell said the measure would provide health care coverage through a Medicaid expansion demonstration waiver to approximately 55,000 uninsured and underinsured individuals who are newly eligible under the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Campbell said the proposal is the result of a thorough study of how other states are approaching the problem of individuals who fall into the “coverage gap” – those who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but too little to qualify for insurance premium tax credits under the ACA.

Calling the bill “an innovation in health care delivery,” Campbell said it would help the state bridge the gap by providing coverage through the WIN Marketplace and WIN Medicaid.



Sen. Kathy Campbell outlines her Medicaid expansion proposal to the committee Jan. 29.

Under the WIN Marketplace, the bill would provide coverage through health insurance premiums paid by Medicaid funds to purchase qualified health plans on the marketplace for newly eligible individuals who earn between 100 and 133% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The bill includes an option to cover premiums through payment of the employee portion of employer-sponsored

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Proposals to fund Game & Parks considered

The Revenue Committee heard testimony on two bills Jan. 29 that would divert state sales tax revenue to the state Game and Parks Commission.

LB814, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Bill Avery, would dedicate the state sales tax revenue derived from the sale or lease of motorboats and



Sen. Bill Avery

personal watercraft for Commission infrastructure maintenance projects.

Avery said many parks have been closed to free up personnel to work on deferred maintenance projects.

“People in this state like their parks and do use them,” he said. “It would be a travesty if we ignore the problem Game and Parks now faces in trying to maintain our parks.”

Currently, the state sales tax revenue is deposited into the state General Fund, the state Highway Capital

Improvement Fund and the Highway Allocation Fund. Under LB814, the revenue would be directed to a newly created Game and Parks Commission Capital Maintenance Fund.

Roger Kuhn, representing the Commission, supported the bill, saying an investment in the parks system is an investment in the state’s tourism industry.

“The parks are in need of financial reform if we are to provide the quality of parks Nebraskans deserve and

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Medicaid expansion proposal discussed

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insurance if determined to be cost effective.

Under WIN Medicaid coverage, Medicaid managed care would be available to newly eligible individuals at or below 100 percent FPL. Newly eligible individuals at or below 133 percent FPL would qualify if they are medically frail or have exceptional medical conditions.

Medicaid funding would be provided through an enhanced match of federal funds. Federal funds would cover 100 percent of costs from 2014 to 2016 and would decrease incrementally to 90 percent starting in 2020.

If federal funding under the ACA falls below 90 percent, the bill would require the Legislature, in the first regular session following the reduction, to review WIN to determine how to mitigate the impact on the state.

The bill also would create an oversight committee within the Legislature to work with the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and other stakeholders to apply for the Medicaid waiver and design a variety of innovations to improve the quality of health care provision and contain costs.

“The effort to develop WIN isn’t about numbers and dollars,” Campbell said. “It’s about our neighbors, friends and relatives who need health care.”

Sharon Lind, testifying on behalf of the Nebraska Hospital Association, supported the bill. She said closing the coverage gap is especially important in rural areas where poverty is prevalent and employer provided health insurance is less common.

Lind said the bill would improve the state’s current



The Health and Human Services Committee listens to testimony on LB887.

health care delivery model by using available federal funds to encourage wellness and provide more care in clinic settings rather than emergency rooms.

“It is unconscionable for Nebraska to turn its back on this federal assistance,” she said.

Sarah Gershon of Lincoln also supported the bill, saying she falls into the coverage gap and cannot afford a test to determine whether she suffers from rheumatoid arthritis or lupus. Without a complete diagnosis, she said, there is no treatment.

Gershon said she has always worked – often more than one job – and wants to continue.

“Without treatment, my arthritis is progressing quickly,” Gershon said. “I’m 31, and I have so much more to con-

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Medicaid (cont.) Proposals to fund Game & Parks considered

tribute. Without medical help, I will end up on disability.”

DHHS CEO Kerry Winterer testified in opposition to the bill, citing the cost of expanding Medicaid enrollment and the administrative burden of carrying out the bill’s provisions.

Winterer said DHHS estimates indicate that WIN would result in over 113,000 newly eligible individuals by 2020, at a cost of \$3.3 billion. In addition, he said, the complex provisions of LB887 would cost 40 percent more in state and federal funds than Medicaid expansion alone.

“Medicaid is the single largest program in state government,” Winterer said.

Doug Kagan of Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom also testified against the bill. He said there are more cost effective ways to accomplish the goals outlined in WIN, including untaxed health savings accounts and reform of medical malpractice liability.

“Most importantly, these solutions would not make Nebraska more dependent upon government,” Kagan said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill. ■

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expect,” Kuhn testified. “We’ve taken steps in the past to try to address our deferred maintenance needs. This bill would help us to be sustainable in the future.”

Nebraska City resident Doug Friedly also supported the bill. He said the tourism industry brings in over \$4 billion in annual revenue to the state.

“We need to ensure that visitors have a good experience when they come to our state parks so that they will encourage their friends and families to visit the state,” he said. “If we do not invest money to properly maintain the parks, it would be a waste of our natural resources.”

The committee also heard testimony on LB841, introduced by Kearney Sen. Galen Hadley, which also would help finance the Commission’s deferred maintenance projects. The bill would dedicate the state sales tax revenue from all-terrain and utility-type vehicles that have been titled in Nebraska to the Game and Parks Commission Capital Maintenance Fund.



Sen. Galen Hadley

Just as city taxes pay for city parks, Hadley said, state taxes should fund the state park system.

“I wonder why we treat city parks differently than state parks,” he said. “We have a state parks system that we’ve let go into disrepair because we haven’t been willing to step up to the plate and fund it.”

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Deputy Director Timothy McCoy supported the bill, saying the Commission is working to determine a way to meet current financing challenges.

“There are a lot of ideas used by other states that would never work in Nebraska,” he said. “We need [the Legislature’s] help to get on a sustainable funding path.”

No one testified in opposition to the bills and the committee took no immediate action on them. ■

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MEET THE SENATOR

Air Force colonel lands at Legislature

Born on Kessler Air Force Base in Mississippi, Tommy Garrett began life as a self-described “Air Force brat” and has been on the move ever since. It was the beginning of a nomadic life that took the retired colonel around the world before landing at the Nebraska State Capitol as the newest member of the Unicameral.

The military has been central to Garrett’s entire life story. His father was drafted into the service during WWII and met wife Rosa after the war while stationed in Germany. Even the senator’s name has a military provenance: Garrett was named after the two sons of his father’s WWII buddy: Tommy and Lee.

After his father’s death when Garrett was 13, the family settled in Colorado where he graduated from high school. Garrett went on to earn a bachelor’s degree in business management from Colorado State University, a master’s degree in international relations from Troy State University and a master’s degree in national security strategy from the National War College.

This background served Garrett well during his time in the Air Force where he earned the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit

(twice), Bronze Star and Meritorious Service Medal (six times). He served in a variety of locations, including Germany, Bahrain, Korea, Saudi Arabia and the Pentagon.

Garrett has been married to his wife Julie for 36 years. Calling her “indefatigable,” Garrett said they and their three children moved 17 times during his 26 years in the Air Force.

Now retired from the Air Force, Garrett owns a small business headquartered in Bellevue that specializes in defense contracting.

When asked what was his favorite place during his years of travels, Garrett did not hesitate. “It may sound cliché, but I have to say Nebraska. After moving so many times, Nebraska became home. We’ve lived here longer

than anywhere else, and we truly love Nebraska.”

Garret was appointed by the governor in December to replace former Sen. Scott Price, who resigned. He represents legislative district 3, which includes Bellevue and a part of Papillion. Garrett said he is deeply honored to be able to serve in the Nebraska Legislature.

“I’ve always had a passion for public service,” Garrett said. “I had long thought I would run for elective office when I retired.”

The first few weeks in office have been eye-opening, he said. “I always knew that there were two sides to every story,” Garrett said. “Now I’m realizing that there is also a third, fourth and fifth side to every issue.” ■



Sen. Tommy Garrett attends a Denver Broncos game with son Tommy and daughters Hannah (left) and Maude.

AGRICULTURE

County ag society equipment levy advances

Senators advanced a bill from select file Jan. 30 that would increase levy authority for county agricultural societies.

Introduced by O'Neill Sen. Tyson Larson, LB597 would expand the use of an agricultural society levy to include purchase of equipment.



Sen. Tyson Larson

Larson introduced an amendment, adopted 31-0, that would require that a society receive consent from the county board before buying, selling or entering into long-term leases with society-owned real estate. Consent would not be required for short-term leases of 90 days or less.

The bill was advanced to final reading by voice vote.

Bill would regulate exotic animal sales

The Agriculture Committee heard testimony Jan. 28 on a bill that would redefine and expand the state's authority to regulate exotic animal sales in Nebraska.

North Platte Sen. Tom Hansen, sponsor of LB884, said the bill would more closely regulate the type of livestock animals being sold, purchased, bartered or otherwise transferred through exotic animal auctions or swap meets.



Sen. Tom Hansen

"LB884 is an attempt to be proactive in protecting the health and safety of Nebraska's livestock," Hansen said.

LB884 would create the Exotic Animal Auctions and Swap Meets Act and would define an exotic animal as one that is not commonly sold through licensed livestock auction markets pursuant to the Livestock Auction Market Act. The definition would include miniature cattle, horses and donkeys as well as sheep, goats, alpaca, llamas and pot-bellied pigs.

The bill would require exotic animal auctions or swap meets to register with the state Department of Agriculture in the same manner as livestock markets and retain or contract with a licensed accredited veterinarian to be available during each sale.

The bill also would require each animal that changes ownership to be accompanied by a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection, which would indicate that the animal has been subject to veterinary inspection within 30 days of change of ownership.

Greg Ibach, director of the state Department of Agriculture, testified in support of the bill. Approximately 20 different sites host exotic animal exchanges in Nebraska, he said, with a total of around 90 events per year. The department's concern is prevention of disease transfer, Ibach said.

Bruce Brodersen of the Nebraska Veterinary Medical Association also supported the bill, saying many of the exotic animal species can carry agents that also can infect humans.

Brodersen referenced the 2003 outbreak of "monkeypox," which was transferred from Gambian rats to prairie dogs and then to humans, noting that one suspected case of the disease occurred in Nebraska. He said LB884 would improve the state's ability to track and trace animal transport in the state.

"We believe passage of this bill will help reduce the spread of disease," Brodersen said.

Jeremy Van Boening of the Nebraska Cattlemen agreed. He said many animals purchased at exotic animal sales - especially sheep and goats - often are comingled with livestock animals.

"The great concern we have as cattlemen is the spread of potentially devastating disease," Van Boening said.

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

BUSINESS & LABOR

Bill would limit criminal record disclosure requirement

The Business and Labor Committee heard testimony Jan. 27 on a bill aimed at limiting public employers' ability to inquire about an applicant's criminal record.

LB932, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Bill Avery, would prohibit public employers from asking an applicant to disclose information concerning his or her criminal history until the employer has determined that the applicant meets the minimum employment qualifications.



Sen. Bill Avery

The bill would not apply to law enforcement agencies, any position for which federal or state law requires a criminal history record check or for which federal or state law specifically disqualifies an applicant with a criminal background.

The bill would not prevent a public employer from conducting a criminal record check after determining that an applicant meets the minimum employment qualifications.

Avery said the bill – known as “ban the box” legislation – was modeled after a California law intended to minimize the impact of the stigma surrounding even minor criminal convictions. Many people come in contact with law enforcement in their youth, he said, which can hinder their job prospects for years.

“You make an initial application and there’s a box to check if you have a criminal background,” Avery said. “Usually that is where the application ends, because once you check the box, you don’t make it to the next stage.”

He said the bill could be an important component of prison reform. Individuals leaving incarceration need a fair chance to become gainfully employed, productive members of society, Avery said, adding that approximately 30,000 people in Nebraska fall into the category of ex-offenders.

Tommie Wilson, community liaison at Metropolitan Community College, testified in support of the bill. The state needs to do more to integrate individuals back into the community who are returning from prison, she said, and employment is an important part of the process.

“Because of the stigma of checking that box, it keeps them from employment,” Wilson said.

Willie Hamilton, executive director of Black Men United, also supported the bill, saying those who have served their time should not continue to be punished by not being able to obtain employment.

“We are the only industrialized country in the world that gives someone who has committed a crime a life sentence,” Hamilton said. “A mistake should not cost a person the rest of their lives.”

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

EDUCATION

Allied schools could offer more classes

The Education Committee heard testimony Jan. 28 on a bill that would require small schools to enter into allied systems.

Norfolk Sen. Jim Scheer introduced LB682, which would require any school district with fewer than 650 students to enter into an allied system with at least three other districts of the same size. The arrangement would last for at least two consecutive school years and must be formed before July 1, 2015.



Sen. Jim Scheer

Scheer said the bill would allow school districts to increase educational opportunities previously impossible because of financial and geographical constraints.

“I hear all the time about small districts having a hard time finding adequate professional teachers in specific areas,” he said. “With a web-based system, a teacher in one district could teach math to students in other districts. It would allow small districts to finally start offering educational opportunities that have been restricted to larger districts in the past.”

Schools in an allied system would be required to participate in an interlocal agreement, which would require the member schools to operate on the same yearly calendar and daily schedule beginning with the 2016 school year.

The member districts would not be required to combine or coordinate revenue, spending, taxation or state aid.

Bob Evnen of Lincoln supported the bill, saying it would give school districts considerable freedom.

“It’s a compact bill that is not at all intrusive,” he said. “It creates an environment that would encourage member districts to see if they can use it for the expansion of curriculum and instruction in their districts.”

Representing the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association, Jon Habben opposed LB682, saying more information is needed before moving forward with the bill.

“There are a lot of schools getting curriculum from many places and finding teachers to share now,” Habben said. “This is an attempt to create a legal structure to fix something without having created the information base about what is happening now.”

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

More tornado drills proposed

Schools would be required to implement a more stringent tornado drill policy under a bill heard by the Education Committee Jan. 27.

LB741, introduced by Gretna Sen. John Murante, would require each public school board to adopt a



Sen. John Murante

policy and response plan that includes:

- at least three tornado drills per year;
- a diagram showing a visible route to tornado shelters;
- provisions relating to safe and orderly movement of students and staff to a sheltered area; and
- what to do when a tornado siren is sounded.

Andrew Dolan, an elementary school student, testified in support of the bill. He said his school has numer-

ous fire drills but only one tornado drill each year.

“Tornadoes can appear quickly and cause a lot of damage,” he said. “This will make schools safer for students and staff because we will be better prepared.”

Norris Public Schools Superintendent John Skretta also supported the bill, saying that tornado safety has a new importance to him after a May 2004 tornado destroyed his school.

“The simple educational standard addressed in this bill is that repetition is essential to learning,” Skretta said. “These provisions can be readily complied with. Vigilance is our single best asset.”

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

New school security director proposed

Increasing school safety would be the focus of a new position created under a bill heard by the Education Committee Jan. 27.

LB872, introduced by Omaha Sen. Rick Kolowski, would create the position of statewide school security director within the state Department of Education. The director’s responsibilities would include:



Sen. Rick Kolowski

- collecting safety and security plans from each school district;
- recommending minimum standards and encouraging their adoption by the department;
- conducting a security assessment of every school;
- identifying deficiencies and recommending remedies; and
- establishing security awareness

and preparedness tools and training programs for public school staff and students.

Kolowski said families across the state are looking to legislators for leadership on the issue of school security.

“Each student is entitled to a school environment that is free from violence, abuse and fear,” he said. “We need to show our commitment to keeping their schools safe.”

Brian Halstead, representing the state Department of Education, supported the bill, saying it would address just one part of school safety.

“Currently we have no staff members that have training or background in safety and security,” he said. “If we have the resources to assist to attempt to address this on a systematic basis, we want to.”

Representing the Nebraska State Education Association, Larry Scherer testified in support of the bill.

“The issue of safety and security needs to be paramount and this is a good first step,” Scherer said.

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

Student and school accountability reforms proposed

Only proficient readers would advance from third to fourth grade under a bill heard by the Education Committee Jan. 28.

Under LB952, introduced by Omaha Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh,

third-grade students who fail to be proficient in state and local reading assessments would be held back until proficiency is attained. Schools would be required to



Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh

provide intensive summer programs and supplemental reading opportunities to all students in kindergarten through third grade to help keep students on track for promotion.

Lautenbaugh said the bill is modeled after education reforms that have been successful in other states.

“One of the goals of this bill is to try to address problems early on so that by third grade, students have reached a level of proficiency that allows students to achieve success in other areas,” he said. “We can do better and this bill establishes a framework to meet some of these goals.”

Bob Evnen of Lincoln spoke in support of requiring reading proficiency before automatically advancing students from the third grade.

“What we communicate to the child in a social promotion is that we’re giving up on them,” Evnen said. “Addressing this now is, without a doubt, in the best interests of the child.”

The bill also would require the state Department of Education to develop a model for grading the quality and progress of individual schools. A school’s grade would be based on a combination of:

- student achievement scores on the statewide assessment for all students enrolled in the school;
- student learning gains for all students enrolled in the school as measured by the statewide assessment; and
- student learning gains of the students enrolled in the school scoring in the lowest 25th percentile in reading and mathematics on the statewide assessment.

Schools that maintain an “A” grade or see improvement by a grade level would be eligible for a monetary reward that could be used for nonrecurring bonuses for faculty and staff or

for special equipment geared toward increasing student performance.

The department also would be authorized to issue teaching certificates to qualified candidates who have not graduated from an accredited state teacher education program if they have:

- qualified by examination and college credits;
- hold a valid doctoral degree from a properly accredited institution; or
- hold a valid teaching certificate from another state or a national accreditation board.

A final provision in the bill would require written approval of teacher transfers from the principal of the school to which the teacher is wishing to transfer.

Gina Miller, whose children are students in the Omaha Public School district, opposed the bill. She said there needs to be more local control and parental involvement in education reform.

“We need to stop legislating, testing and measuring our children’s education to death,” Miller said. “There is less and less time for children to engage in true learning activities. These decisions should be made by local school boards, which understand the issues unique to their students.”

State Education Commissioner Matt Blomstedt opposed the bill on behalf of the state Board of Education, saying that it proposes worthy concepts, but that it would force the state to diverge from its current plan to address student learning goals.

“I believe that we ought to be informing ourselves and the public with the data we have in place as a communication to the public about how well our schools are working,” Blomstedt testified. “If they aren’t reading by grade three, that is their opportunity

to be reading to learn. If we miss that opportunity with students, we have actually impacted their lives.”

Jay Sears, representing the Nebraska State Education Association, also opposed the bill as currently drafted, saying that it is important to acknowledge that not all students come to school ready to learn and that they progress at different rates.

“We appreciate that Sen. Lautenbaugh sought our input on this bill,” he said. “We support extended learning opportunities for students. However, we believe there are more unintended consequences in retaining students than there are benefits to learning.”

Representing Voices for Children, Aubrey Mancuso provided neutral testimony. She said the goals of the bill are admirable, but automatic retention is misguided.

“We support the overall goal of addressing the issue of grade-level reading,” she said. “However, holding children back in the third grade isn’t effective and can have damaging consequences, including behavioral problems and an increase in disruptive classroom dynamics.”

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

state has been borrowing a plane from the University of Nebraska Foundation and has not purchased a new plane in over three decades.



Sen. Bob Krist

The bill is the product of legislation passed last year that commissioned an independent study to determine whether the state should purchase an aircraft for state purposes. The completed study recommended that the state purchase a new aircraft.

“It was worth the extra time and extra effort [to do the study],” Krist said. “This bill allows us to buy a new airplane, under warranty, which would include two pilot positions and one flight mechanic.”

The study commissioned by the Legislature indicated the King Air C90GTx would have the lowest costs over a 20-year life cycle. A new King Air C90GTx would retail for approximately \$3.85 million. The bill would authorize the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency to operate, maintain and hangar the state aircraft.

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Purchase of new state airplane discussed

A bill that would authorize the purchase of a plane for state use was heard by the Executive Board during a hearing Jan. 31.

Omaha Sen. Bob Krist introduced LB1016, which would authorize the state Department of Aeronautics to purchase a new aircraft and sell the state’s current plane. Krist said the

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Restrictions on electronic cigarettes discussed

Minors would be prohibited from purchasing electronic cigarettes in Nebraska under legislation heard by the General Affairs Committee Jan. 27.

Introduced by Wilber Sen. Russ Karpisek, LB861 would add vapor products to the list of tobacco-based items that are illegal to sell to children under 18 years old. In Nebraska, a vapor

product is defined as any noncombustible tobacco-derived product containing nicotine that employs a mechanical heating element, battery or circuit.



Sen. Russ Karpisek

Minors who use vapor products would be violating the same law that applies to other tobacco products, a Class V misdemeanor. Selling a vapor product to a minor would be a Class III misdemeanor, the current penalty applied to other tobacco products.

The bill also would require retailers to display vapor products in secured areas. Tobacco specialty businesses that do not permit minors on the premises would be exempt from this restriction.

Karpisek said he brought the legislation because of the potential health risks of electronic cigarettes.

“I don’t feel there has been enough research on e-cigarettes for minors to have them,” he said.

Tim Bowen of Plumes e-cigarette stores in Omaha testified in support of the age restriction elements of LB861, saying his stores already “aggressively” enforce a policy of not selling any vapor products to minors. Bowen was concerned, however, that proposed regulations on where products could be displayed in his store would hurt his business. Allowing adult customers to handle accessories and sample the products is critical to helping them become familiar with the new technology of vapor products, he said.

Ann Elliott of Lincoln, a vapor product user, also spoke in support of the proposed age restrictions of the bill, but opposed the bill’s language concerning self-service product displays. She agreed with Bowen that her ability to sample vaping products helped her decide the most effective way to reduce her nicotine intake.

Bill Peters, lobbyist for the Cigar Association of America, testified in opposition to some aspects of the bill. He said that the regulations proposed in LB861 should not apply to the tobacco specialty stores that do not sell vapor products. “Traditional cigar stores” currently do not have a problem with unaccompanied minors, he said, so adding the age and self-service restrictions would be unnecessary.

David Holmquist of the American Cancer Society provided neutral testimony. To be consistent with federal regulations, he said, electronic cigarettes should be regulated in the same way as other tobacco products. The ACS does not recommend electronic cigarettes as a tool to reduce nicotine, Holmquist said, and the group is concerned that electronic cigarettes may create new tobacco users.

Holmquist urged the committee to amend the bill’s language to distinguish between vapor products and electronic cigarettes, because some vapor products do not contain nicotine.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.



Election bill amended to extend write-in candidate period

Senators advanced a bill from select file Jan. 30 that would allow for automatic advancement in the case of a small pool of candidates for county office.

If the number of county office candidates from each party in a primary election does not exceed the number of candidates that may be nominated by the party, those candidates automatically would advance to the general election under LB56, a bill introduced

by O’Neill Sen. Tyson Larson.



Sen. Tyson Larson

Omaha Sen. Heath Mello introduced an amendment that would allow for a person to file as a write-in candidate in a partisan primary election within two days of the March 1 filing deadline. Mello said he originally had hoped to extend that period to two weeks past the deadline, but the secretary of state’s office requires more time to print and distribute absentee ballots.

“The issue raised during general file was the elimination of a person’s ability to do a write-in campaign,” Mello said. “This represents a compromise to address the concern of an incumbent running unopposed and allowing someone to file a write-in campaign in a partisan primary election.”

Hoskins Sen. Dave Bloomfield opposed the amendment, saying it would not provide enough time for write-in candidates to make a decision to run.

“I appreciate the work Sen. Mello has done in drafting the amendment,” Bloomfield said, “but how many of you decided within two days that you were going to run?”

Senators adopted the amendment on a 28-2 vote and the bill advanced by voice vote.

New tied election procedures advance

Losing a primary election in a tie would not automatically end a candidate’s run under a bill advanced from general file Jan. 28.

Under LB144, introduced by Bancroft Sen. Lydia Brasch, any candidate who loses a primary election deci-



Sen. Lydia Brasch

sion “by lot” for county, city, village or school district office would be eligible as a write-in candidate in the general election for the same office.

Currently, these primary elections that result in a tie are decided by lot — an object used to determine a question by chance such as a coin toss or the drawing of a card. The loser of the decision by lot is ineligible to run for the same office in the general election, including write-in candidacy, filing by petition or filing a nomination. The only exception would be if there is a vacancy on the ballot for that office.

Brasch said current practices undermine the will of the people.

“Our duty as caretakers of the election process is to build an election system that promotes civic involvement and fairness,” she said. “These games of chance do not express the choice of the people in such small, close races.”

Omaha Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh supported the bill, saying it provides a clear, simple solution.

“It seems unfair to tie in the primary and then be prohibited from running in the general [election] because of a game of chance,” he said.

A floor amendment introduced, and later withdrawn, by Norfolk Sen. Jim Scheer would have included natural resources district member elections in the bill. He said senators should be thinking about the big picture when reforming election practices.

“If we are going to put this on the table to talk about, now is the time to look at the problem in its entirety,” Scheer said. “We should be looking at the total picture, not exclusively in one isolated case somewhere in the state.”

Hyannis Sen. Al Davis introduced a floor amendment to include all elections in the state, saying the issue of fairness in elections required more thought. He later withdrew the amendment.

Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers introduced a motion to bracket the bill until April 17, 2014. He said no one knows what far-reaching consequences the bill would have.

“My job is to look after what I deem to be the interests of the public and the Legislature as an institution,” he said. “Nobody is harmed if we don’t pass this bill, but the entire system will be thrown out of whack if we do.”

The bracket motion failed on a 13-20 vote.

Senators voted to advance the bill to select file on a 28-6 vote.

Electoral vote debate begins

Senators began two days of general file debate Jan. 28 on a bill that would change presidential election procedures.

Currently, the winner of Nebraska’s statewide popular vote receives two Electoral College votes. The state’s three congressional districts also award one electoral vote each based on the popular vote winner in each district. 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 supporters of the current plan claimed that Nebraska would see an influx of presidential candidates and an increase in voter turnout by adopting the state’s unique plan.

“Those claims have not been realized in any great measure,” he said, adding that district allocation of electoral votes diminishes Nebraska’s influence on the national stage.

“States have gone back and forth over time,” Janssen said, “and I think it’s telling that 48 states have now chosen the winner-take-all form.”

Papillion Sen. Bill Kintner supported the bill, saying he saw no purpose in Nebraska being an “outlier” in the electoral process.

“It seems pretty natural that if you win the popular vote in [a] state that you should win the votes in that state,” Kintner said. “If it’s good for 48 states, it’s probably good for 49 states.”

Sen. Sue Crawford of Bellevue opposed the bill, saying district allocation of electoral votes has increased citizen and media interest in Nebraska politics. Having a competitive race in the 2nd Congressional District in 2008 energized young voters, she said.

“LB382 is a loss for the state of Nebraska in terms of citizen engagement,” she said, adding that having a unique system also raises the state’s national profile.

“Every time the Electoral College is mentioned in the media, they mention Nebraska,” Crawford said.

Lincoln Sen. Bill Avery also opposed the bill, saying the competitive 2008 presidential race brought approximately \$5.7 million in economic development to the 2nd District.

“I am searching for a public purpose in [this bill],” Avery said. “I can’t find a public purpose. I can find a political purpose, but I can’t find a public purpose.”

Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers filed a series of amendments to LB382, calling the measure a partisan attempt to “run roughshod” over those in the political minority. He said a return to the winner-take-all system would harm the principle of representative democracy in Nebraska.

The first Chambers amendment, defeated Jan. 29 on an 8-22 vote, would have limited the bill’s provi-



Sen. Charlie Janssen

sions to the Republican Party. Chambers filed a motion to reconsider the vote taken on his amendment, which failed 7-26.

The Legislature adjourned for the day before taking additional action on the bill.

New campaign transparency rules proposed

The Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee heard testimony Jan. 30 on a bill that would make adjustments to existing accountability and disclosure laws.

LB676, introduced by Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers, said the bill would assist the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission (NADC) in detecting and deterring inappropriate behavior by candidates and campaigns.



Sen. Ernie Chambers

“Public confidence may be bolstered by these provisions,” he said.

Under the bill, a committee – other than a political party committee – would be required to submit an end-of-the-year bank statement of its campaign account. In addition, a campaign committee would be prohibited from loaning funds.

The bill also would authorize the NADC to order restitution when appropriate and would increase from \$2,000 to \$5,000 the maximum penalty for an NADC violation.

Jack Gould of Common Cause Nebraska testified in support of the bill. He said the maximum fine has not been raised in 20 years and may no longer be enough to serve as a deterrent.

“LB676 is really a crucial bill in the sense that the credibility of campaign funds is really at stake,” Gould said.

NADC director Frank Daley also supported the bill, saying it would help the commission do a better job of tracking campaign bookkeeping and potentially could catch problems earlier.

“This provides us with the opportunity to bring it to the attention of the committee ... so we have good, clear and accurate campaign filings,” Daley said.

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

Class II and III school board size discussed

The Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee heard testimony Jan. 31 on a bill that would allow Class II and Class III school districts to adjust the number of members on their respective school boards.

Norfolk Sen. Jim Scheer said he introduced LB726 to provide smaller communities with more local control regarding the size of their school boards. He said the current nine-member boards are a result of merging school districts in the past.



Sen. Jim Scheer

“When the districts started moving together, everyone wanted as many representatives from their previous boards as possible,” he said. “It’s not only much harder to reach consensus, but it’s also harder to find the people to serve in much smaller districts.”

John Bonaiuto, representing the Nebraska Association of School Boards, supported the bill, saying that it’s difficult to find nine people to serve on a board in smaller districts.

“It’s not easy to get that many people to run for the empty seats in these smaller communities,” he said.

“Some continue to serve because they really don’t feel comfortable leaving their seats empty.”

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

Meeting requirements proposed for additional entities

The Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee heard testimony Jan. 30 on a bill intended to provide greater public scrutiny of certain quasi-governmental entities.

Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers, sponsor of LB778, said the bill was inspired by the operation of Omaha’s Metropolitan Entertainment and Convention Authority (MECA). He said the entity, which was formed jointly with the city and spends public funds, should be open to greater public scrutiny.

Under the bill, an entity jointly formed or constituted between a political subdivision and another entity would be required to:

- comply with the Open Meetings Act;
- disclose conflicts of interest; and
- make available for public examination documents and business records disclosed at a public meeting of the governing board.

The bill would not apply to trade secrets and other proprietary or commercial information, that, if released, would give advantage to business competitors and serve no public purpose.

Marty Bilek, testifying on behalf of the Omaha mayor’s office, supported the bill. He said the city long has had concerns with MECA regarding transparency. Although not technically a government body, he said, MECA should abide by the same transparency rules.

Jack Gould of Common Cause Ne-

braska also testified in support, saying the bill at least would clarify MECA's status as an entity. Gould said his organization received an opinion from the Nebraska attorney general's office saying MECA's status was unclear.

"They weren't sure whether it was public; they weren't sure whether it was private," he said. "At the bare minimum ... it's necessary for us to at least know what MECA is." Roger Dixon, president and CEO of MECA, testified in opposition to the bill. Acknowledging that the entity could do better in terms of transparency, he said the bill raises concerns about unintended consequences.

Dixon said venues and cities competing for entertainment acts and sponsorships could use the bill to attempt to obtain proprietary information from MECA and use it to their competitive advantage.

MECA is a 501(c)(3) that has not taken funds from the city in five years, Dixon said, adding that the entity is eager to work with the city of Omaha to increase transparency while protecting proprietary information.

"We just need the time to work through this," he said.

Frank Daley, executive director of the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission, provided neutral testimony, saying the broad nature of the bill made it difficult to estimate how much public education the Commission would be required to engage in.

"At this time we're unable to determine how many entities it would apply to," Daley said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

State slogan bill withdrawn

Senators voted to withdraw from consideration a bill that would have provided the state's tourism commis-

sion additional marketing authority.

LB1024, introduced by Omaha Sen. Heath Mello, would have authorized the Nebraska Tourism Commission to adopt a state symbol, state slogan or both. The Commission asked Mello to withdraw the bill to prevent any further confusion in their ongoing branding efforts.

"The bill, which should have been noncontroversial, would have repealed statutory language from 1963 establishing the official state slogan as 'Welcome to Nebraskaland, where the west begins,'" Mello said. "Unfortunately early media reports gave the false impression that it would have repealed 'The Good Life,' which is not actually the state slogan."

Senators voted to withdraw the bill on a 30-2 vote.



Sen. Heath Mello



Increase in Medicaid personal allowance proposed

Residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities would receive an increase in their personal needs allowance under a bill heard Jan. 31 by the Health and Human Services Committee.

LB705, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Colby Coash, would require the state Department of Health and Human Services to include in the standard of need for eligible aged, blind



Sen. Colby Coash

and disabled persons at least \$75 per month for a personal allowance, if an individual resides in an alternative living arrangement. Currently, the personal allowance is \$50 for nursing home residents and \$64 for individuals in assisted living facilities.

Coash said the personal allowance amount has not increased since 1999.

"This bill could have a significant impact on people in need," he said.

Keith Fickenscher, former administrator of the Grand Island Veterans Home, testified in support of the bill. He said small things that can greatly improve nursing home residents' quality of life, such as haircuts, over-the-counter pain relievers and snacks are much more expensive than they were 15 years ago.

In addition, he said, many residents spend up to half of the current allowance each month to prepay funeral expenses so that their children will not be burdened when they die.

"This increase of \$25 is needed, it is warranted and it is long overdue," Fickenscher said.

Nick Faustman of the Nebraska Health Care Association also testified in support of LB705, saying many residents struggle to cover all of their personal needs with the current allowance.

"This modest increase in the resident allowance would make a world of difference for so many," Faustman said.

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

Education funds exemption proposed

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony Jan. 31 on a bill that would exempt education funds from asset limit tests for certain public benefit programs.

LB732, introduced by Omaha Sen. Rick Kolowski, would remove 529 savings plans, student scholarships and work-study income from asset limit tests for Medicaid, the state's child care subsidy program and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).



Sen. Rick Kolowski

Kolowski said low-income families often must prioritize immediate well-being over long-term interests when considering whether to put aside money for education.

"LB732 is one way we can make college savings a more accessible option for our lowest income families," he said.

Aubrey Mancuso of Voices for Children in Nebraska testified in support of the bill, saying the cost of higher education is increasing faster than incomes. The state's current incentive of offering a tax deduction for college savings plans is not reaching families most in need of assistance in paying for higher education, she said.

Mancuso said research shows that students with an education savings plan are six times more likely to enroll in higher education than individuals in similar financial circumstances who lack a savings plan.

"Our economy needs educated workers," Mancuso said.

Tip O'Neill of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Nebraska also supported the bill. Removing enrollment barriers from low-income students is good public policy for Nebraska, he said.

"We know of the unmet financial need of students in this state and the great sacrifice that families have to make to enroll students in colleges and universities," O'Neill said.

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

JUDICIARY



Creation of guardianship office proposed

Nebraskans requiring guardians could turn to the state under a bill heard by the Judiciary Committee Jan. 29.

LB920, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Colby Coash, would create the Public Guardianship Act, which would establish an office that would serve as a means of last resort as guardian or conservator for situations in which no family member or suitable individual is available. The office also would provide education, training and support to current and future guardians and conservators.

The bill would place the Office of Public Guardian under the jurisdiction of the Nebraska State Court Administrator and would establish a director, deputy public guardian and up to 12 associate guardians.

Coash said Nebraska is facing a "critical epidemic" because the number of available guardians is decreasing while the number of people needing guardians continues to grow.

"Due to a rapidly aging population and smaller, geographically-dispersed families, there are often no family members or no interested individuals to serve as guardians for our elderly and mentally ill people with developmental disabilities in our state," Coash said.

State-approved guardians would be a better option than Nebraska's current policy, Coash said, in which courts appoint volunteers in cases

where no one comes forward to serve as a guardian. The lack of available guardians has forced the courts to sometimes select unqualified conservators, he said.

"This has led to some dishonest volunteers taking on multiple and hundreds of wards and stealing their assets," he said, referencing a recent state audit report that revealed a single person to be a legal guardian for more than 600 people.

Bruce Cudly of the Association of Community Professionals was one of 14 people who testified in support of the bill. Cudly said Nebraskans with no guardianship options are "terribly at risk and the state needs to do something about it."

Tom Maul, an attorney from Columbus, also spoke in support of the bill. He called the proposed office a safety net for the most vulnerable people in Nebraska—the elderly and mentally incapacitated in nursing homes who have no guardian options.

Speaking in a neutral capacity, Douglas County Court Judge Susan Bazis called Nebraska's current system unacceptable.

"We are at the breaking point and the reality is, if we don't do this now, people are not going to have guardians," Bazis said.

Nebraska would be the final state to create a guardianship office, Coash added.

The committee took no immediate action on LB920.

Legislators consider taking shark fins off of the menu

Shark fin soup would be banned in Nebraska according to legislation heard by the Judiciary Committee Jan. 31.

LB921, introduced by Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, would prohibit the sale, possession, trade and distri-

bution of shark fins or products containing shark fins in Nebraska. Violation of the law would be a Class V misdemeanor.



Sen. Jeremy Nordquist

Mark Roberts of DiVentures in Omaha testified in support of the bill. He said that 73 million sharks are killed annually for their fins, putting the animals in danger of extinction. Because all other sea life depend on sharks as “apex predators,” he said, it is only a matter of time before oceans cease to provide food, knowledge and beauty humans have become accustomed to.

Dr. Lee Simmons, former director of Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo, testified in support of the bill but said it will be difficult to change people’s perceptions that shark fin products are delicacies, especially in Asian cultures.

“It takes a lot of pressure to change a culture, but it can happen,” Simmons said.

There is no nutritional value and little taste to shark fins, said Brett Homme, a student at the Papillion-La Vista Zoo Academy who spoke in support of the bill.

Pat Purkhiser, an instructor at the Academy, said his students investigated the availability of shark fins in Omaha, and found them, as well as complete sharks, in multiple markets. He also testified in support of the bill.

“I urge you to be stewards of this planet and pass this law,” Purkhiser said.

No one testified in opposition to LB921 and the committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Placement of native foster children discussed

Improving native foster children’s

connection to their culture is the purpose of legislation heard by the Judiciary Committee Jan. 29.

LB928, introduced by the State Tribal Relations Committee, would change provisions of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) to:

- clarify the responsibilities of Nebraska child welfare providers by strengthening state law and defining key areas of the ICWA;
- define existing pieces of ICWA; and
- ensure Native American tribes have a voice in judicial hearings involving native children.

“Native American children are more likely to be state wards than their peers,” said Sen. Colby Coash chairperson of the State Tribal Relations Committee. He referred to statistics that show Nebraska has the nation’s third highest rate of native children in foster care and said the state has not changed ICWA since 1985.

“The intent is that if a native child is removed from their home, then a greater effort will be made to place that child with next of kin or at least within the tribal community,” Coash said.

Roger Trudell, Santee Sioux tribal chairman, testified in support of the bill.

“The children, for tribal people, are really considered to be our greatest resource,” Trudell said.

“We have lost a lot of children over the years,” he said, adding that the bill would help the children reestablish their tribal heritage.

Chris Legband, executive director of tribal affairs for the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, told her story of being placed in foster care and separated from her brother and sister for 30 years.

“We didn’t know each other existed,” she said, speaking in support

of the bill.

“This law fearlessly fights to ensure that the siblings, the culture and the families are kept together,” Legband said.

Kim Hawekotte, executive director of the State Foster Care Review Office, testified in support of LB928 and presented statistics showing that native children make up 8 percent of Nebraska foster children in out-of-home care.

“We know we have a disproportionate minority overrepresentation,” she said, and added that the bill is “a good start in order to deal with the situation.”

Alicia Henderson of the Lancaster county attorney’s office testified in opposition to the bill. She said the Legislature does not have the authority to exceed the bounds of the current federal Indian child welfare laws.

“There are many portions of the bill that we believe are susceptible to a constitutional challenge,” Henderson said.

“The county attorney’s office would be hard-pressed to pursue any foster care placement or termination of parental rights action on any Indian child” if the bill were passed, said Douglas County Attorney Amy Schuchman in her neutral testimony.

“It is incredibly difficult getting ahold of the different tribes to even find out whether or not that child is eligible for enrollment in their tribes,” she said.

The committee took no immediate action on LB928.

Human trafficking prevention coordinator proposed

Human trafficking prevention efforts in Nebraska would be coordinated by a single individual under a measure heard by the Judiciary Committee Jan. 30.

LB934, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Amanda McGill, would create a Coordinator of Human Trafficking Prevention and Rehabilitation under the Nebraska Crime Commission. The position is intended to lead and coordinate efforts, research and assist in implementing programs



Sen. Amanda McGill

The bill is estimated to cost \$118,000 in fiscal year 2014-15 for the position, a study and related costs.

McGill said a recently created task force on trafficking resulted in her office and other groups being overwhelmed by Nebraskans seeking information about and reporting incidents of human trafficking. Despite best efforts to respond to citizens' concerns, she said, "we are still not moving along with improving victim services as quickly as I believe we need to be."

"It's become clear that in order to move forward in a meaningful way, we need to have this dedicated statewide coordinator—a single person whose job it is to lead efforts," McGill said.

Al Riskowski of the Human Trafficking Task Force testified in support of the bill. He said the group has discovered that human trafficking is an extensive problem in Nebraska, with more than 1,200 adult women estimated to be involved in the sex trade in Lincoln and Omaha. A coordinator would give the task force much needed guidance on how to address this problem, Riskowski said.

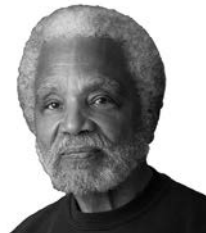
No one provided opposing or neutral testimony and the committee took no immediate action on LB934.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Bill aims to end hunting of mountain lions

Hunters could no longer target mountain lions under a bill heard by the Natural Resources Committee Jan. 29.

LB671, introduced by Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers, would repeal the law passed in 2012 that authorizes the state Game and Parks Commission to hold a mountain lion hunting season. Chambers said the Commission has estimated there are between 15 and 22 mountain lions in the state.



Sen. Ernie Chambers

"When you put out several hundred permits, you're not talking about hunting. You're talking about eradicating," he said. "I will do all I can to prevent the extermination of any species of any animal in this state."

The bill also would eliminate limited permits currently issued to farmers and ranchers to kill mountain lions preying on their livestock or poultry.

Rancher Alvin Guenther testified in support of the bill. He said the original legislation was drafted because of inaccurate information.

"I have hunted most of my entire life and I have gained a very deep appreciation for the magnificent resources of our great state," he said. "Much of this law that has been enacted has been because of hyperbole and fear of an animal indigenous to the land."

Retired University of Nebraska professor Paul Johnsgard also supported the bill, saying that the hunting season is not reducing human and mountain lion contact.

"In the states which have allowed hunting seasons, it's been found that the incidence of harmful contacts between humans and mountain lions actually increases," Johnsgard testified. "We're not ameliorating or reducing any perceived dangers from mountain lions."

Dean Forney, representing Forney Ranch, opposed the bill, saying the hunting season was never intended to eradicate the population.

"If [Game and Parks] doesn't manage the mountain lion population, you're going to decimate the deer, bighorn sheep, turkey and elk populations," he said. "It would be irresponsible not to permit Game and Parks to manage all wildlife, using hunting seasons as a tool."

Nebraska Big Game Society representative Henry Rick Brandt also opposed the bill. He said it is crucial to have a management plan in place, including the use of hunting seasons.

"Some day mountain lions will be a problem and it's good to have someone competent to manage them," he said.

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Director Jim Douglas testified in a neutral capacity. He said the Commission always is open to additional consideration of game management policies.

"We realize that the hunting of mountain lions is a controversial topic," Douglas said. "Our intent has always been to manage populations over time and with consideration given to social acceptance, which is always changing."

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Changes to NRD occupation tax procedures proposed

Members of the Natural Resources Committee heard testimony on two

bills Jan. 30 that would change the way natural resources districts (NRDs) use local occupation taxes.

Currently, eligible natural resources districts may levy an occupation tax on irrigated land. Producers who opt out of irrigating can file by March 1 to be exempted from the occupation tax.

LB686, introduced by Imperial Sen. Mark Christensen, would extend the annual deadline from March 1 to June 1. Christensen said that the current timeline places undue restrictions on producers.



Sen. Mark Christensen

“[The current deadline] restricts the producer’s flexibility when it comes to managing their operation,” Christensen said. “It locks them into irrigating or not irrigating at a time when circumstances such as precipitation may change drastically after that date.”

James Meismer, representing the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts, opposed the bill, saying he believed it would lead to a significant loss of revenue.

“If this change were to occur, producers could irrigate through April and May and then request nonirrigated status to avoid the occupation tax,” he said. “They would then have the remainder of the year to grow a dry year crop.”

No one testified in support of the bill.

The committee also heard testimony on LB710, introduced by Christensen, which would require an NRD board to hold a public hearing before entering into a ground water augmentation project outside of district boundaries. The bill also would require a two-thirds vote by the board to entire into such a project.

Christensen said a hearing would

increase public awareness of potential projects that could obligate millions of local tax dollars.

“I don’t want to tie their hands when it comes to managing their projects,” he said. “It’s good public policy to require a public hearing. This just provides another layer of taxpayer protection.”

Mike Delka, representing the Bostwick Irrigation District, testified in support of the bill, saying it should help to avoid conflicts between local users.

“This would encourage local solutions to local problems,” Delka said. “This requires more than a simple majority for major decisions and encourages sustainability of local water supplies.”

Upper Republican NRD Assistant Manager Nate Jenkins opposed the bill. He said it disregards the efforts of many NRDs to gather public testimony on current projects.

“We have a long, proud history of inviting and using public testimony to create public policies that are designed to preserve water resources,” he said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bills.



Financial assistance proposed for municipal infrastructure projects

Municipalities could apply for financial assistance to address federally mandated infrastructure projects under a bill considered by the Revenue Committee Jan. 29.

Omaha Sen. Heath Mello introduced LB760, in part to deal with Omaha’s combined sewer overflow project. He said the project could be

the largest infrastructure project in the history of the state.

“Local governments regularly face unfunded mandates,” he said. “The sheer size of this project, combined with strict U.S. Environmental Protection Agency timelines, make the project troublesome.”



Sen. Heath Mello

The bill would create two separate funds to address the costs of municipal infrastructure projects. Municipalities would be eligible for assistance under only one fund, not both.

The Combined Sewer Overflow Infrastructure Fund (CSOIAF) would allocate to municipalities overseeing a combined sewer overflow project 90 percent of the state sales tax collected on increased monthly sewer use fees.

CSOIAF also would create a board to review and approve applications for state assistance. Membership would include the director of the state Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the CEO of the state Department of Health and Human Services and the state fire marshal.

Assistance under CSOIAF would be conditional on the municipality using local option sales tax revenue collected from sewer use fees for the project. Municipalities would be barred from using the local option sales tax revenue to fund the general operations of the city.

Marty Grate, environmental services manager for the city of Omaha, supported the bill, saying residents would begin to feel negative financial impacts of the sewer project without assistance.

“Through 2018 we, as a community, should be able to afford the increases to keep pace with the compliance schedule,” Grate testified. “We need to begin working now to find

some way to reduce the burden [on citizens]. This won't solve the problem, but it will help us chip away at the costs."

Nebraska Association of Industrial Manufacturers representative James Timmerman also testified in support of LB760. He said many of the Association's members were facing potential water fee increases of 50 to 100 percent.

"Businesses face tough decisions regarding whether to keep operating or expanding in Omaha," he said. "Although we remain the largest class of rate payers for this project, we are committed to finding solutions. This would create another revenue stream to help fund the project."

The remaining 10 percent of sales taxes collected on sewer use fees would be distributed under the Unfunded Federal Mandate Infrastructure Assistance Fund (UFMIAF). DEQ would administer grants to political subdivisions not receiving assistance under CSOIAF. Any subdivision receiving assistance under UFMIAF would be required to provide a 10 percent match of funds received from the state.

The state tax commissioner would be authorized to audit approved applications to determine the amount of state sales tax revenue available for projects.

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

TRANSPORTATION & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Zoning penalties amended into waste spill bill, advanced

Senators advanced a bill from select file Jan. 30 that would increase penalties for drivers who spill livestock

excrement on highways in urban areas.

LB174, introduced by Omaha Sen. Heath Mello, would increase the minimum fine from \$100 to \$250 for any driver who spills manure or urine from a vehicle on any highway located within the corporate limits of a metropolitan class city. The violation is a Class IV misdemeanor.

Lincoln Sen. Amanda McGill filed a motion to suspend the rules to permit the consideration of an amendment to the bill, which was approved on a 27-0 vote. The amendment would change the penalties for zoning ordinance violations in metropolitan class cities to a Class IV misdemeanor for a first or second violation and a Class II misdemeanor for third and subsequent violations, if they are committed within two years of the prior violation.

The penalties for zoning ordinance violations haven't changed in 100 years, McGill said, and increasing the fines for violations should result in safer neighborhoods.

The bill was advanced to final reading by voice vote.

Emergency contact registry proposed

Law enforcement could unite families sooner following emergency situations under legislation heard by the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee Jan 28.

LB786, introduced by Bellevue Sen. Sue Crawford, would create an emergency contact registry within the State Department of Motor Vehicles for exclusive use by law enforcement following crisis situations in which a victim cannot communicate.

Under the bill, Nebraska residents

with a state driver's license or identification card voluntarily could provide up to two contact names and phone numbers via the DMV website without charge. Registrants under 18 years old would be required to provide contact information for at least one parent or guardian.

The contact information would not be considered public record, except upon a subpoena issued by a grand jury or court order in a criminal matter. Law enforcement and DMV personnel would not be held liable if the contact information is incorrect or inaccessible due to technological reasons.

Crawford said she brought LB786 to give authorities an additional tool to reunite families sooner after traumatic events such as motor vehicle crashes and natural disasters.

"Nebraska families deserve to be present with their loved ones following an accident or other emergency, to share medical histories, make treatment decisions and, unfortunately in some cases, say goodbye," she said.

John Francavilla, president of the Nebraska Fraternal Order of Police, testified in support of the bill.

"LB786 will give us a chance to be able to notify a family member of an injury and allow the family to see their loved one in a responsible and reasonable time," he said.

Francavilla said that without contact information, it sometimes takes hours or days to reach family members of accident victims.

"You never forget the difficulties you had in trying to find the family of the victim—the desperation you felt knowing the victim doesn't have long to live and all you want to do is find a family member and get them to the hospital," Francavilla said.

He recommended that the committee change the bill to make providing contact information a mandatory requirement when the DMV issues a



Sen. Sue Crawford

driver's license or identification card.

Sue Sheely of Bellevue testified in support of the bill, saying it took authorities eight hours to contact her family after her father's motorcycle accident. First responders and the hospital revived her father twice, she said, because they were unaware of his wishes to not be resuscitated.

"If we had been notified in a timely manner, the needless suffering of my family and the \$100,000 spent on my father's medical care could have been avoided or at least minimized," Sheely said.

Rhonda Lahm, Nebraska DMV director, opposed the bill, saying it would be "nearly impossible to implement in its current language."

Lahm questioned several technical aspects of the bill, such as the financial, time and labor costs of establishing and maintaining the contact registry, connectivity between databases and liability regarding access to and accuracy of the information.

Speaking in a neutral capacity, John Lindsay of the Nebraska Association of Trial Attorneys recommended that the committee amend the bill to delete sections or more narrowly define the liabilities of those providing and using the contact registry information.

The committee took no immediate action on LB786.

Driver texting, seat belt penalties discussed

Not wearing a seat belt and texting while driving would be grounds for law enforcement to stop a vehicle under legislation heard by the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee Jan. 28.

LB807, introduced by Scottsbluff Sen. John Harms, would create the Ne-



Sen. John Harms

braska Roadway Safety Act, which would change five motor vehicle violations from secondary to primary offenses:

- texting while driving;
- failure by occupants in a vehicle to use seat belts;
- using any type of wireless communication device while driving a school bus;
- using any type of wireless communication device while driving for those with a learner's, school or provisional driving permit; and
- operating a motor vehicle with a provisional driving permit between 6 a.m. and midnight with more than one passenger who is not a family member and under 19 years old.

Currently in Nebraska, secondary offenses can be enforced only when a driver has been cited or charged with a traffic violation or some other offense.

LB807 would save lives and give law enforcement the "proper tools" to address dangerous driving behavior in the state, Harms said, adding that statistics overwhelmingly support the disastrous effects of distracted driving.

"Research shows today that texting is just as dangerous as drunken driving," he said.

Sending and receiving texts takes drivers' eyes off of the road an average of 4.6 seconds, Harms said, which, at 55 mph, is equivalent to driving the length of a football field. He added that Nebraska is one of only four remaining states where texting is not a primary offense.

Rob Reynolds of Omaha said stronger penalties for texting while driving could have prevented the death of his daughter, who was killed by a distracted driver. Speaking in favor of the bill, he said statistics show people who text while driving are 23

times more likely to cause an accident.

"You will not find a piece of research that negates the ill effects of texting while driving," Reynolds said.

Lancaster County Sheriff Terry Wagner testified in support the bill, saying it would heighten public awareness of a dangerous situation on Nebraska roads. Passing laws like LB807 "sends a strong message that these are important issues that save lives," he said.

Enforcing a ban on texting while driving would not be impossible, Wagner said, noting that he sees people texting while driving daily. Officers who suspect a driver is texting can use phone records to determine if a text was made, he said.

"It's frustrating to see a violation of law and not be able to do anything about it," Wagner said.

Beverly Reicks of the National Safety Council testified in support of the bill, saying that young drivers will not change their potentially dangerous behavior "unless we show them that there are consequences for their actions."

Bruce Beins of the Nebraska Emergency Medical Services Association spoke in favor of LB807. He said first responders have seen over time how seat belt and drunken driving laws have diminished the number and severity of traffic injuries. Updating current seat belt and distracted driving laws would continue to change drivers' attitudes, he said.

George Ferebee of Edgar testified in opposition to LB807. He suggested that better driver education could increase seat belt use and recommended that the committee work with phone companies to develop technology that prevents phones from operating inside moving vehicles.

The committee took no immediate action on LB807.

URBAN AFFAIRS

Additional powers for certain SIDs proposed

The Urban Affairs Committee heard testimony Jan. 28 on a bill that would provide additional powers for certain sanitary and improvement districts (SIDs) in Nebraska.

Norfolk Sen. Jim Scheer, sponsor of LB968, said the bill would apply when an SID is too close to a municipality to incorporate, yet too far away from a municipality to be annexed. He said the bill would allow a qualifying SID to provide the sort of services that those who live within a municipality take for granted.

“This is about trying to have normal conveniences and enforcement of



Sen. Jim Scheer

what you’d expect in a neighborhood,” Scheer said.

In order to qualify for the additional powers, the SID would have to be:

- located in a county with a population between 5,000 and 8,000;
- located in a different county than the county of the municipality within whose zoning jurisdiction the SID is located;
- unable to incorporate due to its close proximity to a municipality; and
- unable to be annexed by a municipality with zoning jurisdiction because the SID is not adjacent or contiguous to such municipality.

Scheer said he would offer an amendment that also would require county approval for a qualifying SID to have any of the additional powers authorized in the bill.

Subject to approval by a city council or village board within whose zoning jurisdiction it is located, a qualifying

SID would have the power to regulate:

- licensure of dogs and other animals;
- parking of abandoned vehicles;
- streets and sidewalks, including removal of obstructions and encroachments; and
- parking on public roads and rights of way relating to snow removal and access by emergency vehicles.

Lynn Rex of the League of Nebraska Municipalities testified in support of the bill. She said SIDs have limited authority in statute because they were not intended to be permanently independent.

“SIDs clearly were legally structured so that they would ultimately be part of a city,” Rex said. An SID that would qualify under the bill would be rare, she said, and would require a unique solution to allow for limited powers.

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

Youth legislature registration now open

Registration for the 2014 Unicameral Youth Legislature is now open. Scheduled for June 8-11, the Unicameral Youth Legislature offers high school students the opportunity to learn what it’s like to serve as a state senator. Student senators will discover the unique process of our nation’s only unicameral by sponsoring bills, conducting committee hearings and debating legislation.

Participants will learn the details of the Nebraska Legislature directly from senators, staff and lobbyists using bill topics based on actual legislation considered during the most recent unicameral session. Students will conduct their legislative duties in the historic Warner Chamber, the former home of the Nebraska Senate.

If you know a student who has an interest in law, government, leadership or public speaking, encourage them to visit the Unicameral Youth Legislature website to learn more about this unique four-day event.

Early-bird registration is available until April 1. Registration and scholarship application forms can be obtained from NebraskaLegislature.gov/uyl or bigredcamps.unl.edu. The registration deadline is May 15.



COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

Monday, February 3

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB905 (Speaker Adams) Provide for deficit appropriations
LB906 (Speaker Adams) Transfer funds and create and eliminate funds
Agency 65: Dept. of Administrative Services
Agency 18: Dept. of Agriculture
Agency 19: Dept. of Banking
Agency 29: Dept. of Natural Resources
LB837 (Legislative Performance Audit) Change a provision relating to preaudits by state agencies
LB704 (Avery) Create the Nebraska Sesquicentennial Fund
LB797 (Nelson) Provide funding for fountains at the State Capitol

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB749 (B. Harr) Adopt the Nebraska Model Business Corporation Act
LB751 (Conrad) Adopt the Nebraska Benefit Corporation Act
LB810 (Watermeier) Change provisions relating to the enforcement and servicing of real estate loans
LB1010 (Janssen) Adopt the Nebraska Enterprise Act and authorize the Governor to award economic development grants

Business & Labor

Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.

LB800 (Mello) Provide for designation of enterprise zones and preferences in certain business incentive programs
LB765 (Conrad) Change the Nebraska Wage Payment and Collection Act
LB903 (Lathrop) Require a wage statement for employees under the Nebraska Wage Payment and Collection Act
LB943 (Nordquist) Change the minimum wage rate
LB947 (Lathrop) Change the minimum wage for persons compensated by way of gratuities
LB1085 (Cook) Require listing of employee salaries and job titles of certain private employers

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Shoemaker, J. Richard -

Neb. Educational Telecommunications Commission

Appointment: Bird, Kenneth - Neb.

Educational Telecommunications Commission

Appointment: Ohles, Frederik - Neb.

Educational Telecommunications Commission

LB692 (Sullivan) Change and eliminate

provisions relating to the Nebraska

Educational Telecommunications Act

LB703 (Avery) Change the Nebraska

Optometry Education Assistance

Contract Program

LB835 (Avery) Extend a pilot project

relating to college entrance exams

LB729 (Kolowski) Create the Task Force

on Expanded Learning Opportunities

for School-Age Youth

General Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB863 (Karpisek) Eliminate certain

election provisions under the Nebraska

Liquor Control Act

LB866 (Karpisek) Provide for appointment

of two additional members to the

Nebraska Liquor Control Commission

LB888 (Murante) Provide for changing

the hours for sale of alcohol

LB899 (Karpisek) Define hard cider

under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act

LB1104 (Watermeier) Change farm

winery licensing provisions

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB698 (Larson) Change provisions

relating to mowing and harvesting hay

on the right-of-way of highways

LB981 (Dubas) Change commercial

motor vehicle provisions relating

to falsified information, medical

examinations, texting, and use of

handheld mobile telephones

LB982 (Dubas) Redefine the terms all-

terrain vehicle and utility-type vehicle

LB983 (Dubas) Change provisions

relating to commercial driver's licenses

and commercial learner's permits

Tuesday, February 4

Agriculture

Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.

LB673 (Chambers) Repeal the Black-

Tailed Prairie Dog Management Act

LB882 (K. Haar) Change duties of the

Climate Assessment Response

Committee

LB1008 (K. Haar) Change duties of the

Climate Assessment Response

Committee

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 69: Neb. Arts Council

Agency 54: State Historical Society

Agency 33: Game & Parks Commission

LB873 (Larson) Create a fund and

appropriate and transfer funds for the

Game & Parks Commission

LB874 (Larson) Appropriate funds to

the Game & Parks Commission

LB1033 (Watermeier) Appropriate funds

to the Game & Parks Commission and

state intent relating to operation and

maintenance of Arbor Lodge State

Historical Park

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB750 (B. Harr) Change provisions

relating to lien perfection and

termination

LB753 (Gloor) Change a provision for

notice of a change of address for an

agent for service of process for a limited

liability company and provide a filing fee

LB774 (Pirsch) Change provisions

relating to filing corrected or amended

annual and biennial reports with the

Secretary of State

LB734 (Schumacher) Provide for deposit

of public funds with credit unions

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB992 (Howard) Create the Early

Childhood Data Governing Body

LB864 (Mello) Allocate funds to the

Early Childhood Education Grant

Program

LB984 (Sullivan) Change allocations

from the Education Innovation Fund

LB967 (Education) Change provisions

relating to state aid to schools and

funding for early childhood education

programs

LB1069 (Sullivan) Change provisions

relating to education

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

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

LB701 (Dubas) Change provisions relating to salvage titles and acquisition of salvage titles by insurance companies
LB727 (Harms) Change provisions relating to anatomical gift donation designations on drivers' licenses and state identification cards
LB816 (Murante) Authorize use of electronic forms of evidence of insurance for purposes of motor vehicle registration
LB910 (Dubas) Require notice from state or local law enforcement to lienholders or mortgagees of abandoned motor vehicles

Urban Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1011 (Janssen) Change the time limit on amending or repealing a municipal initiative
LB1012 (Schilz) Change provisions relating to blighted areas under the Community Development Law
LB1096 (Ashford) Change provisions for expansion of a business improvement district

Wednesday, February 5

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 47: Neb. Educational Telecommunications Commission
Agency 48: Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education
Agency 13: Dept. of Education
LB944 (Bolz) State intent relating to funding for early childhood services
LB969 (Sullivan) Change a limitation on appropriations for special education programs and support services
LB1026 (Bolz) Create and provide for a Nebraska Educational Trust Fund

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB946 (Murante) Change provisions relating to elections
LB1048 (Murante) Change and eliminate political party provisions
LB746 (Avery) Change election provisions to authorize provisional ballots and require identification for certain voters

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB854 (Krist) Prohibit issuance of a long-term care request for proposals before Sept. 1, 2015
LB1076 (Campbell) Provide for medicaid reimbursement rates and services for home health care
LB994 (Health & Human Services) Change fees as prescribed for vital statistics

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB677 (Mello) Adopt the Nebraska Patent Abuse Prevention Act
LR399 (Wightman) Recommend the enactment of comprehensive immigration reform
AM1674 - LB464 Change jurisdiction of courts over juveniles, procedures for juvenile indictment and filing of juvenile petitions, provisions relating to youth rehabilitation and treatment centers, payment of costs involved in adjudication and disposition of juveniles, and juvenile services funding
AM1734 - LB464 Change school truancy provisions

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB683 (Scheer) Change a reference to federal rules and regulations relating to storm water management
LB767 (Schilz) Change provisions relating to operator training for underground storage tanks and provide funding

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB986 (Revenue) Change homestead exemption income limitations
LB987 (Revenue) Adjust individual income tax brackets for inflation and exempt social security benefits from income taxation
LB995 (Hadley) Provide an income tax credit for state and local taxes paid

Thursday, February 6

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 14: Public Service Commission
Agency 41: State Real Estate Commission

Agency 85: Public Employees

Retirement Board

Agency 50: Neb. State College System

Agency 51: University of Neb. System

LB764 (Conrad) Appropriate funds for pediatric cancer research at the University of Neb. Medical Center
LB1051 (Howard) Adopt the Public Health Leadership and Development Act and appropriate funds to the Board of Regents of the University of Neb.

Executive Board

Room 2102 - 12:00 p.m.

LB720 (Crawford) Provide and change complaint procedures for rules and regulations
LB909 (Kintner) Require state agencies to submit to the Legislative Performance Audit Committee a list of certain rules and regulations and legislation requiring the rules and regulations
LB996 (McGill) Require state agencies to respond to legislative requests for information

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1018 (Hadley) Change public record provisions for withholding job application materials from the public
LB825 (Lautenbaugh) Require Open Meeting Act compliance by boards and subcommittees subject to the Nebraska Workforce Investment Act
LB937 (Karpisek) Change the quorum requirement for county boards

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB898 (Legislative Performance Audit) Require reports for public benefit programs delivery system
LB1088 (Conrad) Change income eligibility provisions relating to federal child care assistance
LB1050 (Campbell) Change provisions relating to inspections of certain child care facilities

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB785 (Lathrop) Provide when acknowledgment is not required for contract for sale of homestead property
LB1007 (K. Haar) Change provisions

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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relating to the Security, Privacy, and Dissemination of Criminal History Information Act

LB907 (Ashford) Provide for supervised release, reentry probation officers, create the Nebraska Center for Justice Research, and change presentence investigations and good time provisions
LB999 (Ashford) Adopt the Criminal Justice Reentry and Data Act and create the Reentry Programming Board

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Fisher, Rex - Game & Parks Commission

LB896 (Carlson) Change provisions of the Erosion and Sediment Control Act
LB1074 (Lathrop) Change provisions relating to the regulation of ground water

Nebraska Retirement Systems

Room 1525 - 12:00 p.m.

Appointment: Elliott, Janis N. - Public Employees Retirement Board
LB977 (Conrad) Change provisions relating to standard of care for corporate trustees regarding governmental retirement and pension funds

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB761 (Mello) Provide for a tax amnesty program and change provisions on contracts for finding nonpayers of taxes
LB850 (Watermeier) Provide a homestead exemption for individuals with developmental disabilities
LB912 (Kolowski) Adopt the Property Tax Relief Act
LB1087 (Pirsch) Create a homestead exemption for disabled veterans, widows, and widowers

Friday, February 7

Executive Board

Room 2102 - 12:00 p.m.

LB970 (Lautenbaugh) Provide that certain votes of public officials are public record
LR397CA (Lautenbaugh) Constitutional amendment to require public recording and preservation of votes of public officials

LB976 (Karpisek) Adopt the Redistricting Act

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB919 (Mello) Create the Open Data Advisory Board
LB845 (Schilz) Provide for regulation of meteorological evaluation towers
LB817 (K. Haar) Change membership provisions relating to public power district boards

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Rieken, Becky - Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Appointment: Salansky, Jr., Paul L. - State Board of Health

Appointment: Warner, Jeromy - State Board of Health

Appointment: Grandall, Trisha - Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board

Appointment: Knoche, Lisa L. - Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board

Appointment: Verzal, Brandon - Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board

Appointment: Harmon, Donald L. - Board of Emergency Medical Services
Community Services Block Grant Program

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB821 (Lautenbaugh) Provide a public benefits exemption for burial or cremation of an unclaimed body
LB881 (Watermeier) Change provisions relating to death, injury, or property damage to innocent third parties as a result of a police vehicular pursuit
LB878 (Seiler) Change provisions relating to wrongful death actions
LB964 (Brasch) Provide a homestead exemption for claimants under sixty-five years of age and not married

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Grennan, Dennis E. - Neb. Power Review Board
LB856 (Wallman) Require water well metering relating to hydraulic fracturing

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB670 (McCoy) Change property tax valuations of agricultural land and horticultural land
LB813 (Hansen) Change valuation of agricultural land and horticultural land for property tax purposes
LB913 (Kolowski) Provide an income tax credit for property taxes paid
LB1038 (Dubas) Provide an income tax credit for certain property taxes paid on agricultural land and horticultural land

Monday, February 10

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB876 (Howard) Prohibit exclusions of coverage for injury or damage from carbon monoxide or other gas exposure
LB716 (Gloor) Provide procedures relating to electronic delivery of insurance notices and documents and Internet posting of certain insurance policies
LB849 (B. Harr) Redefine automobile liability policy relating to the Motor Vehicle Registration Act
LB971 (Kolowski) Change and eliminate provisions relating to stacking of insurance coverage

Business & Labor

Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.

LB951 (Lautenbaugh) Change lump-sum settlement provisions under the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act
LB731 (Kolowski) Change provisions relating to workers' compensation first injury reports
LB793 (Wallman) Change workers' compensation death benefit provisions
LB961 (Cook) Change exclusive remedy provisions of the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act
LB997 (McGill) Change provisions relating to the Nebraska Training and Support Trust Fund
LB1083 (Garrett) Change job training grant provisions relating to veterans

Education

Room 1525 - 1:00 p.m.

Appointment: Zeiss, Jess D. - Board of Trustees of the Neb. State Colleges

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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Appointment: Lauritzen, Mary
- Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

Appointment: Wilson, William "Scott"
- Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

Appointment: Probyn, Dwayne
- Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

Appointment: Warner, Lori L. -
Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

LB1103 (Education) Provide for a strategic planning process for education

LB1077 (Sullivan) Adopt the Shared Responsibility for Access and Success Act
LB779 (Scheer) Change duties of the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education relating to transfer-of-credit policies

LB1055 (Janssen) Provide for tuition-free credits for veterans and military personnel as prescribed

LB1061 (Lautenbaugh) Change from elected to appointed boards for community college areas

Executive Board

Room 2102 - 12:00 p.m.

LR400 (Dubas) Provide the Executive Board of the Legislative Council appoint a special committee to be known as the ACCESSNebraska Special Investigative Committee of the Legislature

LR424 (Lathrop) Provide the Executive Board of the Legislative Council appoint a special committee of the Legislature to be known as the Dept. of Correctional Services Special Investigative Committee of the Legislature

Tuesday, February 11

Agriculture

Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.

LB696 (K. Haar) Prohibit the use of and require labeling of food containers containing Bisphenol A

LB768 (Schilz) Change fee provisions of the Livestock Brand Act

LB846 (Davis) To create the brand inspection service area for brand inspection fees and estray disposition

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB735 (Bolz) Require refund of certain insurance premiums upon death of insured

LB860 (Nordquist) Adopt health insurance requirements relating to dollar limits, rescissions, preexisting conditions, and dependents

LB875 (Howard) Change provisions relating to long-term insurance

LB993 (Christensen) Provide that health care sharing ministries are not insurance

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LR421CA (Lautenbaugh) Constitutional amendment to eliminate references to the State Board of Education, State Dept. of Education, and the Commissioner of Education

LB1059 (Lautenbaugh) Change membership of learning community coordinating councils

LB865 (Smith) Eliminate certain taxing authority of learning communities and change state aid calculations

LB1101 (Crawford) Change and eliminate provisions relating to state aid

and learning communities

LB1068 (Sullivan) Change provisions relating to learning communities

LB1070 (Sullivan) Change provisions relating to state aid to schools

Urban Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1095 (Davis) Create the Tax-increment Financing Division of the Dept. of Economic Development and change the Community Development Law

LB823 (Lautenbaugh) Terminate metropolitan utilities districts on Jan. 1, 2015

LB1014 (Murante) Change provisions for election of metropolitan utilities district board of directors

Wednesday, February 12

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1072 (Lathrop) Adopt the Prescription Monitoring and Health Information Exchange Act

LB1078 (Nordquist) Change the Nebraska Telehealth Act, provide for the establishment of a patient relationship through video conferencing, and require insurance coverage for telehealth services

LB1017 (Krist) Change and transfer pharmacy, prescription, and drug provisions

Nebraska Retirement Systems

Room 1525 - 12:00 p.m.

LB1041 (Nordquist) Change retirement provisions relating to school employees

LB1042 (Nordquist) Provide for repayments by school employees rejoining a retirement system ■

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public hearings on bills are typically held in the afternoons during the first half of the legislative session. Committees have regularly scheduled rooms and meeting days, although they sometimes meet in different rooms at varying times in order to accommodate testifiers or large audiences.

The weekly schedule of committee hearings is published on the last legislative day of the week throughout the legislative session. The schedule is available on a table in front of the Clerk's Office, in the Sunday editions of the Lincoln Journal Star and the Omaha World-Herald, in the weekly Unicameral Update and at www.nebraskalegislature.gov.

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Several Gretna students testified Jan. 27 in support of LB741, a bill that would require at least three school tornado drills per year. The students worked on the subject as members of the Future Bot Innovators team in the FIRST LEGO League. Story on page 6.