

## Bill would prohibit job discrimination for sexual orientation

Employees would be protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity under a bill heard by the Judiciary Committee Feb. 4.

Introduced by Lincoln Sen. Adam Morfeld, LB586 would prohibit employers, employment agencies and labor unions from discriminating against individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. The bill would apply to employers with 15 or more employees, employers with state contracts, the state of Nebraska, governmental agencies and political subdivisions.



Sen. Adam Morfeld

Discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, disability, marital status and national origin currently is prohibited.

Morfeld said the bill is necessary because lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Nebraskans are being terminated from jobs and discriminated against based on their lifestyles, not workplace performance.

"We need to bring meaning to the words 'equality before the law,'" he said. "No one should be fired for who they are or who they love."

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## Meningitis vaccine requirement advances



Sen. Bob Krist confers with Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks during general file debate on LB18.

Students would be required to receive two meningitis vaccinations by a bill advanced from general file Feb. 4.

Under LB18, introduced by Omaha Sen. Bob Krist, every student would receive a meningitis vaccine upon entering the seventh grade and again at age 16.

Krist said that vaccinating adolescents and young adults would have health benefits for the population at large.

"Teen meningitis vaccination can also protect high risk individuals through reduced carriage of bacteria and herd immunity," he said. "Keeping our teens up-to-date with vaccines is the best defense."

North Platte Sen. Mike Groene

introduced an amendment that would have stricken any requirement for students to receive the vaccine. It also would have required public and private schools to provide information to students' parents or guardians on the causes and symptoms of meningitis, how the disease spreads and where people can obtain more information about vaccination.

Groene said that the low number of meningitis cases does not warrant a mandatory vaccine program.

"Over the last 11 years, there have only been two cases of meningitis recorded in the 12- to 17-year-old age range and nine in the 18 to 22 age group," he said. "I believe an education process will be more effective in alerting the populace to the dangers

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# Bill would prohibit job discrimination for sexual orientation

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Morfeld added that a similar ordinance enacted by Omaha in 2012 did not yield an increase in discrimination litigation.

Clark Lauritzen, chairman of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, testified in support of the bill. Discrimination policies have an economic impact, he said, because inclusivity is increasingly becoming a deciding issue when talented employees consider working in Nebraska. Unwelcoming policies turn away prospective workers and create barriers for businesses looking for qualified employees, he said.

“We can’t afford to give good people a reason to leave our state,” Lauritzen said.

Tom Beckius, chairman of the Lincoln Young Professionals Group, agreed, saying LB586 is critical to creating a more inclusive and diverse workforce in the state. Speaking in favor of the bill, he said it is an important step in keeping Nebraska attractive to potential workers.

Lucas Peterson, a Lincoln resident, also supported the bill, saying that as

a gay man, his job searches require an inordinate amount of time spent studying prospective employers’ discrimination policies.

“I have been fired three times in my life for being who I am,” he said.

Greg Schleppenbach of the Nebraska Catholic Conference testified in opposition to LB586. He said the government should not force employers to affirm lifestyles and behavior they don’t agree with. Those who stand up for their own beliefs, he said, would be subject to litigation.

Joe Neuhaus of the Nebraska Family Alliance also opposed the bill, saying discrimination against the LGBT community has not been proven to be a problem in Nebraska. Employers likely are not aware of their workers’ lifestyles, he said, and would have difficulty identifying the people the bill seeks to protect.

“Many if not most employers here in Nebraska do not care what an employee’s sexual orientation is,” he said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill. ■

# Meningitis vaccine requirement advances

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of [the disease].”

Crete Sen. Laura Ebke supported the amendment.

“I recognize that this is a danger, but I’m not sure it rises to the level of a public health risk at this time,” Ebke said. “I’m concerned that for whatever reason we may be overstepping our bounds here in requiring that parents do this.”

Omaha Sen. John McCollister opposed the amendment. He said the potential public costs of treating meningitis warranted a vaccine mandate, noting that one of his classmates died from the disease.

“I think it’s worth the cost if we can save the life of just one person or reduce the debilitating aspects of this disease,” McCollister said.

The amendment failed on a 19-27 vote before senators voted 28-13 to advance the bill to select file. ■



## UNICAMERAL UPDATE

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# MEET THE SENATOR

## Banker invests in legislative service

Sen. John Stinner's path to the Nebraska Legislature began in a Pennsylvania household with seven siblings.

But growing up in a large family was not as chaotic as one would expect, Stinner said, because his father was an Army drill sergeant who prioritized exemplary behavior. Those expectations culminated in the future senator serving as an Eagle Scout, high school class president and captain of several sports teams.

A multi-sport standout, Stinner was recruited to play football for the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. He played for two national championship teams from 1969 to 1972, two years as a running back and two years as a line-backer.

Not being a starter meant he watched many games from the bench.

"I got to know the coaches really well," Stinner said with a smile.

While playing football didn't make him famous, Stinner said his scholarship furnished a degree in business administration that led him to start his career and eventually settle in Nebraska.

Stinner started his business career in public accounting and spent several years revitalizing failing banks in small Nebraska and Iowa towns, which developed his passion for

numbers and a love for community banking. That passion steered the Stinner family—wife Rita, daughter, Cecilia and son, John—from Lincoln to Gering more than 27 years ago, where he and a group of investors helped start what is now Valley Bank & Trust.



Sen. Stinner and his wife Rita visited the Muir Woods National Monument in California, famous for its giant redwood trees.

Growing the bank to more than 12 locations, chairing the Nebraska Bankers Association and serving on numerous civic groups gave Stinner the deeper understanding of community needs necessary to be an advocate for others, he said.

Joining the Nebraska Unicameral seemed to be the appropriate next step, Stinner said.

"If you want to make a positive impact on your district, the Legislature is one of the best ways to do that," Stinner said. "It's important to have a strong voice for western Nebraska."

Stinner said he hopes to transfer his business skills to his new job as a legislator to "get in front of problems" such as economic development and property tax relief

for western Nebraskans.

His fellow senators appear to have the same drive to get things done in their districts, he said.

"I'm impressed with everybody," Stinner said. "They're friendly, but committed to do the right thing." ■

# AGRICULTURE

## Bill would end county prairie dog management

The Agriculture Committee heard testimony Feb. 3 on a bill that would repeal the Black-Tailed Prairie Dog Management Act.

LB128, introduced by Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers, would repeal the act, which was passed by the Legislature in 2012. Chambers said the management act does not take into account that prairie dogs are indigenous to Nebraska and an important part of the state's ecosystem. Instead, he said, the act was modeled on noxious weed laws, which are designed to completely eradicate invasive species.



Sen. Ernie Chambers

"So, when you use that as a model," he said, "the mindset is that you are to exterminate all of these animals."

In addition, he said, the Black-Tailed Prairie Dog Management Act allows counties to violate the rights of property owners who may want prairie dogs on their land, by authorizing the management of colonies based on complaints from neighboring land owners.

"No law, in my opinion, should be passed by the Legislature totally discounting the right of a person who owns property based on the complaint of a neighbor," Chambers said.

John Hansen, president of the Nebraska Farmers Union, testified in support of the bill. The act that it would repeal leads to a "heavy-handed" approach to prairie dog management and puts a strain on counties and on re-

lationships between neighbors, he said.

"We did not support this [act] when it was passed in the first place," Hansen said, "for the very same reasons ... that Sen. Chambers has already listed in his presentation."

Robert Bernt, an organic farmer from Wheeler County, also testified in favor of the bill, saying there are ways to manage prairie dogs short of eradication. In addition, he said, a complaint by a neighbor that results in poisoning by the county could ruin business for an organic farmer.

"If poisons were found on our land, we'd lose our organic certification for at least three years," Bernt said, which would result in a loss of \$400,000 in income.

Larry Dix, representing the Nebraska Association of County Officials, testified in opposition to the bill. To date, he said, Sheridan is the only county to adopt the Black-Tailed Prairie Dog Management Act. Landowners there have worked cooperatively to stop problems before they reach the stage of county intervention, he said.

"Since Sheridan County put this in place ... there's not been one complaint," Dix said. "It is working; it can work. I think Sheridan County has proved that."

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

## Fee to control aquatic invasive species advanced

Senators gave first-round approval Feb. 5 to a bill that would address the potential impact of aquatic invasive species on local ecosystems and surface water.

LB142, introduced by Ogallala Sen. Ken Schilz, would create the



Sen. Ken Schilz

Nebraska Aquatic Invasive Species Program to prevent and mitigate the damage caused by species such as the zebra mussel and silver carp.

"These species have proven destructive to the ecosystems and usability of surface waters in surrounding states and steps must be taken to prevent their establishment in Nebraska," Schilz said.

The bill would impose a fee every three years on motorboat registrations, both new and renewal, of between \$5 and \$10. The collected fees would be used to:

- monitor and sample waters for aquatic invasive species;
- hire personnel;
- purchase equipment to inspect and decontaminate water;
- provide additional enforcement, education and research relating to aquatic invasive species; and
- conduct aquatic invasive species projects as needed.

Omaha Sen. Rick Kolowski spoke in favor of the bill, saying that the infestation of Lake Zorinsky in Omaha by zebra mussels had a devastating effect on the lake's ecosystem.

"[Lake Zorinsky] went through an 18-month period of having to entirely drain the lake and let it sit bare for an entire winter to freeze out and kill the zebra mussels," he said. "It was a mess for quite a while, but it has kept the lake free from additional invasive species."

Owners of motorboats registered outside Nebraska would be required to purchase an annual aquatic invasive species stamp for between \$10 and \$15. These fees would be remitted to the state Game Fund.

Senators adopted a technical committee amendment 34-0 and advanced the bill to select file on a 36-1 vote.

**BANKING, COMMERCE & INSURANCE**



**Crowdfunding investments for small business considered**

Small businesses could seek start-up capital through new avenues under a bill heard by the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee Feb. 2.

Under LB226, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Colby Coash, small businesses could raise up to \$2 million each year from accredited or unaccredited investors. Coash said that Nebraska currently ranks very low in access to capital for small businesses.



Sen. Colby Coash

“[LB226] creates incredible opportunities for startup companies that otherwise do not have easy access to capital,” he said. “It allows an individual working out of his garage looking for a way to expand, to actually move forward to raise funds and meet investors.”

All projects attempting to raise money would require approval from the state Department of Banking and Finance. Individuals investing money under LB226 would receive a proportionate security stake in the company in exchange for their investment, without registration under state and federal securities laws. Unaccredited investors would not be allowed to invest more than \$5,000 in a particular company.

Investors must be residents of Nebraska and would be required to sign a certificate acknowledging the potential for the complete loss of investment.

Steve Bradford of Lincoln spoke in favor of the bill. He said that it would help narrow the small business capital gap.

“Very small businesses, especially startups, have difficulty raising money,” he said. “Small businesses could raise money much more effectively if they could offer securities. [LB226] strikes a good balance between protecting investors and offering small businesses a relatively inexpensive way to raise capital.”

Ann Post, representing Lincoln Independent Business Association, also supported the bill, saying that it was a creative solution to keeping businesses in the state.

“We see entrepreneurs every day working so hard to make their idea a thriving business. This is just another tool to keep innovation and talent in Nebraska,” she said.

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

**BUSINESS & LABOR**



**Lower minimum wage proposed for youth**

Some workers would be paid less than Nebraska’s current \$8.00 per hour minimum wage under a bill heard by the Business and Labor Committee Feb. 2.

Last November, Nebraska voters approved Initiative 425, which raised the state’s minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$8.00 per hour for 2015. The ballot initiative was the result of a successful petition drive that followed the 2014 Legislature’s rejection of a bill to increase the wage. Nebraska’s minimum wage will increase to \$9.00 in 2016.

LB599, introduced this session by Crete Sen. Laura Ebke, would allow employers to pay \$7.25 an hour for workers age 18 and younger. Workers could receive the rate for only 25 percent of the hours worked.



Sen. Laura Ebke

The bill would apply only to workers enrolled in public or private schools and would not include employees participating in vocational training programs.

Ebke said LB599 would protect struggling businesses, especially grocers in small communities, by allowing them to reduce labor costs. Younger workers require more training and can work only when not in school, she said.

Dick Clark, director of research for the Platte Institute, testified in favor of the bill. Capping the amount paid to younger workers would mitigate the negative effects of Nebraska’s recently increased minimum wage, Clark said, because high minimum wages can discourage some younger workers from finishing high school or trade school.

Kathy Siefken, executive director of the Nebraska Grocery Industry Association, also spoke in favor of the bill. She said it is hard for small town grocers to justify the current minimum wage for entry-level positions because of the amount of time needed to train employees. Money for those wages come directly from store owners’ pockets, she said, and those stores are critical to the survival of some small communities.

“We have retailers just barely hanging on,” she said. “This bill allows us to continue to keep hiring those kids.”

Jason Hayes of the Nebraska State Education Association testified in opposition to the bill. He said the

proposal sends the wrong message to students because it would tell them that they can earn a higher wage if they drop out of school.

Rodney Vlcek, president of the Nebraska AFL-CIO, also spoke in opposition to the bill. He said it would create a separate, second-class of worker that retailers would prefer to older workers.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

### Citizenship confirmation for employees discussed

Private businesses would be required to confirm the citizenship of new employees under a bill heard by the Business and Labor Committee Feb. 2.

LB611, introduced by Papillion Sen. Bill Kintner, would require private employers to verify the work eligibility status of new employees via the federal government's electronic verification, or E-Verify, program.



Sen. Bill Kintner

Businesses that violate the measure could be fined up to \$2,000. The bill would not apply to contractors who unknowingly use subcontractors that fail to comply with the E-Verify requirement.

Currently in Nebraska, only public employers are required to verify the work eligibility status of new employees.

Kintner said bill is designed to keep unscrupulous employers from hiring illegal immigrants and subjecting them to unfair business practices such as substandard wages and dangerous work conditions.

Gregg Rhoades of the Plasterers and Cement Masons Union 538 tes-

tified in support of the bill. He said contractors who prey upon illegal immigrants exploit them by not paying for benefits such as health insurance, workers' compensation and overtime. Subsequently, he said, they are able to offer lower bids for projects, which takes jobs away from reputable companies.

Because they are in the country illegally, noncitizens are reluctant to contact authorities about unfair business practices, Rhoades said. Without LB611, he said, there is no way to improve their abusive work conditions.

"This bill is a large step in the direction to achieve accountability," Rhoades said.

Steve Simpson, president of the Lincoln Building and Construction Trades Union, agreed. Speaking in favor of the bill, he said building trades suffer from suppressed wages when contractors pay some workers by the number of rooms they drywall or paint, rather than by an hourly wage.

Paul Von Behren of Nebraska Voice also spoke in favor of the bill, saying the E-Verify process is a simple way to check a worker's citizenship status.

"It's the best program we've got," he said.

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



### Options for school finance review proposed

The Education Committee heard testimony Feb. 3 on two bills that would establish school finance review committees.

LB323, introduced by Hyannis

Sen. Al Davis, would create the School Financing Review Commission, which would conduct an in-depth review of current public school financing. Davis said that while changes to school finance have been made over time, the issue of property taxes remains unaddressed.



Sen. Al Davis

"Our over-reliance on property wealth results in a tax inequity and a narrow and unstable source of funding," he said. "[LB323] would ensure that education is equitable, balanced and that every student is educated to success."

The commission would be tasked with examining additional options for school funding including using income or sales tax revenue and other financing methods used in other states. Members also would examine financing issues as they relate to quality and performance of the schools, options for funding pre-kindergarten services and students with limited English proficiency.

Renee Fry, executive director of the Open Sky Policy Institute, testified in support of the bill. She said the issues surrounding school funding are so complex that it may be difficult to adequately achieve a more balanced approach within one legislative session.

"Over reliance on our agricultural community to fund K-12 schools could result in cuts to schools statewide if agricultural land values were to drop," she said. "Our state would benefit from a more balanced approach [to school funding]."

Nebraska Farmers Union President John Hansen also supported the bill, saying that previous efforts to reform school funding have gone largely unimplemented.

"We did make progress [with a previ-

ous commission], but we did not follow through with those commitments as we had hoped,” Hansen said. “The way that we finance schools now, more so than it’s ever been, puts those folks who want and need quality education in conflict with those who pay a disproportionate share for that education.”

Membership of the 19-person commission would include:

- three members of the Legislature, appointed by the Executive Board;
- two members representing postsecondary education, with expertise in the area of school finance;
- the commissioner of education or designee;
- a representative of the governor;
- two members from each class of school district;
- two at-large members;
- one member representing a rural educational service unit; and
- one member representing an urban educational service unit.

Commission members would be appointed by the governor, with approval of the Legislature, and serve through Dec. 31, 2016. At that time, a final report with recommendations would be submitted electronically to the full Legislature.

The committee also heard testimony on LB182, introduced by Malcolm Sen. Ken Haar.



Sen. Ken Haar

Under LB182, a School Funding and Educational Outcomes Review Committee would continuously review the adequacy and effectiveness of school funding in the state. Haar said an advisory committee would help bring new ideas and ways of thinking to the problem of school funding.

“This committee would add another perspective to the deliberations of the Education Committee,” Haar said. “It would bring some fresh, experienced eyes to the process.”

The committee would review implementation of the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA) as it relates to budget growth limitations, equalization aid, minimum levy adjustments and expenditures of school districts.

Ensuring that goals set forth by the Legislature and the state Department of Education are met and that students are acquiring necessary skills and knowledge also would be reviewed.

Jay Sears, program director for the Nebraska State Educational Association, spoke in favor of the bill. He said that one advantage to LB182 is that it would not only look at funding options, but the efficacy of those options as well.

“We need to look at the funding formula, but we also need to look at the outcomes,” he said. “It’s an accountability piece, an advisory committee that can tell us if the TEEOSA formula is working.”

Membership of the committee would include:

- four members of the general public, at least one of whom has experience in the teaching profession;
- four members who are either school superintendents or school district business officials;
- one member from a school board from each class of school district;
- the governor or a designee;
- the state property tax administrator; and
- the chairperson of the Education Committee, who also would serve as chairperson of the newly formed committee.

The governor, state property tax administrator and Education Committee chairperson all would be non-voting members.

On or before July 1 of each even-numbered year, the committee would file a report with the governor, state Board of Education and Legislature on the adequacy of school funding as it relates to property tax relief, broadening the tax base for support of public schools, equalization of the tax burden and equalization of educational opportunities.

No one testified in opposition to LB182.

The committee took no immediate action on either bill.

### College and career readiness funding proposed

School districts could receive funding for implementing college and career readiness programs under a bill heard by the Education Committee Feb. 3.

Under LB343, introduced by Omaha Sen. Rick Kolowski, school districts could apply for reimbursement beginning July 2016 for each student who successfully completes a designated program of excellence, dual-enrollment course or career readiness program.



Sen. Rick Kolowski

Kolowski said college and career readiness programs increase the rigor and relevance of students’ education.

“[LB343] will hold schools accountable for the success of their students because they will only receive funding once students prove mastery,” he said. “It’s not about body count, it’s about mind count.”

A school district would apply reimbursement through its educational

service unit, which then would provide documentation to the state Department of Education. Applications for reimbursement must be made by Aug. 1 of each year, beginning in 2017. The department would award reimbursements no later than Oct. 1 of each year.

Dan Novak, superintendent of Elmwood-Murdock Public Schools, spoke in favor of the bill, saying it would help support the district's current college and career readiness programs.

"Our goal is to have students graduate with 12 hours of college credit," he said. "[LB343] would allow for the growth and continuation of these programs not only in our district but the entire state as well."

Jennifer Creager, director of public policy for the Greater Omaha area Chamber, also supported the bill. She said it would help to produce more career ready students.

"We see immediate workforce needs in our community," she said. "Targeting workers at a young age [with these programs] is a win-win for everyone."

LB343 would authorize a one-time transfer of \$7 million in fiscal year 2016-17 to fund the reimbursement program.

Any school implementing an eligible program also could apply for grant funding from the state Department of Education to offset the initial costs associated with implementation. A district could receive up to 49 percent of the total implementation costs. If an eligible program is not implemented within two years of application for grant funding, the district would be required to repay all awarded grant funding.

The bill also would authorize a transfer of \$3 million from the Education Innovation Fund for FY2015-16 to fund the implementation cost portion of the bill.

No one testified in opposition to

the bill and the committee took no immediate action on it.

**Adjustments recommended for school aid formula**

The Education Committee heard testimony Feb. 2 on a bill that would increase state funding for nonequalized school districts under the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA).

LB522, introduced by Cedar Rapids Sen. Kate Sullivan, would make several adjustments to the current TEEOSA formula. Sullivan said the bill represents another opportunity to adjust the formula with changing circumstances.



Sen. Kate Sullivan

"These changes would provide direct support to school districts for students, reduce property taxes, and improve communications with the public regarding how their state tax dollars are being used to support education," she said.

In total, the proposed changes to the formula would result in estimated state aid funding increases of \$11 million in fiscal year 2015-16 and \$106.9 million in FY2016-17.

The bill would decrease the local effort rate from its current level of \$1.00 to \$.95 in FY2017-18 and thereafter. Decreasing the local effort rate would result in an estimated \$53.6 million increase in state aid provided to school districts because the formula would assume a district has decreased resources.

LB522 would eliminate the current method of allocated income tax disbursement and replace it with 10 percent of the aggregated statewide income tax liability of all resident individuals for the prior year. The aid would be calculated by taking the ag-

gregated income tax liability divided by the number of formula students.

Currently, statute caps allocated income taxes at \$102.3 million. The new formula proposed by LB522 would result in an increase in state aid of \$27.3 million in FY2017-2018 and would impact only nonequalized school districts.

Jon Habben, representing the Nebraska Rural Community Schools, spoke in favor of the bill. He said rather than eliminating the TEEOSA formula altogether, changes should be made to address current inequalities between rural and urban districts.

"I appreciate the idea that several factors are a part of this bill and try to address several components to stretch TEEOSA further," he said. "We can't lose sight of the fact that this formula does have positive attributes. We need to make a strong attempt at finding a way that isn't just an 'us versus them.'"

Liz Standish, associate superintendent of business affairs for Lincoln Public Schools, opposed the bill, saying it represents a move away from equalization aid.

"Equalization [aid] is a center point in school funding in Nebraska," Standish said. "It must be recognized and preserved."

The bill also would:

- eliminate the minimum levy adjustment and nonequalized minimum levy adjustment;
- change the net option formula funding so the amount per formula student would be reduced by the amount of state apportionment and income taxes;
- provide for state apportionment funding from the Temporary School Fund based upon formula students in public school districts only;
- provide for a one-time transfer of funds from the state Cash Reserve Fund to transition be-



tween methods for distributing state apportionment funds;

- eliminate the requirements of a school district with at least 900 formula students to levy a certain amount in order to be eligible for the averaging adjustment; and
- eliminate a requirement that state aid for a learning community be calculated as one entity, rather than separately for each school district within the learning community.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

### Reauthorization recommended for investigative committees

The Executive Board heard testimony Feb. 6 on resolutions that would continue the work of three special investigative committees. The resolutions were introduced by Omaha Sen. Bob Krist, chairperson of the Executive Board.

LR32 would provide for continuation of the Developmental Disabilities Special Investigative Committee. The committee has been providing ongoing oversight of the placement and care of the developmentally disabled in Nebraska since 2008.

Krist said continuation of the committee is needed to ensure compliance with the terms of a U.S. Department of Justice consent decree regarding care at the Beatrice State Developmental Center and to implement recommendations from the committee's most recent report.



Sen. Bob Krist

"The special committee would continue its work until the start of 2017," he said.

Michael Chittenden of the Arc of Nebraska testified in support of the resolution, saying the Legislature needs to make sure that taxpayer dollars are being well spent in caring for one of the state's most vulnerable populations.

"We would like to see the special investigative committee continue to ensure accountability and transparency," Chittenden said.

LR33 would provide for continuation of the ACCESSNebraska Special Investigative Committee. ACCESSNebraska is an online and call center system developed and implemented by the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to determine public benefit eligibility and deliver benefits to clients.

The committee originally was established in 2014 to investigate an array of problems including long wait times for callers, high worker turnover and lost paperwork. The resolution would authorize continuation of the committee's oversight of the ACCESSNebraska system.

Katie Pitts of Nebraska Appleseed testified in support of the measure, saying the system continues to need improvement with management and technology issues.

"Since its inception, ACCESSNebraska has had serious problems," Pitts said.

Finally, LR34 would provide for continuation of the Department of Correctional Services Special Investigative Committee. The committee was established in 2014 and was authorized to study the administration of good time laws, policies relating to inmate segregation and the availability of rehabilitative and mental health programs.

In its report to the Legislature,

Krist said the committee identified additional problems within the state Department of Correctional Services. Continuation of the committee would allow for further study and oversight of the department, he said, including whether an office of inspector general for the correctional system is warranted.

Brad Meurrens of Disability Rights Nebraska supported the measure. Meurrens said the organization has particular concerns about the impact of segregation on inmates with mental health issues and the availability of transition services for mentally ill inmates returning to their communities.

"The vast majority of persons incarcerated in U.S. prisons and jails will eventually be released," he said.

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

## GENERAL AFFAIRS

### Cigar shop clarification advanced

A bill was brought this session in response to a 2014 Nebraska Supreme Court decision that declared unconstitutional the Legislature's previous exemption of cigar bars and tobacco retail outlets from the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act. Senators advanced it from general file Feb. 4.

Introduced by O'Neill Sen. Tyson Larson, LB118 would grant businesses that exclusively sell smoking products an exemption to the 2008 Clean Indoor Air Act, which prohibits indoor smoking in the state.

The bill would permit a cigar shop



Sen. Tyson Larson

to apply for a liquor license if the establishment:

- does not sell food;
- generates at least 10 percent of its gross revenue from sales of cigars, tobacco and tobacco-related products, not including cigarettes;
- has a walk-in humidor; and
- does not allow cigarette smoking.

Niche businesses such as cigar and tobacco shops are entitled to the exemptions, Larson said, because their customers expect to encounter second-hand smoke in those locations. He added that because so few cigar shops exist in Nebraska, there are ample non-smoking businesses that provide job opportunities.

“You have a choice whether to go into one of these establishments,” he said.

An amendment by the General Affairs Committee added a severability clause, Liquor Control Commission regulations and language that only public accommodations, research facilities, tobacco retail outlets and cigar shops would be exempt from the Clean Indoor Air Act.

Larson offered an amendment to the committee amendment that replaced public accommodations with guestrooms and suites. The amendment also clarified that cigar shops differ from tobacco retail outlets because they can have liquor licenses. Lawmakers approved it and the committee amendment on 36-0 votes.

Lincoln Sen. Colby Coash supported the amendments and the bill, saying that LB118 sends a clear message to the state Supreme Court that the Legislature is requesting an exemption for a specific group that is not trying to circumvent the Clean Indoor Air Act.

“We recognize that these businesses look a little bit different,” he said

The bill advanced to select file on a 34-2 vote.

**Statehood celebration license plates advanced**

Lawmakers gave first-round approval Feb. 2 to a bill that would authorize specialty license plates in celebration of Nebraska’s 150th anniversary of statehood in 2017.

Under LB220, introduced by Papillion Sen. Jim Smith, the Nebraska 150 Sesquicentennial Plate would be available as an alphanumeric or a personalized message plate. The alphanumeric version of the plate would display up to seven characters and would not display county designators.



Sen. Jim Smith

The plates would be available from Oct. 1, 2015 to Dec. 31, 2022. An initial application and renewal fee of \$70 would apply. Fifty-seven percent of the fee would be credited to the Nebraska 150 Sesquicentennial License Plate Fund, also created by the bill.

Smith said specialty license plates in Iowa, Minnesota, West Virginia and Nevada have been used to help fund similar statehood celebrations.

“[LB220] will provide an important fundraising mechanism—as well as draw attention to Nebraska history—as people travel throughout the state and across the nation,” Smith said.

The bill advanced to select file in a 33-0 vote.

**Bills addressing underage drinking proposed**

Two changes to the Nebraska Liquor Control Act were considered Feb. 2 by the General Affairs Committee.

LB439, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Adam Morfeld, would change penalty provisions for certain violations relating to or committed by minors under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act.



Sen. Adam Morfeld

The bill would grant limited legal immunity to minors seeking help for themselves or someone else in need of immediate attention due to alcohol poisoning. The bill would apply only to minors who request assistance after such an emergency is apparent and who fully cooperate with medical assistance and law enforcement.

Morfeld said the bill would provide legal immunity only against a minor in possession (MIP) charge, and would not provide immunity from other crimes related to an incident, such as illegally procuring alcohol for a minor, sexual assault or hazing.

Morfeld said young people may be reluctant to seek emergency assistance in a case of underage alcohol poisoning out of fear that an MIP charge will follow them and hinder their chances for future employment and advancement.

“I believe this ensures that we are putting safety first while ensuring accountability,” he said.

Geraldine Cotter, associate dean of students at Nebraska Wesleyan University, testified in support of the bill. She cited two recent situations involving university students who were reluctant to call 911 or another authority figure when faced with an alcohol poisoning situation.

Both situations had good outcomes, she said, but lawmakers should consider removing barriers and encouraging young people to make the right decision.

“I shudder to think what the outcome might have been if the students had waited much longer to make the call,” Cotter said. “These are life and death decisions where minutes make a difference.”

Assistant Chief of Police Brian Jackson also testified in favor of the bill on behalf of the city of Lincoln. Law enforcement rarely make an MIP arrest in a case involving a medical emergency related to alcohol poisoning, he said, but young people may not realize that and may be afraid to call for help.

“These choices can sometimes lead to a serious medical condition or even death,” Jackson said. “This legislation—if it saves even one life—will be well worth the time and effort.”

John Lindsay of the Nebraska Association of Trial Attorneys testified in opposition to the bill’s prohibition on an individual initiating an action against a peace officer, or the employing state agency or political subdivision, based on an officer’s compliance or failure to comply with LB439. He said the bill violates state constitutional provisions guaranteeing legal remedy to any injured party.

“It means it’s closing off access to the courts,” Lindsay said. “I would suggest that by doing that, it violates the [Nebraska Constitution].”

The committee also heard testimony on LB460, introduced by Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, which would require liquor licensure for charter bus services, limousine services and pedal pub services. A pedal pub vehicle is defined as a multi-passenger, human powered vehicle.

Licenses would be statewide and only one license would be required for



Sen. Jeremy Nordquist

all charter buses or limousines operated in Nebraska by the same owner. Fees would be \$75 per year for charter bus and limousine licenses and \$50 per year for a pedal-pub vehicle license.

Nordquist said the law allowing drinking in limousines and party buses—passed by the Legislature in 2011—has proven problematic and additional regulation is required.

“Without any licensure or any kind of regulation, we’re setting up a situation where the state doesn’t have the ability to make sure that we don’t have unscrupulous operators out there who are putting the safety of minors at risk,” he said.

HoBERT Rupe, executive director of the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission, testified in support of the bill. He said many party buses currently are operating like bars, but are not subject to compliance checks because they are not required to have a liquor license.

He said party buses have become “havens for underage drinking,” noting that a party bus that recently was boarded in connection with a shoplifting incident in Nebraska City resulted in 19 of the 27 passengers being cited for MIP.

“We think that this is a public health, safety and welfare risk,” Rupe said.

Jim Campin, owner of Emerald Limousine in Omaha, disagreed. Testifying in opposition to LB460, he disputed the notion that party buses and limousines are havens for underage drinking.

“There’s been no proof laid out here for that,” he said, adding that it is the responsibility of the person renting the vehicle to ensure that minors are not drinking. Campin said it would be asking too much of the limousine and party bus industry to take on the job of policing against minor consumption.

“You’re basically taking what bars do and adding driving on top of it,” he said.

The committee voted 8-0 to advance LB439 to general file, and took no immediate action on LB460.

**Special poker license proposed**

The Nebraska Liquor Control Commission could issue special liquor licenses for poker games under a bill heard by the General Affairs Committee Feb. 2.

LB619, introduced by O’Neill Sen. Tyson Larson, would authorize two types of poker—draw and community card games. The bill defines community card games as those, such as Texas Hold’em, in which a player combines the cards he or she is holding with community cards that all players share.



Sen. Tyson Larson

Under the bill, liquor licensees could apply for a poker endorsement to their liquor license and for a special poker license (SPL) with a special designated liquor license (SDL) for events on or off the licensee’s premises.

Nonprofit organizations that qualify for an SDL also could apply for an SPL. Any entity or person accepting wagers on a game conducted under a special designated poker license would be prohibited from extending credit to a participant.

An SPL would require approval of the local governing body, which may establish criteria for approval of an SPL. The fee for an SPL would be \$40 for each day of the event. In addition, a licensee would remit 10 percent of the gross proceeds of a poker tournament and 5 percent of the final amount in each pot of a cash game to the Liquor Control Commission.

If an event were held within the

boundaries of a city or village, proceeds would be distributed as follows:

- 50 percent to the Property Tax Credit Cash Fund;
- 24.5 percent to the county treasurer of the county in which the event was held;
- 24.5 percent to the city or village in which the event was held; and
- 1 percent to the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund.

If the event were held outside the boundaries of a city or village, 49 percent would go to the treasurer of the county in which the event was held.

Testimony focused on whether poker should be considered a game of chance or one of skill. The Nebraska Constitution prohibits the Legislature from authorizing games of chance. In the bill's statement of intent, Larson contended that poker is a game of skill.

Testifying in support of the bill, Adam Clayman, a poker player from Ogallala, agreed. Poker is inherently different from games of chance like roulette, he said, in which "you have nothing but gut instinct ... it's all risk."

Poker, on the other hand, is a game of skill, he said. For example, he said, players can learn to improve their chances of winning.

"A professional poker player will hire a coach—a tutor—to improve their playing skills," Clayman said.

Pat Loontjer, executive director of Gambling with the Good Life, testified in opposition. Gambling bills invariably are subject to filibuster, she said, and those that pass almost always result in legal challenges. Lawmakers could be spending their time on more productive measures, she said.

"Why would we want to put our time and energy into something like this?" Loontjer asked.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

## GOVERNMENT, MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS

### Electoral winner-take-all bill advanced

The Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee voted 7-1 to advance a bill to general file Feb. 4 that would reinstate a winner-take-all system for allocating Nebraska's presidential electoral votes.

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.

LB10, introduced by Omaha Sen. Beau McCoy, would reinstate a winner-take-all system and award all five electoral votes to the winner of the state's popular vote.

McCoy said the district plan has led presidential campaigns—when they focus attention on Nebraska at all—to limit their focus to the 2nd Congressional District, which was won by President Barack Obama in 2008.

"I think we're a small state anyway [and] we further dilute our effectiveness as a state in national elections when we split our portion of electoral votes," McCoy said.

Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale agreed. Testifying in support of the bill, he said Nebraska is at a disadvantage when 48 other states use the winner-take-all system. He said small states like Nebraska with a dominant statewide political party can have more influence at the regional and national



Sen. Beau McCoy

level if they do not dilute their Electoral College votes.

"We need all of those electoral votes to have an impact on the outcome of presidential elections," Gale said.

Former state senator DiAnna Schimek, who sponsored the bill that enacted Nebraska's current electoral system, testified in opposition to LB10. She said the goal of the district system is to encourage political participation and to make voters who are in the political minority feel that their vote counts.

"When it was first introduced, it wasn't immediately partisan nor was it immediately controversial," Schimek said. "The most important reason for enacting the [district system] ... is that it encourages grassroots activity."

### Additional funeral expenses for veterans advanced

More veterans' funeral expenses would be covered by a bill advanced from general file Feb. 5.

LB305, introduced by Scribner Sen. David Schnoor, would add transportation costs to the list of veterans' funeral expenses furnished by the director of veterans' affairs. Currently, food, shelter, fuel, ap-

parel and medical or surgical aid are provided to veterans, their families and recognized veteran representatives to cover funeral expenses.

To be eligible for the benefits, the veteran must have served on active duty, been discharged under honorable or general conditions, died while in or as a direct result of service, or have been a U.S. citizen at the time of enlistment and served with an ally of the United States.



Sen. David Schnoor

Schnoor said the bill would give additional assistance to military families in their time of need. The expansion would cover local transportation costs and money needed to make repairs to vehicles.

A Judiciary Committee amendment, adopted 31-0, added an emergency clause to the bill, which would allow the bill to take effect immediately after the governor signs it.

The bill advanced on a 34-0 vote.

**Senators consider expanding voting options**

The Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee considered a bill Feb. 5 that would alter the election process in Nebraska.

LB319, introduced by Papillion Sen. Jim Smith, would allow any county to request that an election be conducted by mail. Currently, only counties with populations of less than 10,000 may apply to eliminate polling places and instead conduct a by-mail election.



Sen. Jim Smith

The bill also would permit special elections involving candidates to be conducted by mail. Currently, only special elections on issues can be conducted by mail.

Smith said the bill, brought to him by county election commissioners, would simplify the election process and makes it easier for rural voters to participate in elections.

Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale testified in support of the bill, saying it would give voters in less populated areas of the state the same voting opportunities as urban voters. He said voting by mail helps rural voters overcome barriers such as inclement

weather, poor road conditions and having to travel long distances to polling sites that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Additionally, elections by mail save counties money, Gale said, because election commissioners do not have to hire staff and transport equipment to polling places. Gale added that population guidelines for mail-in elections will prevent a sudden increase in applications.

“We’re not trying to create all mail-in counties,” he said. “We’re just trying to create a convenient experience for the rural voter.”

Wayne Bena, Sarpy County election commissioner, also spoke in favor of the bill. He said election commissioners are seeing a steady increase of mail-in ballots and precincts with mail-in ballots show higher voter turnouts than some precincts without.

“The bill gives us an additional tool to successfully conduct elections in our county,” Bena said.

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

**Bill would strengthen audit authority**

The Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee heard testimony Feb. 6 on a bill intended to strengthen the audit authority of the Legislative Audit Office (LAO) and the state Auditor of Public Accounts (APA).

Syracuse Sen. Dan Watermeier, sponsor of LB539, said the bill would better equip the LAO and the APA to carry out their respective tasks by ensuring that



Sen. Dan Watermeier

the offices are equally empowered to require audited entities to respond quickly and responsibly to requests for audit records and documentation.

The bill would require state agencies to respond to a request for information from the LAO or APA within three business days of the request. For particularly difficult or extensive requests, the agency would have up to three weeks to provide the requested information. Failure to comply with the bill’s deadlines or other willful obstruction of an audit would be a Class II misdemeanor.

A supervisor or manager who takes retaliatory action against a state or political subdivision employee who provides information to the LAO or APA would be guilty of a Class III misdemeanor and dismissed from employment with the state.

Finally, the bill would ensure that the LAO and APA have the authority to review agency information protected under attorney-client privilege, while noting that compliance does not constitute a waiver of that privilege.

Lance Lambdin, legal counsel for the state auditor’s office, testified in support of the bill, saying the office has had to wait months for a state agency to respond to a records request.

Lambdin said the office sometimes has resorted to a public records request when dealing with uncooperative auditees in the hope of obtaining information more quickly. Unfortunately, he said, while doing so may speed up a response, there are 18 types of information that can be withheld from a public records request.

“So we’re placed between a rock and a hard place,” he said.

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

## HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

### Nurse practitioner changes advanced

Lawmakers gave first-round approval Feb. 6 to a bill intended to address the shortage of primary care providers in rural Nebraska.

LB107, introduced by Bellevue Sen. Sue Crawford, would remove the requirement for an integrated practice agreement between a nurse practitioner and a collaborating physician and replace it with a transition to practice agreement.



Sen. Sue Crawford

Crawford said the bill was identical to one she sponsored last session, which passed on a 43-0 vote before being vetoed by former Gov. Dave Heineman.

“LB107 does not change the scope of practice for nurse practitioners,” Crawford said. “The bill is about a restriction of trade and a government regulation that currently does not improve patient safety or outcomes.”

The bill would replace the integrated practice agreement with a transition to practice agreement. The agreement would provide that the nurse practitioner and the supervising provider practice collaboratively within the framework of their respective scopes of practice.

A supervising provider is defined as a physician, osteopathic physician or nurse practitioner licensed and practicing in the same practice specialty, related specialty or field of practice. A nurse practitioner would be required

to have 10,000 hours of practice to qualify as a supervising provider.

Grand Island Sen. Mike Gloor supported the bill, saying it had overwhelming support last session but that lawmakers ran out of time in the session to pursue a veto override. He said the bill would be an incentive for nurse practitioners to stay in Nebraska, particularly in rural areas.

“This bill is important as a small step to address some of our workforce issues,” he said.

Crete Sen. Laura Ebke expressed concerns about a possible increase in malpractice claims against nurse practitioners should the bill pass.

“I think, before we go too far down the path, I’d like to see us at least consider how we structure this,” she said.

Crawford said research from other states that grant full practice authority to nurse practitioners have not seen an increase in malpractice claims.

Senators voted 35-2 to advance LB107 to select file.

### Aging and disabled resource center discussed

A bill seeking to improve access to existing services and support for Nebraskans who are aging or disabled was considered Feb. 5 by the Health and Human Services Committee.

LB320, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Kate Bolz, would establish resource centers to provide information on long-term care services for aging and disabled Nebraskans and their family members and caregivers.



Sen. Kate Bolz

The Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC) would be certified by the state Department of Health and Human Services and services provided

would include:

- information and referral;
- options counseling;
- strategic partnerships with providers;
- streamlined eligibility determination for public programs; and
- transition support for individuals moving from one setting to another.

Bolz said improved coordination and early planning are key to better serving the state’s aging and disabled populations. Nebraska needs to do a better job of directing people to community-based services that will allow them to live independently longer, she said.

“According to the AARP, Nebraska ranks 49th for providing aging and disability resource center types of services,” Bolz said.

June Pederson of Aging Partners—one of eight Nebraska area agencies on aging—testified in support of the bill. She said the state needs better coordination so that Nebraskans can easily access the information they need to age at home if possible, and to explore assisted living and nursing home level care options if necessary.

“The Nebraska area agencies on aging are ready and willing to become ADRC sites,” Pederson said.

Kathy Hoell, executive director of the Nebraska Statewide Independent Living Council, also testified in support of the bill. Institutional care for a person with a disability costs approximately \$221,000 a year, she said, compared to \$45,000 per year for an individual to remain at home with the proper support.

“Because the state is paying a very large share of what it costs to have people institutionalized, they save money by having people in their own homes and communities,” Hoell said. “People are happier in their own

homes and communities; they have a better quality of life.”

No opposition testimony was given and the committee took no immediate action on LB320.

**Alzheimer’s advisory group proposed**

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony Feb. 5 on a bill that would create a group to examine Alzheimer’s needs in Nebraska.

LB405, introduced by Hyanis Sen. Al Davis, would create the Alzheimer’s and Related Disorders Advisory Working Group within the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).



Sen. Al Davis

The working group would examine resources and services available to patients with Alzheimer’s, dementia and related disorders and identify strategies to eliminate service gaps.

The 13-member group would include the CEO of DHHS, two members appointed by the Legislature, the state’s public guardian and eight members appointed by the governor to represent:

- area agencies on aging;
- law enforcement;
- health care providers;
- advocacy and caregiver organizations; and
- Alzheimer’s or related disorder patients.

The group would create a state plan with policy recommendations for providing coordinated services and support and present the plan to the committee by Dec. 15, 2016. The group would terminate on Dec. 31, 2016.

Viv Ewing, executive director of the Alzheimer’s Association of Ne-

braska, testified in support of the bill. Alzheimer’s is no longer just an aging issue, she said, noting that more people are being diagnosed in their 40s and 50s.

“Every 67 seconds someone is diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease,” Ewing said. “Alzheimer’s is a growing public health crisis. It is the only cause of death in the top 10 that cannot be prevented, cured or slowed.”

Stephen Bonasera, a geriatrician at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, also testified in support of the bill. Nebraska needs to coordinate policy, research and services for Alzheimer’s and related disorders, Bonasera said, adding that the state faces challenges in creating a plan due to its unevenly distributed population.

“We need a plan that works both in the center of Omaha and in the most remote and rural areas of the state,” he said. “As far as I can see, everyone has a stake in this [issue].”

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

**JUDICIARY**



**Smaller marriage license fee increase advanced**

Marriage license fees would increase under a bill advanced from general file Feb. 3 after several mornings of legislative debate.

LB88, sponsored by Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell, originally would have increased the fee charged by counties from \$15 to \$50 for issuing and recording marriage licenses and



Sen. Kathy Campbell

to administer oaths or affirmations for marriage. The bill also would increase the fee charged by counties from \$5 to \$16 to make a certified copy of a marriage record.

Campbell said that Nebraska county officials requested the fee increases because their administrative costs have not been adjusted since 1995. She said county officials have estimated that the time required to verify and correct information provided by couples totals an average of \$55 in administrative costs per year.

Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers opposed the bill, calling it a 300 percent tax increase that is too large, especially for a document he said holds no value.

“This piece of paper that allows you to get married does not ensure the marriage will work,” he said during the second day of debate on the bill. “You are not going to hurt these counties if you do not pass this bill.”

Chambers filed several motions over four mornings to extend debate. All failed to be adopted.

Papillion Sen. Bill Kintner introduced and later withdrew an amendment that would have allowed counties to charge up to \$35 for a marriage license. He said the lower fee better reflects how administrative costs have risen due to inflation.

Chambers then offered two floor amendments to reduce the fee amount, both of which were rejected.

Kintner offered another amendment to make the fee \$25 in all Nebraska counties. It was adopted 32-5.

The amended bill advanced to select file on a 32-7 vote.

**Concealed gun permits for military spouses advanced**

Military spouses could qualify for concealed handgun permits under a bill advanced from general file Feb 3.

Currently, members of the United States Armed Forces stationed in Nebraska are considered state residents and permitted to apply for concealed handgun permits. LB190, introduced by Hoskins Sen. Dave Bloomfield, would allow the spouses of service members stationed in Nebraska to be considered state residents who also could apply for concealed handgun permits.



Sen. Dave Bloomfield

Additionally, the bill would allow non-U.S. citizens who reside in the country legally to apply for concealed handgun permits. Currently, only U.S. citizens are allowed to apply for a concealed handgun permit in Nebraska.

Bloomfield said that the bill would extend specific residential benefits to the families of service members who accompany those stationed in Nebraska.

A Judiciary Committee amendment, adopted 34-0, removed the U.S. citizenship requirement from the list of requirements necessary for application for the permit.

Lincoln Sen. Colby Coash said the amendment stemmed from a case in which the U.S. District Court ordered the Nebraska State Patrol to not enforce the citizenship requirement of the statute.

Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers opposed the bill, saying guns are a common denominator in mass killings that happen in this country. He filed motions to indefinitely postpone and then bracket the bill, both of which he withdrew.

Columbus Sen. Paul Schumacher offered an amendment that would clarify the bill's definition of a spouse as anyone receiving benefits as a result of being married to a member of the military.

Schumacher brought the amendment after a question arose during debate on whether spouses in same sex marriages would be entitled to the benefit permitted by the bill. The Second Amendment right to bear arms, Schumacher said, is not something that can be selectively waived.

"Why would we want to limit that right according to sexual orientation?" he asked.

Lincoln Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks supported the clarification, saying that the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution applies to anyone born in the country, regardless of sexual orientation.

The amendment was adopted 38-0 and the bill advanced to select file on a 37-4 vote.

**Custodial plans for children of deployed parents advanced**

Children of deployed military parents would have custodial plans in place under a bill given first-round approval Feb. 4.

LB219, introduced by Bellevue Sen. Sue Crawford, would adopt the Uniform Deployed Parents Custody and Visitation Act. The act would provide a legal framework for parents and judges regarding care for children when a military parent is deployed. The bill also would clarify parenting arrangements required when a deployed parent returns.



Sen. Sue Crawford

Crawford said the bill would minimize the amount of disruption in a child's life when a military parent with custodial responsibilities is deployed. Children in families with deployed parents are at greater risk for depression and substance abuse,

Crawford said. Because those behavioral health challenges are magnified when military parents divorce, she said, custodial plans are critical.

"This bill creates a legal framework for establishing a plan to reduce the disruption deployment causes for children in military families," Crawford said.

LB219 would allow families with deployed parents to create a temporary custodial agreement that specifies how decisions for the child would be made, frequency and duration of contact with parents and nonparents and how the agreement could be changed.

Further, the act would permit courts to grant temporary caretaking authority to parents or nonparents, grant decision-making authority to nonparents and enforce a prior written agreement by the parents regarding custodial responsibility.

Omaha Sen. Bob Krist spoke in favor of the bill, saying he has seen the "devastating consequences" that deployment can have on children and on the parent who is deployed.

A Judiciary Committee amendment, adopted 38-0, changed the definition of "adult" under the act to an individual who is 19 or an emancipated minor. Hastings Sen. Les Seiler, chairperson of the committee, said the amendment would align the act with Nebraska law regarding the age of majority.

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

**Senators consider bill to expedite evictions**

Landlords could evict certain tenants sooner under a bill heard by the Judiciary Committee Feb. 6.

LB385, introduced by Omaha Sen. Brett Lindstrom, would permit a landlord or his or her representative to



begin eviction litigation three days after notification of the termination of a rental agreement. Currently, the Uniform Residential



Sen. Brett Lindstrom

Landlord and Tenant Act requires landlords to wait 30 days to evict a tenant after notification.

The bill would apply only in cases where tenants, roommates or their guests threaten the health, safety or peaceful enjoyment of the landlord or other tenants.

Activities that could prompt a landlord to begin the eviction process include:

- physical assault or the threat thereof;
- illegal use of a firearm or the threat thereof; and
- possession of a controlled substance.

Tenants who report threatening behavior to law enforcement or have sought a protection or restraining order would not be subject to eviction.

Lindstrom said the bill gives landlords a faster way to protect tenants from illegal activity or menacing behavior that can occur in their buildings.

“The goal here is to maintain a safe environment for tenants and all others in the building,” he said.

Gene Eckel of the Apartment Association of Greater Omaha & Lincoln testified in support of the bill. He said the proposal mirrors laws already enforced through the Nebraska Public Housing Agency Act. Tenants who are in harms way want action as soon as possible, he said, and LB385 would give landlords another tool to make them safe.

“A landlord has the duty to protect his tenants,” Eckel said.

John Chatelain, president of the

Metropolitan Omaha Property Owners Association, also spoke in favor of the bill, saying the current eviction process can sometimes take six weeks.

The bill would decrease the amount of time tenants are exposed to dangerous behavior, he said.

“[The bill] gets after that tenant who is threatening or menacing to other people in the building,” he said.

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

### Foster care nondiscrimination bill proposed

Prospective foster parents would be protected from discrimination during placement proceedings under a bill heard by the Judiciary Committee Feb. 4.

LB647, introduced by Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, would prohibit the state Department of Health and Human Services from discriminating based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, marital status or national origin when determining the suitability of a juvenile’s out-of-home placement.



Sen. Jeremy Nordquist

The department would be required to make placement decisions based on the health, safety and well-being of a child. The measure also would apply when the department considers issuing foster home licenses.

More than 3,000 Nebraska children currently are in out-of-home care, Nordquist said, with nearly half of them living in four or more locations since 2012. A major reason for the high number of state wards, he said, is a 1995 policy memo issued by

the then-named state Department of Social Services that prohibits children being placed in homes of people who identify themselves as homosexual.

Nordquist said that document, which is not state statute, unjustly prevents qualified parents from providing safe and secure homes for children. Forty-nine other states have nondiscrimination policies regarding out-of-home placement, he added.

“All of Nebraska’s children deserve to be part of a loving family,” he said. “Good parenting is good parenting. It’s not just reserved for parents who are straight.”

Amy Miller, legal director for American Civil Liberties Union Nebraska, testified in support of the bill. A state with thousands of state wards should not reject prospective parents solely because they are in a same-sex relationship, she said. Until more homes are available, she said, children will remain in institutions where their ability to thrive is hampered.

“This is actually hurting children in Nebraska every day,” she said.

Joel Busch and Todd Vesley of Lincoln also spoke in favor of the bill. Busch said that although he and his partner offered a safe, loving home for a child, they were told their sexual orientation disqualified them from consideration.

“This has been a fight for us for over seven years,” Busch said.

Linda Cox, research analyst for the Foster Care Review Office, said the high number of children needing homes requires that some placements be based on available space, rather than the best interest of children. Speaking in support of the bill, she said allowing same-sex parents to furnish homes would increase the options for children to be placed in homes based on their best welfare.

Greg Schleppebach of the Ne-

braska Catholic Conference testified in opposition to the bill, saying a home with a married man and woman provides the most stable and nurturing environment for a child.

Karen Bowling of the Nebraska Family Alliance also spoke in opposition to the bill.

Child welfare officials should base their placement decisions solely on the best interest of the children, she said, not on the rights of parents. The bill also would subject those making placements to difficult decisions when their beliefs are at odds with those of prospective parents, she said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

**Senators discuss extending adoption eligibility**

The marital status of prospective parents would not be a factor in the adoption process under a proposal heard by the Judiciary Committee Feb.4.

LB648, introduced by Omaha Sen. Sara Howard, would permit two people to adopt a child regardless of their marital status. The measure also would allow the parent of a minor child to consent to the adoption of the child by the parent’s spouse or another adult, without the parent having to relinquish legal rights to the child.



Sen. Sara Howard

Howard said allowing co-parent and second-parent options would give Nebraska couples equal legal custody of their children. Currently, unmarried couples who are co-parents are not eligible for medical and other benefits in the event of the death of a biological parent, she said.

Lin Quenzer, a parent from Lin-

coln, testified in support of the bill. If her same-sex partner were to die, she said, the court would not be bound to consider her as the legal guardian of their 15-year-old son.

“I am a legal stranger to my son, even though I’m his parent in every other respect,” she said. “It’s frightening to know I have no legal standing.”

Amy Miller, legal director of American Civil Liberties Union Nebraska also supported the bill. Currently, in co-parent cases where guardianship must be awarded, judges can make a determination based on their own conscience rather than the best interest of the child, Miller said.

A parent who already is a second parent should be able to step forward and take responsibility for the child, she said.

Joe Neuhaus of the Nebraska Family Alliance testified in opposition to the bill, saying it would advance the interest of parents, not children. The law should reflect that the ideal environment for a child is a home with a married mother and father, he said.

Matt Heffron an Omaha attorney also opposed the bill, saying the language does not clearly define what kind of relationship co-parents must have to be eligible to adopt children. As written, he said, the bill would allow adults with no statutory connection, such as roommates and co-workers, to consider adoption.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

**REVENUE** 

**Tax exemptions proposed for Social Security and military retirement**

Members of the Revenue Commit-

tee heard testimony Feb. 4 on a bill that would exempt Social Security and military retirement benefits from state income taxes.

LB20, introduced by Omaha Sen. Bob Krist, would reduce an individual’s adjusted gross income by the entire amount of Social Security benefits received by a person beginning Jan. 1, 2015. The bill also would exempt any income received as military retirement benefits.



Sen. Bob Krist

Krist said 16 other states have similar exemptions in place.

“As a veteran of the United States Air Force, it’s my goal to see Nebraska keep more retired veterans living in the state and attracting more military veterans to the state,” he said. “I will continue to fight for the rights of veterans and those receiving Social Security benefits.”

The proposed exemptions would result in an estimated loss of \$151.7 million in fiscal year 2015-16 and \$114.2 million in FY2016-17.

Ronald Dupell, representing the Nebraska Veterans Coalition, spoke in favor of the bill, saying it would help to keep veterans in the state after they retire from service.

“Despite good efforts by the state to recognize veterans, it lags behind all neighboring states in benefits to veterans,” he said. “This bill can be part of the state’s effort to retain Offutt Air Force Base and attract more businesses to the state.”

Dick Clark, director of research for the Platte Institute for Economic Research, also supported the bill, saying it would help people with fixed incomes.

“This is an attempt to lower taxes on two demographic groups par-

ticularly affected by high taxes,” Clark said. “Few states tax these groups to the extent that Nebraska does.”

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

**Sales tax exemption proposed for college textbooks**

College students would receive a break on textbook costs under a bill heard by the Revenue Committee Feb. 6.

Under LB153, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Adam Morfeld, any required textbook for a course at a postsecondary institution would be exempt from state sales tax. Morfeld said the bill represents targeted tax relief for a constituency that is in need.

“Many worthy students either cannot afford to go [to school] or they incur a large amount of debt to do so,” he said. “We should do anything we can to ease the financial burden on students and their parents.”

The exemption would apply to a textbook regardless of whether it is sold, leased or rented. Electronic course materials also would qualify for the exemption.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln student Nick Devine spoke in favor of the bill, saying that covering the rising costs of textbooks is difficult for students taking full course loads.

“Already we see students who would rather struggle in class than pay for textbooks,” Devine said. “While the cost of textbooks will no doubt continue to be a rising cost for students, the state can further facilitate higher learning in Nebraska [by passing LB153].”



Sen. Adam Morfeld

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

**Increased angel investment tax credits proposed**

Business investors could receive increased tax credits under a bill heard by the Revenue Committee Feb. 5.

Currently, investors can apply for up to \$3 million in annual refundable tax credits for investments made in a business with at least 51 percent of its workforce and payroll in Nebraska and 25 or fewer employees primarily engaged in researching, developing or using products and services in the high-tech field.

LB156, introduced by Gering Sen. John Stinner, would increase the annual maximum available amount of the angel investment tax credit to \$5 million. Stinner said the bill would fund the tax credit program at its original proposed amount.

“The angel investment tax credit fills the identifiable key gaps in Nebraska’s economic development program,” he said. “[LB156] is about growing Nebraska, creating good paying jobs and rebuilding the middle class.”

State statute defines high-tech field to include aerospace, agricultural processing, renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation, environmental engineering, food technology, cellulosic ethanol, information technology, materials science technology, nanotechnology, telecommunications, biosolutions, medical device products, pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, biologicals, chemistry and veterinary science.

Eric Dinger, cofounder of Lincoln company Powderhook, spoke in favor



Sen. John Stinner

of the bill. He said the angel investment tax credit program helps local startups to compete nationally.

“Businesses like mine, the startups of the world, are the economic development that’s really working,” Dinger said. “This is investment in businesses that will hire high-tech workers in the state.”

To qualify for tax credits, an individual must invest at least \$25,000 in a calendar year and qualified funds—composed of three or more investors—are required to invest at least \$50,000.

Refundable credits equaling 35 percent of the investment are granted to investors with caps of \$350,000 for married couples filing joint returns and \$300,000 for all other filers.

Refundable credits of 40 percent are offered for investments made in a business located in a distressed area, which is defined as: a city; a county with a population of fewer than 100,000 residents; an unincorporated area within a county; or a census tract that has an unemployment rate that exceeds the statewide average, a per capita income below the statewide average or a population decrease between the two most recent censuses.

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

**Apprenticeship tax credit considered**

Individuals participating in qualified apprenticeships could receive a tax credit under a bill heard by the Revenue Committee Feb. 4.

LB255, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Adam Morfeld, would provide a non-refundable income tax credit for wages paid to an apprentice participating in a qualified program. Morfeld said the bill would help keep qualified workers in the state.

“My district faces chronic under-employment with the closure and downsizing of many companies in recent years,” he said. “All too often, I see my friends and family leave the state not because of a lack of jobs, but a lack of living-wage jobs.”

A qualified apprenticeship program must provide between 1,200 and 6,000 hours of on-the-job apprenticeship, certification by the U.S. Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training and joint administration by labor and management trustees.

Ron Sedlacek, representing the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce, testified in favor of the bill, saying that businesses in the state are in need of a skilled workforce.

“Typically, in the past, when we’ve surveyed our members about the barriers to doing business in the state, they’ve said things like regulation, taxation or the cost of healthcare,” he said, “But this year, overwhelmingly, they said it is the skills gap and how we’re going to address that.”

Michael LaPlant, a third-year electrician’s apprentice, also supported the bill, saying that apprenticeships provide invaluable experience.

“Through the program I’m getting hands-on work experience,” he said. “I’m out there working with the journeymen, building skills that I’m going to use for the rest of my life. You won’t

get that in a typical college classroom.”

Calculation of the tax credit would equal one dollar for every hour worked by the apprentice during the taxable year, not to exceed the lesser of \$2,000 or 50 percent of the total wages paid to the apprentice during the taxable year.

LB255 would decrease state revenue by \$11.6 million in fiscal year 2016-17 and \$12.8 million in FY2017-18.

The committee did not take immediate action on the bill.

## TRANSPORTATION & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

### Single license plate option for cars considered

Some cars in Nebraska could display only one license plate under a bill heard by the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee Feb. 3.

LB53, introduced by Norfolk Sen. Jim Scheer, would allow owners of passenger cars to be issued only a rear license plate. The fee for the single plate option would be \$100 in addition to standard licensing charges.



Sen. Jim Scheer

In lieu of a second plate, drivers would be required to purchase a decal for 65 cents to be affixed to the driver’s side of the windshield.

Scheer said the bill would give passenger car owners a license plate option that already is available to numerous other vehicles in Nebraska, such as motorcycles and buses.

Loy Todd, president of the Nebraska New Car and Truck Dealers Association, testified in favor of the bill. For many new cars, license plate brackets are an option that dealers and customers do not want to pay for, Todd said. For vehicles sold in Nebraska that do not have brackets, holes must be drilled which can diminish the value of high end and collectible cars, he said.

Todd recommended that Nebraska switch to single plates for all vehicles, pointing out that 19 states already follow that policy.

Mick Mines, a lobbyist for the 3M company, testified in opposition to the bill, saying front license plates should not be eliminated for aesthetic reasons. Often, a license plate is the only reflective surface on the front of a vehicle, he said, and having two plates enhances law enforcement’s ability to quickly identify vehicles.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill. ■

# COMMITTEE HEARINGS

\*Current hearing schedules are always available at: [nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar](http://nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar)

## Monday, February 9

### Banking, Commerce & Insurance Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB342 (Howard) Permit insurers to contract for pharmacist professional services

LB456 (Gloor) Change provisions relating to the Nebraska Exchange Stakeholder Commission

LB531 (Kolterman) Provide requirements

for publication of insurance information  
LB632 (Scheer) Prohibit employers and associations from precluding certain contracts relating to health benefit plans

### Business & Labor

#### Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.

LB334 (Mello) Repeal the Nebraska Workforce Investment Act

LB627 (Mello) Change provisions

relating to pregnancy under the Nebraska Fair Employment Practice Act  
LB306 (Nordquist) Change the Conveyance Safety Act  
LB493 (Nordquist) Adopt the Healthy and Safe Families and Workplaces Act

### Education

#### Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB582 (Nordquist) Change provisions

# COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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relating to a focus school and program allowance

LB509 (Cook) Change and eliminate provisions relating to a poverty allowance under the state aid formula  
LB530 (Sullivan) Provide a duty for the student achievement coordinator  
LB524 (Sullivan) Change provisions documenting eligibility relating to free and reduced-price school meals

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

LB474 (Chambers) Provide for Mountain Lion Protection Plates and create a fund  
LB597 (Davis) Adopt the Contract Carrier Safety Act  
LB31 (Bloomfield) Eliminate motorcycle and moped helmet requirements

## Tuesday, February 10

### Agriculture

#### Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB176 (Schilz) Change the Competitive Livestock Markets Act  
LB175 (Schilz) Adopt the Livestock Growth Act and change provisions of the Nebraska Advantage Rural Development Act

### Banking, Commerce & Insurance

#### Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB78 (Gloor) Change provisions relating to the public agencies authorized to enter into agreements under the Intergovernmental Risk Management Act  
LB257 (Nordquist) Require insurers to provide descriptions relating to telehealth and telemonitoring  
LB553 (Gloor) Change insurance provisions relating to dental services

### Education

#### Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB421 (Kintner) Eliminate a learning community and provide for distribution of assets as prescribed  
LB481 (Kintner) Permit school districts to opt out of a learning community as prescribed  
LB96 (Smith) Eliminate certain taxing authority of learning communities  
LB392 (Crawford) Change and eliminate learning community provisions relating

to levy authority, distribution of core services funds, and state aid calculations  
LB528 (Sullivan) Change and eliminate provisions relating to learning communities  
LB529 (Sullivan) Change provisions relating to the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act

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

LB498 (Hadley) Change sales and use tax provisions relating to all-terrain vehicles and utility-type vehicles  
LB570 (Brasch) Change operation restrictions on golf car vehicles  
LB641 (Garrett) Provide rights and duties for a person operating a manual or motorized wheelchair or bicycle as prescribed

### Urban Affairs

#### Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB197 (Scheer) Provide additional powers to certain sanitary and improvement districts  
LB300 (Schumacher) Change provisions relating to enforcement of ordinances by sanitary and improvement districts  
LB324 (McCullister) Provide authority to sanitary and improvement districts to contract for solid waste collection services  
LB420 (Crawford) Require acknowledgments from purchasers of real estate in a sanitary and improvement district

## Wednesday, February 11

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

LB282 (Baker) Change provisions relating to closed sessions for public bodies  
LB283 (Baker) Allow school districts and educational service units to make emergency expenditures under the Emergency Management Act  
LB365 (Baker) Allow school districts and educational service units to keep electronic records  
LB403 (Davis) Change requirements for elections by mail

### Health & Human Services

#### Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB471 (Howard) Change provisions relating to prescription drug monitoring  
LB452 (Hilkemann) Provide advertising requirements under the Uniform Credentialing Act  
LB567 (Johnson) Permit transfer of prescription information between pharmacies as prescribed

### Judiciary

#### Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

*Appointment:* Ruiz, Gerard A. (Fred) - Crime Victims Reparations Committee  
*Appointment:* Schindler, Michelle - Crime Victims Reparations Committee  
LB483 (Pansing Brooks) Change provisions relating to indeterminate sentencing  
LB172 (Chambers) Eliminate certain mandatory minimum penalties  
LB173 (Chambers) Change habitual criminal provisions

### Natural Resources

#### Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB536 (K. Haar) Provide for the filing of an annual report by public power suppliers with the Nebraska Power Review Board  
LB583 (Schilz) Require a state energy plan

### Nebraska Retirement Systems

#### Room 1525 - 12:00 p.m.

*Appointment:* Walden-Newman, Michael W. - Nebraska Investment Council  
LB467 (Nordquist) Change provisions relating to State Patrol retirement  
LB468 (Nordquist) Change benefit and contribution provisions relating to judges retirement

### Revenue

#### Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB331 (Nordquist) Adopt the Bioscience Impact Opportunity Act  
LB321 (Bolz) Adopt the Nebraska Industrial New Job-training Act and authorize certain payments and taxes  
LB322 (Bolz) Increase child and dependent care tax credits  
LB372 (Craighead) Adopt the First-time Home Buyer Savings Plan Act and provide income tax adjustments

# COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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## Thursday, February 12

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

LB105 (Watermeier) Change provisions relating to payment of fees and costs associated with deaths of incarcerated persons and grand juries  
LB106 (Watermeier) Adopt the Livestock Operation Siting and Expansion Act and change powers of counties relating to zoning  
LB492 (Morfeld) Change provisions relating to fees charged by the register of deeds  
LB561 (Stinner) Name the Irrigation District Act and change election provisions for irrigation districts

### Health & Human Services

#### Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB80 (Gloor) Provide, change, and eliminate anesthesia and sedation permit provisions under the Dentistry Practice Act  
LB315 (Howard) Change provisions relating to medicaid recovery audit contractors

### Judiciary

#### Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB290 (Coash) Eliminate certain notification requirements under the Sex Offender Registration Act and eliminate the offense of unlawful use of the Internet by a prohibited sex offender  
LB119 (Schumacher) Change where certain sentences of imprisonment may be served

*Appointment:* Fisher, Darrell E. - Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

*Appointment:* Frakes, Scott R. - Department of Correctional Services

### Natural Resources

#### Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

*Appointment:* Batie, Donald P. - Nebraska Natural Resources Commission  
LB310 (Davis) Change provisions of the Niobrara Scenic River Act  
LB622 (Larson) Change provisions relating to the Niobrara Scenic River Act

### Revenue

#### Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB210 (Ebke) Change provisions relating to housing agencies and

taxation of mixed-use developments  
LB277 (B. Harr) Change tax deed lien priority  
LB345 (Kolowski) Adopt the Property Tax Relief Act  
LB615 (Kintner) Provide a property tax exemption for homesteads of certain persons

## Tuesday, February 17

### Agriculture

#### Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB377 (Kolterman) Change provisions and procedures relating to the disposition, care, custody, and costs associated with the impoundment of dogs or cats  
LB360 (Johnson) Change provisions of the Commercial Dog and Cat Operator Inspection Act  
LB389 (Kuehn) Change license and inspection fees under the Commercial Dog and Cat Operator Inspection Act  
LB359 (Johnson) Change a fee collected from dog licensees

### Appropriations

#### Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

AM 242 to LB 430

### Banking, Commerce & Insurance

#### Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB48 (Scheer) Change unfair insurance trade practices relating to casualty losses  
LB213 (Schumacher) Provide for withholding of insurance proceeds for demolition purposes  
LB628 (Schilz) Provide for electronic posting of property and casualty insurance policies and notices related to such policies

### Education

#### Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB478 (Baker) Provide bonding authority for educational service units  
LB513 (Craighead) Change provisions relating to use and leasing of school property  
LB431 (Baker) Change provisions relating to public school district construction  
LB595 (Davis) Create the Task Force on School Construction Assistance  
LB477 (Davis) Change provisions

relating to school districts maintaining the only public high school in a county  
LB616 (Larson) Adopt the Independent Public Schools Act

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

LB311 (Transportation & Telecommunications) Change provisions relating to CLP-learner's permit issuance and applications for commercial drivers' licenses  
LB568 (Brasch) Change certain administrative license revocation provisions relating to commercial drivers' licenses  
LB579 (Murante) Change traffic accident reporting requirements as prescribed and authorize a fee for a copy of a peace officer report

### Urban Affairs

#### Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB455 (Gloor) Change provisions relating to employment of a full-time fire chief by cities of the first class  
LB378 (Groene) Change requirements for voter approval of borrowing money for public improvements by a first-class city  
LB540 (Crawford) Adopt updated international building code standards

## Wednesday, February 18

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

LB214 (Schumacher) Provide for electronic signatures on initiative and referendum petitions  
LB367 (Groene) Eliminate a restriction on paying petition circulators based on number of signatures  
LB368 (Groene) Prohibit certain activities interfering with petition circulators  
LB577 (Murante) Permit counties to regulate peddlers, hawkers, and solicitors

### Health & Human Services

#### Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB490 (Watermeier) Adopt the Provider Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment Act  
LB335 (Mello) Create and provide duties for the Intergenerational Poverty Task Force  
LB607 (Mello) Adopt the Home Care Consumer Bill of Rights Act

# COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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## Judiciary

### Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB113 (Larson) Provide a co-payment for correctional inmates' health care services

LB425 (Riepe) Provide for earned time and discontinue the use of good time

LB426 (Riepe) Provide for violent offenders and provide powers and duties for the Director of Correctional Services, the Parole Administrator, the Board of Parole, and parole officers  
LB545 (B. Harr) Provide for additional mandatory minimum sentencing as prescribed

## Natural Resources

### Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

*Appointment:* Palm, Owen A. - Nebraska

Natural Resources Commission

LB208 (Schilz) Provide an exemption to water storage reservoir permit requirements as prescribed

LB394 (Schilz) Prohibit interference with hunting, trapping, or fishing by intimidation using a telephone or other communication device

## Revenue

### Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB419 (Mello) Exempt sales and purchases by zoos and aquariums from sales and use tax

LB280 (Davis) Authorize a school-funding surtax and reduce the levy authority of school districts and learning communities

LB357 (Smith) Change income tax rates and transfer funds from the Cash Reserve Fund

## Thursday, February 19

### Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

#### Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB291 (Coash) Remove professional wrestling from the jurisdiction of the State Athletic Commissioner

LB166 (Crawford) Change filing and enforcement provisions of the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act

LB400 (Smith) Change filing requirements for statements of financial interest

LB640 (Garrett) Provide for retrocession of jurisdiction for land on which the Omaha National Cemetery is located

## Health & Human Services

### Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB243 (Bolz) Create a pilot project relating to family finding services

LB441 (Bolz) Change provisions relating to the bridge to independence program

LB199 (Howard) Provide for stipends for social work students

LB296 (Kolterman) Require the Department of Health & Human Services to provide notification after removal of a child

## Judiciary

### Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB406 (Morfeld) Change provisions relating to actions for the recovery of vacant, platted, and subdivided real property as prescribed

LB415 (Pansing Brooks) Change provisions relating to the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act  
LB316 (Kintner) Prohibit joining certain interstate compacts and the sharing of red light camera and speed camera information with other compact members as prescribed

## Revenue

### Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB230 (Mello) Change provisions relating to partition actions

LB293 (Schnoor) Change valuation of agricultural land and horticultural land

LB350 (Brasch) Change valuation of agricultural land and horticultural land

LB384 (Lindstrom) Provide for reclassification of agricultural land and horticultural land

## Friday, February 20

### Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

#### Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

*Appointment:* Mitchell, Ronnie -

Department of Aeronautics

LB465 (B. Harr) Adopt the Electronic Notary Public Act

LB479 (Bloomfield) Change provisions relating to memorials to veterans

LB562 (Morfeld) Adopt the Nebraska Treasures Act

LR26CA (Larson) Constitutional amendment to change the age for eligibility to public office

## Health & Human Services

### Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB196 (Campbell) Change provisions of the Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act

LB549 (Campbell) Adopt the Health Care Transformation Act

## Judiciary

### Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB598 (Schumacher) Change and provide requirements regarding treatment and segregation of mentally ill inmates

LB592 (Bolz) Change provisions relating to corrections and parole and mentally ill offenders

LB605 (Mello) Change classification of penalties, punishments, probation and parole provisions, and provisions relating to criminal records and restitution and provide for a special legislative committee

LB606 (Mello) Adopt the Office of Inspector General of the Nebraska Correctional System Act, change provisions relating to the Public Counsel, and mandate a declaration by the Governor of a correctional system overcrowding emergency as prescribed

## Revenue

### Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB200 (Davis) Change the distribution of sales and use tax revenue and provide duties for the Department of Revenue

LB256 (Bloomfield) Change the sales tax rate and the distribution of sales tax revenue

LB284 (Riepe) Redefine terms under the Sports Arena Facility Financing Assistance Act

LB285 (Riepe) Redefine a term under the Sports Arena Facility Financing Assistance Act ■

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