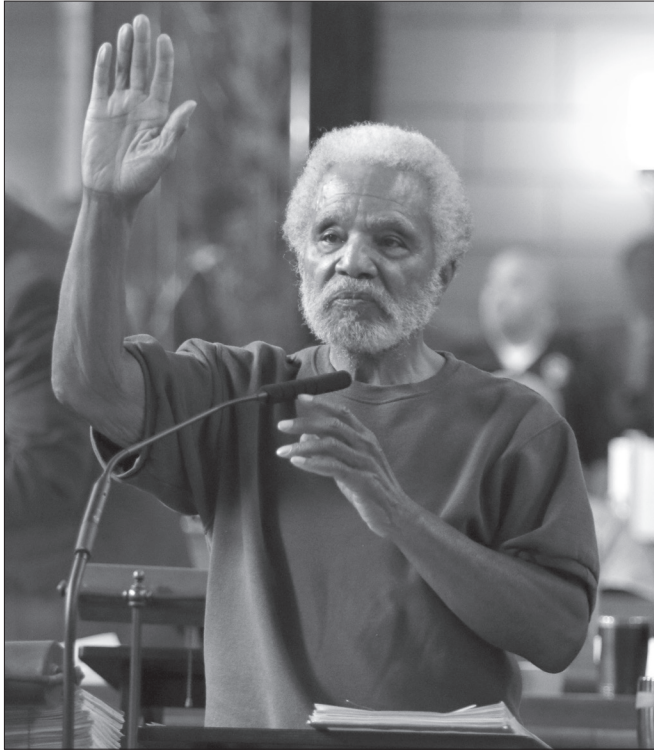


Veto overridden, Legislature adjourns



Sen. Ernie Chambers requests a moment of personal privilege to thank his colleagues who supported LB268.



Sen. Jeremy Nordquist said LB623 will enable nearly 2,700 young immigrants to be issued driver's licenses.

Death penalty repealed

Lawmakers abolished capital punishment in Nebraska following a narrowly successful veto override May 27. LB268, introduced by Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers, replaces death penalty provisions with a life sentence. The bill applies to 10 inmates currently serving capital punishment sentences at the Tecumseh State Correctional Institution. An 11th death row inmate, Michael Ryan, died in prison of natural causes May 24. He had been on death row since 1986.

The bill was passed by the Legislature May 20 on a 32-15 vote, but Gov. Pete Ricketts vetoed it May 26.

Chambers offered a motion to override the governor's veto, saying the repeal finally would lift the "cloud of darkness" over the state caused by the use of capital punishment.

"This will be a shining moment for the Nebraska Legislature," Chambers said. "I am hoping that we will be that motive force in this country that will ultimately result in

(continued page 2)

DACA licenses approved

Qualifying young immigrants can be permitted to drive in Nebraska following a successful veto override May 28.

Introduced by Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, LB623 allows Nebraska residents of driving age who are covered by the federal Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program to secure a driver's license or state identification card.

Gov. Pete Ricketts vetoed the bill May 27 after it was passed by the Legislature May 21 on a 34-9 vote.

In his veto message to the Legislature, Ricketts said the bill would grant too many illegal immigrants privileges. Under LB623, Ricketts said, any immigrant with approved deferred action status could be issued a driver's license and state identification card.

"The bill is wrong on principle and the bill is overly broad," Ricketts wrote.

(continued page 3)

Death penalty repeal withstands veto

(continued from front page)

the abolition of state killing.”

The effort to end capital punishment in Nebraska has been a career-long effort of Chambers’ since 1973.

In his veto message to the Legislature, Ricketts had said repealing the death penalty is counter to the beliefs of an overwhelming majority of Nebraskans who support it as an important public safety tool. The death penalty is necessary to provide justice to the families of victims of especially heinous and violent crimes, Ricketts said.

“Your decision will determine whether the families of victims of ten murderers on Nebraska’s death row will ever receive the justice they deserve,” Ricketts wrote, “which was meted out by a very deliberate and cautious judicial process in each of their cases.”

In her support of the motion to override the veto, Bellevue Sen. Sue Crawford disputed the claim that the death penalty is good for victims’ families. In states without the death penalty, she said, studies show that victims’ families fare better psychologically than those in death penalty states because they do not have to relive the crimes throughout the offenders’ lengthy appeals process.



Members of the public observe the historic vote to repeal the death penalty in Nebraska.

“The death penalty does not bring closure and healing,” Crawford said.

Sen. Adam Morfeld of Lincoln said the state should set an example based on justice, not vengeance. Justice can be provided with a life sentence, he said in support of repealing the death penalty.

“If we give the state the right to take a life, then what kind of message does that send to our society?” Morfeld said.

Norfolk Sen. Jim Scheer was in favor of retaining the death penalty. Those convicted of heinous, premeditated murder deserve the ultimate punishment, he said.

“I believe there is a time and a place for the death penalty in Nebraska,”

he said.

Omaha Sen. Beau McCoy agreed, saying that without the death penalty, the lives of murder victims are devalued by a lack of justice.

“I’ll always rise to defend the death penalty as the ultimate punishment for those who have committed the worst crimes possible against their fellow Nebraskans,” McCoy said.

Sen. Colby Coash of Lincoln said that Nebraska’s prolonged inability to procure the chemicals needed to carry out executions shows that capital punishment is no longer a viable way to punish the state’s worst criminals.

“The taxpayers have not gotten their bang for their buck for almost

UNICAMERAL UPDATE

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20 years. This program is broken," he said. "When are we going to admit that we have a broken system that will not work?"

Bellevue Sen. Tommy Garrett also supported the override motion. He said the justice system is too flawed to give the state the power to kill its citizens, so the death penalty is not worth the risk.

"I can think of no greater injustice than government taking the life of an innocent man or woman," Garrett said.

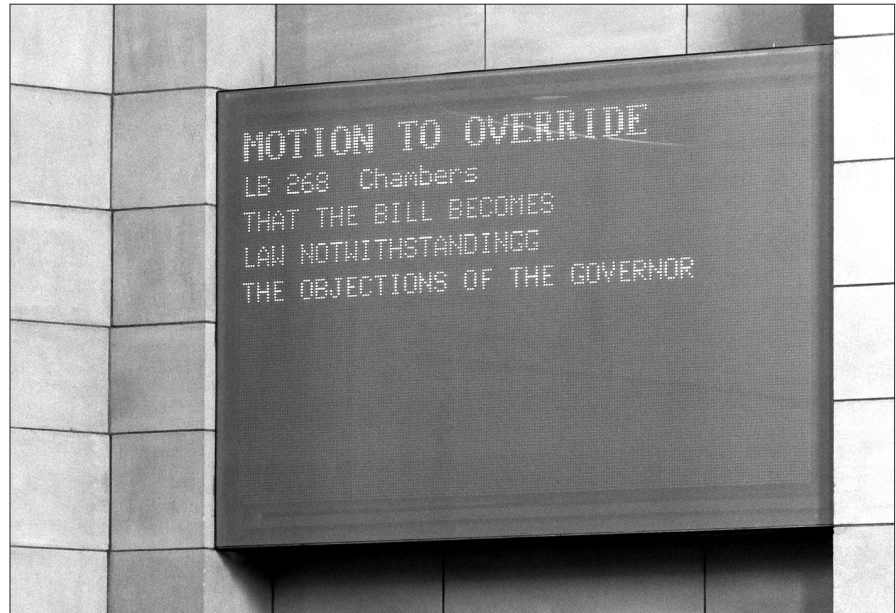
The measure removes the Class I felony penalty designation from the state criminal code and makes first degree murder a Class IA felony punishable by life imprisonment. According to statute, a murder is considered a first degree offense if done purposely with deliberate and premeditated malice in the attempt of a first degree sexual assault, arson, robbery, kidnap-

ping, hijacking, burglary or poisoning.

The bill does not prevent a sentencing court from ordering restitution or alter the authority of the state Department of Correctional Services

to determine appropriate measures for incarceration of an offender.

Senators voted 30-19 to override the governor's veto. Thirty votes were needed. ■



Licenses approved for young immigrants

(continued from front page)

Nordquist offered a motion to override the governor's veto, saying that pending federal programs to extend deferred status to adult illegal immigrants will be litigated for years.

"It is extremely unlikely it will move forward," Nordquist said, adding that the only people who will be affected by the bill are current DACA recipients.

"There are thousands of bright, young, educated immigrant youth in our state who are in need of the legal right to drive," Nordquist said. "It's time to remove a barrier to the success of these kids and also the success of our economy and our community."

Sen. Mike Groene of North Platte agreed with the governor's assessment of the bill, saying that it would give driving privileges to all of the state's illegal immigrants with deferred status. If the measure was narrowed to benefit only DACA recipients, Groene said, he would support it.

"Let's come back with an accurate bill," Groene said. "Let's see what the courts do and let's do it right."

Hastings Sen. Les Seiler supported the motion to override the veto. Denying driver's licenses to young immigrants who have become doctors and lawyers in Nebraska creates an absurd and embarrassing situation, he said.

"You mean to tell me we will authorize a license to a

person to practice medicine in the state of Nebraska but they can't drive a car?" Seiler said. "What kind of mentality is that?"

Administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the DACA program is designed to protect from deportation individuals who were brought into the country illegally as children. Those who meet DACA guidelines are eligible for a work permit and may request deferred action for two years, subject to renewal.

To qualify for the program residents must have:

- lived in the U.S. continuously since June 15, 2007;
- been no older than 31 as of June 15, 2012;
- entered the country prior to their 16th birthday;
- attended school, earned a diploma or general education certificate or been honorably discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces; and
- not been convicted of a felony or significant misdemeanors.

Under LB623, DACA recipients will be required to relinquish a state driver's license or identification card if their lawful status is revoked by the federal government.

Lawmakers voted 34-10 to override the governor's veto. Thirty votes were needed. ■

Session ends early, Nordquist resigns

The first session of the 104th Legislature adjourned sine die May 29. Senators adjourned on the 89th day of the scheduled 90-day session.

Kearney Sen. Galen Hadley, Speaker of the Legislature, acknowledged the hard work of senators during a contentious session. Lawmakers addressed difficult issues, he said, including achieving a balanced budget, repealing the state's death penalty and addressing prison reform and roads funding.

"It was an historic session regardless of which side of the issues you fell on," he said. "It was a year of tough decisions."

Hadley applauded senators for not backing away from hard choices, especially the 18 new members serving in their first session.

"I have not seen a class hit the ground running the way this class did," he said, adding that the Legislature accomplished a great deal under nine new committee chairpersons and a new speaker. Senators passed into law provisions of 272 bills that were heard in committee this session, he said.

Hadley noted that lawmakers will work throughout the interim and next session to address the important issues facing Nebraskans.

"The Legislature is a process, not an event," he said. "Everything I just talked about—the tough issues—we will continue to work on those."

Senators also acknowledged the service of Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, who will resign from the Legislature June 30.

Nordquist, who was elected in 2008 and re-elected in 2012, has served as the Nebraska Retirement Systems Committee chairperson for four years. He is leaving the Legislature to serve as chief of staff to Congressman Brad Ashford.

Nordquist said it has been an honor to represent downtown and south Omaha and credited legislative staff and fellow senators for helping him to succeed during his time as a state senator.

"I think very few people understand the sacrifices that you make to be here and the dedication that you have to the work that we do here," Nordquist said. "You are all dedicated to this institution; you are the strength of this institution."

Noting that it is "easy to be cynical" about politics and

elected officials, Nordquist encouraged lawmakers to remember their mission.

"I can say without reservation that you are all here for the right reason," he said. "You all want to make the state a better place to live."

In his remarks, Gov. Pete Ricketts also acknowledged the hard work of senators this session.

"Every session you, our citizen legislators, sacrifice your time with your family, your friends, your communities and your businesses, to come here to Lincoln to do the work of the people," he said. "Thank you very much for sacrificing to be here for the people of Nebraska."

Ricketts thanked the members of the Appropriations Committee for their work on crafting the state budget and helping him to accomplish two goals for the state: cutting the growth of government and providing property tax relief.

"Working together, we cut the growth of [state] government by nearly half, to 3.5 percent," he said. "Working together, we provided \$128 million of additional property tax relief. This is direct relief from the state to all property owners."

Among other successes noted by the governor were an increase in Aid to Dependent Children payments, a pilot program for vocational training and providing greater flexibility to nurse practitioners across the state.

Ricketts acknowledged differences with senators on which direction to take the state during the session, but encouraged lawmakers to keep the lines of communication open.

"So next year, we will continue to work on the priorities that the people of Nebraska sent us here to work on," he said.

The second session of the 104th Legislature is scheduled to convene Jan. 6, 2016. ■



Speaker Galen Hadley praised senators for making difficult choices.



AGRICULTURE



Repeal of meat packer restrictions stalled on second round

An attempt to force a select file vote on a bill that would have allowed meat packing companies to own swine during production failed May 27.

Currently, a restriction under the Competitive Livestock Markets Act prohibits livestock packers from directly or indirectly owning or feeding livestock. LB176, introduced by Ogalala Sen. Ken Schilz, would narrow that restriction to apply only to cattle producers.



Sen. Ken Schilz

Schilz said the change would encourage growth in the state's swine production industry.

"Nearly every state that surrounds Nebraska is seeing significant growth in their hog industries, but we are not keeping pace," he said. "If implemented, this will once again allow hog processors to own hogs and contract with producers under custom feeding agreements."

The bill would enable a swine processor or packer to enter into an oral or written agreement with a person who owns, leases or holds a legal interest in the livestock operation. The packer would own the swine, while the individual producer would retain ownership of the facilities and land.

An Agriculture Committee amendment, adopted 27-5 on general file May 26, would expand from five to 14 the number of days of incidental ownership and feeding of livestock

excluded from the prohibition.

Hoskins Sen. Dave Bloomfield moved to bracket the bill during general file debate until April 15, 2016, saying it would hurt small independent farmers.

"The independence of the Nebraska farmer is renowned. If this passes, it would eliminate that independence," Bloomfield said. "When you enter into a contract such as the one offered under the bill, it is a life-changing commitment. There is no renouncing the contract on the producer's part; his entire family is locked into a contract they can't get out of even by dying."

The contract system allowed in the bill represents a sort of indentured servitude, according to Cedar Rapids Sen. Kate Sullivan.

"In my estimation, this is just another strike against competitive and fair marketing of livestock in Nebraska," she said. "This makes hog producers nothing more than serfs, totally beholden to the corporate entity that owns the livestock."

Sen. John Stinner of Gering opposed the bracket motion, saying the notion of the small family farm is no more.

"The family farm has now morphed into thousands of acres of production with technology incorporated throughout the operation. LB176 would put Nebraska on equal footing with neighboring states and promote sustainability and profitability," he said.

The bracket motion failed on a 10-17 vote.

An amendment introduced by Hyannis Sen. Al Davis, adopted 37-2, precluded the contracts from containing confidentiality agreements.

Several senators introduced a series of motions and amendments on general file to extend debate on the bill, saying it would prioritize corporations

over independent farmers.

After eight hours of general file debate, Schilz introduced a motion to invoke cloture—or cease debate and force a vote on the bill—which senators approved on a 34-9 vote. A successful cloture motion requires at least 33 votes in support. The bill was advanced to select file on a 28-10 vote.

Following four hours of extended debate on select file, Schilz again filed a motion to invoke cloture. The motion failed 31-11.

LB176 remains on select file with amendments pending.

BANKING, COMMERCE & INSURANCE



Downsizing assistance fund changes approved

Senators gave final approval May 29 to a bill that makes changes to funds intended to mitigate the impact of economic downsizing.

LB457, introduced by Grand Island Sen. Mike Gloor, terminates the Industrial Recovery Fund. During general file debate May 26, Gloor said the fund was started in 2012 with two one-year transfers of \$1 million from the Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Fund (NAHTF) that had been recaptured from housing projects. No municipalities applied for those funds, he said, and they remain unused.



Sen. Mike Gloor

"This bill was brought to me by the Department of Economic Development to transfer funds from a program that has not been used since its inception," Gloor said.

LB457 terminates the Industrial

Recovery Fund. Existing funds will be transferred to the Site and Building Development Fund. Projects that were eligible under the Industrial Recovery Fund—those that mitigate the economic impact of a closure or downsizing of a private-sector entity by making necessary improvements to building and infrastructure—will be eligible under the existing fund.

A Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee amendment, adopted 40-0, altered the distribution of funds to allocate 50 percent to the Site and Building Development Fund and 50 percent to the NAHTF.

LB457 advanced from general file 40-0 and was given final approval May 29 on a vote of 46-0. The bill takes effect immediately.

GOVERNMENT, MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS

County solicitor ordinances authorized

Counties can issue ordinances regulating panhandling under a bill passed by the Legislature May 29.

LB577, introduced by Gretna Sen. John Murante, authorizes counties to regulate the operation and conduct of peddlers, hawkers and solicitors on public and private commercial property through the imposition of fees, issuance of a permit or both. Murante said counties currently cannot regulate solicitors.

“The challenge we’re having in suburban communities is that counties do not currently have the authority to require permits for peddlers, hawkers



Sen. John Murante

or solicitors,” he said. “As a result, the more aggressive solicitors are leaving the cities and going to the outlying areas and there’s no way to regulate them or even know who they are.”

Any ordinance established under the bill will apply to all areas of a county’s jurisdiction, except where a similar city ordinance is in place.

A Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee amendment, adopted 33-0, prohibits counties from charging a fee for such permits.

Senators advanced the bill from general file May 26 on a 32-0 vote and gave it final approval May 29 with a 45-1 vote.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Guidelines for Medicaid recovery audits approved

Senators passed a bill May 29 that sets guidelines for Medicaid recovery audits in Nebraska.

LB315, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Sara Howard, establishes new guidelines for Recovery Audit Contractors to follow while conducting audits as required by the Affordable Care Act.

Among other provisions, the bill:

- clarifies that only one audit may be conducted at a time;
- excludes from review claims otherwise audited;
- requires claim review within two years of the date of payment;
- aligns the appeals process with



Sen. Sara Howard

DHHS practice;

- requires procedures for resubmitting corrected claims; and
- requires audit completion within 60 days of receipt of all requested material.

LB315 passed on a 44-0 vote.

Health care provider advertising rules adopted

A bill intended to ensure that patients have accurate information about health care provider credentials received final approval May 29.

LB452, introduced by Omaha Sen. Robert Hilkemann, amends the Uniform Credentialing Act to require that any credential holder’s advertisement for health care services identify the type of credentials held by the health care provider.

The use of deceptive advertising is prohibited.

LB452 passed on a vote of 46-0.



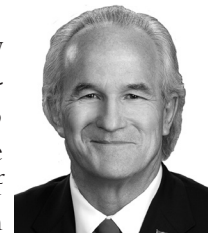
Sen. Robert Hilkemann

JUDICIARY

Medical marijuana legalization stalled

A bill was bracketed May 27 that would legalize medical marijuana in Nebraska.

Introduced by Bellevue Sen. Tommy Garrett, LB643 would authorize the state Department of Health and Human



Sen. Tommy Garrett

Services to regulate the manufacture and use of cannabis in Nebraska for medical purposes.

Garrett offered a motion to bracket the bill until June 15, 2015, later saying that he intends to work with senators over the interim to improve the bill and that he planned to bring it back for the 2016 session.

The Medical Cannabis Act would require the department to establish a patient registry and define qualifying medical conditions required for enrollment in the registry to include seizures, severe or chronic pain and nausea associated with cancer, acquired immune deficiency syndrome or epilepsy.

The bill would locate centers in each of the state's congressional districts to distribute Medical cannabis in liquid, oil or pill form.

A five-person, governor-appointed Medical Cannabis Board would advise the department regarding medical cannabis regulations.

There were no objections to Garrett's bracket motion and it was approved by unanimous consent, ending debate on LB643 for the session. Several amendments are pending on the bill.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Rebate available for clean fuel vehicles

Owners of clean fuel-burning vehicles can receive a rebate under a bill passed by the Legislature May 29.

Under LB581, introduced by Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, the owner of a qualifying vehicle can apply for the rebate as long as the applicant has not claimed another rebate or incentive for the same vehicle.

Nordquist said that over 30 states



Sen. Jeremy Nordquist

currently offer some sort of incentive to convert vehicles to a form of compressed natural gas.

"Since 2008, oil and natural gas production has increased each year, while imports of foreign oil have decreased," he said. "This would create a rebate program to promote conversion of vehicles to qualifying clean-burning fuels, which offer significant benefits over gasoline."

The bill defines qualified clean-burning motor vehicle fuel as hydrogen fuel cell, compressed natural gas, liquefied natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas or gasoline containing at least 15 percent ethanol.

An applicant who has installed conversion equipment in their vehicle can receive the lesser amount of \$4,500 or 50 percent of the cost of conversion.

A rebate of \$2,500 or 50 percent of the cost of conversion also is available for property that is directly related to the compression and delivery of natural gas from a private home or residence, for noncommercial purposes, into a fuel tank of a motor vehicle propelled by natural gas.

Omaha Sen. John McCollister opposed the bill.

"There are just so few fueling stations currently. Until there is more opportunity to fill up a vehicle and a greater number of stations, I really doubt this will have much effect," he said. "Let the state stay away from these credits and let the market decide whether or not this is the way to go."

Sen. Curt Friesen of Henderson introduced an amendment, adopted 30-0, which added to the bill gasoline containing at least 15 percent ethanol as a qualified clean-burning motor vehicle fuel. It also allocated \$500,000 to fund rebates under the program.

The bill advanced from general file May 26 on a 27-13 vote and received final approval May 29 on a 41-4 vote.

NEBRASKA RETIREMENT SYSTEMS

Judges' retirement plan revisions passed

Senators passed a bill May 26 to change the retirement plan for Nebraska judges.

LB468, introduced by Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, creates a new tier of reduced benefits for judges who become members of the judges' retirement plan on and after July 1, 2015.

The bill requires that the final retirement benefit be calculated using an average of the five highest years of salary and that the contribution rate for judges in this tier not decrease after 20 years. New judges will be required to contribute 10 percent of their annual salaries to the retirement plan.

Beginning July 1, 2015, the bill redirects \$2 each from civil, criminal, traffic and probate case docket fees from the state's General Fund to the judges' retirement plan, which will generate an estimated \$660,000 annually. Beginning July 1, 2017, the bill redirects \$4 from those fees to the retirement fund, which is estimated to generate \$1.3 million annually.

The bill passed with an emergency clause on a 44-2 vote.

REVENUE

Mechanical amusement device tax vetoed

A bill that would impose an additional tax on operators of mechanical amusement devices was passed by the Legislature, but was vetoed May 27 by

Gov. Pete Ricketts.

Columbus Sen. Paul Schumacher, the bill sponsor, chose not to attempt a veto override. His bill, LB70, would impose the tax—10 percent of the gross revenue derived from the operation of the device—on any business operating such a device.



Sen. Paul Schumacher

Mechanical amusement device, as defined in state statute, includes any machine in which a person plays a game by inserting some form of currency, a prize is paid and the results are determined by chance.

In his veto letter to the Legislature, Ricketts said that the devices represent an expansion of gambling—an issue voters repeatedly have rejected.

“While merely indicated such devices have paid taxes cannot legalize such terminals, there will be a presumption that such devices and the games on them are legal in Nebraska,” he wrote. “I am concerned that the practical effect of the bill will give de facto legal status to these potentially illegal gaming machines.”

Schumacher opted to not file a motion to override the veto, saying that while he and the governor disagreed on the expansion of gambling in Nebraska, both agree that a solution should be sought over the interim.

The bill would apply to mechanical amusement devices that:

- accept currency, coins, tokens or other value in exchange for play;
- award a monetary prize or anything redeemable for a monetary prize;
- are played by a player using a touch screen, computer mouse, touch pad, light pen, laser or

device of similar function by which the player competes against software running the device; and

- have not been adjudicated by a court of competent jurisdiction within the state of Nebraska to not constitute a gambling device.

Senators had passed the bill on a 35-11 vote on May 21.

URBAN AFFAIRS

Building codes updated

Senators passed a bill May 29 that updates several building codes.

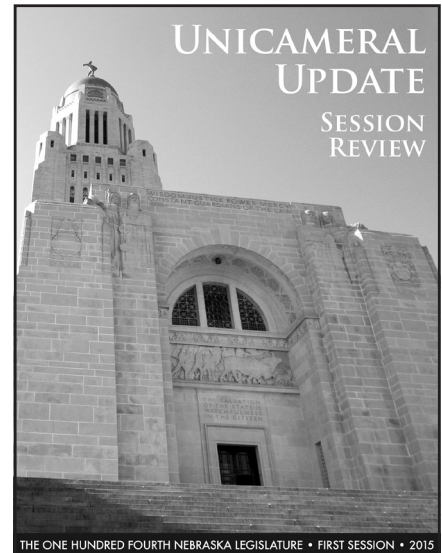
Currently, Nebraska uses the 2009 editions of the International Building Codes. LB540, introduced by Bellevue Sen. Sue Crawford, adopts the 2012 revisions to the following codes:



Sen. Sue Crawford

- the International Building Code, which covers all new construction except one- and two-family dwellings;
- the International Residential Code, which covers new construction of one- and two-family dwellings; and
- the International Existing Building Code, which covers repair, alteration, addition and change of occupancy for existing buildings.

The bill passed on a 46-0 vote. ■



This is the final weekly issue of the Unicameral Update for 2015.

Look for our special session review issue in June.



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104th Legislature, 1st Session - Day 3*
* click the day above to see Agenda and other calendar activity

The Legislature is adjourned until Friday, January 9, 2015 at 10:00 am.

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RECENT HEADLINES: [State funding of probation administration proposed](#)

State funding of probation administration proposed
Published January 29, 2015, in Government Military and Veterans Affairs

The facility and administration costs of state probation offices would be paid with state funds under a bill heard by the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee Jan. 29. Under LB427, introduced by North Platte Sen. Mike Groene, counties would no longer be required to provide office space and necessary

Carbon monoxide safety considered
Published January 29, 2015, in Health and Human Services

Carbon monoxide detectors would be required in residences under legislation heard by the Health and Human Services Committee Jan. 29. LB34, introduced by Omaha Sen. Sara Howard, would require the installation and maintenance of carbon monoxide detectors in any residence sold, rented or receiving a building permit after Jan. 1, 2017. The bill would apply

HISTORY OF A UNICAMERAL

“There is no more reason for a two-house legislature in any of our states than there is for a bank to have two boards of directors or for a city to have two separate boards of aldermen. Indeed there is no more use for a two-branch legislature than there is for two governors.”

– George Norris

Nebraska’s legislature is unique among all state legislatures in the nation because it has a single house. It wasn’t always a unicameral, however. The state had a senate and a house of representatives for 68 years before Nebraskans voted to eliminate half of their state legislature in 1934.

The change did not come easily. Nebraskans rejected similar proposals several times before interest in reining in state spending heightened because of the Great Depression. The cause also was helped by a zealous petition campaign led by the prestigious U.S. Sen. George W. Norris and the fact that two other popular proposals were on the ballot that year: local option on prohibition and legalized pari-mutuel betting. The vote was 286,086 for and 193,152 against a unicameral system.

Norris, a “New Deal Republican” who settled in McCook, wore out two sets of automobile tires while he drove throughout the state campaigning for the measure. He said the two-house system was outdated, inefficient and unnecessary.

The bicameral system was modeled after the British Parliament, Norris said, which is made up of the House of Commons, with representatives elected by the people, and the House of Lords, with its aristocratic members appointed by the king.

The one-house system differs little from most city, county and school district governing bodies. All Canadian provinces operate with single-house systems.

Implementation of the unicameral legislature in 1937 cut government costs for obvious reasons. Legislative membership went from 133 in the bicameral to 43 in the new single house – nearly a 70 percent reduction.

Also, the one-house system was more efficient than its predecessor. The number of committees was pared down from 61 to 18, and 581 bills were introduced in 1937 as opposed to twice that many the previous session. The last bicameral session in 1935 ran 110 days, passed 192 bills and cost \$202,593. The first unicameral session two years later ran 98 days, passed 214 bills and cost \$103,445.

A common question regarding unicameralism was how to preserve checks and balances to prevent abuse of power. Norris argued there would be checks and balances without a second house. The Supreme Court and the governor would rule on or veto measures deemed improper, he said.

More importantly, the people would serve as a check upon the possible abuse of power by their elected officials with the right to vote and petition, Norris said. The Nebraska Unicameral would have easy-to-follow procedures and extend greater privileges to the press to allow for greater public awareness.

In a one-house legislature, Norris said, no actions could be concealed as was commonly done in the conference committee of bicameral legislatures. Conference committees resolve differences when bills passed in both houses vary in content.

Another unique aspect of Nebraska’s legislature is its nonpartisanship, which was included in the successful 1934 unicameral amendment. A nonpartisan body allows senators to concentrate on local interests without being influenced by national party lines. National party lines, Norris argued, often have little to do with local government. A voter who votes according to party lines might vote for a state candidate who disagrees with him or her on matters over which the senator will have jurisdiction.

Movements for unicameralism have existed throughout the United States since the nation’s independence. There were several pro-unicameral movements in Nebraska before one finally succeeded. The same year Nebraska’s unicameral legislature began operating, attempts in 21 other states to become one-house legislatures failed. Many states looked to Nebraska as a model of an effective one-house legislature. Those states included California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Montana, New York, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Texas. Despite the interest unicameralism has received over the years, Nebraska remains the only state with a unicameral legislature. ■



George W. Norris

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The Nebraska Capitol's tower is home to a nesting pair of peregrine falcons. This year, they produced four eggs, only one of which hatched. This chick, or eyas, was banded on May 29 by employees of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and Fontenelle Forest's Raptor Recovery. This male eyas, pictured above with one of the unhatched eggs, will be the 22nd chick raised at the Capitol since the first successful nesting in 2005.