

Proposal would add per-student aid to school funding system

The state would pay public school districts \$1,500 in foundation aid per student each year under a bill heard Feb. 7 by the Education Committee.

In addition to that funding, LB583, introduced by Bellevue Sen. Rita Sanders at the request of Gov. Jim Pillen, would require the state to pay districts special education supplemental aid each year beginning with school fiscal year 2023-24.

The aid would be 80 percent of the difference between a district's actual expected expenditures for special education and the special education funding it already receives from state and federal sources.

Sanders said the proposal is a first step toward fixing Nebraska's "inadequate" school funding system, the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act. Under LB583, she said, approximately 180 of the state's roughly 240 school districts would receive additional state aid, and no district would receive less aid than it does currently.

The additional state support would be paid from a new fund proposed under LB681, introduced by Elmwood Sen. Robert Clements at the request of the governor. That bill would require a \$1 billion transfer to the fund from the state's general fund in fiscal year 2023-24 and a \$250 million transfer the following year.

Pillen testified in support of LB583, saying it would provide guaranteed state funding to each Nebraska public school student for the first time
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Ban on gender altering procedures for minors proposed



Sen. Kathleen Kauth said her bill would give families time to address gender confusion without potentially harmful medical interventions.

The Health and Human Services Committee heard six hours of often emotional testimony Feb. 8 on a bill that would ban gender altering health care for minors in Nebraska.

LB574, introduced by Omaha Sen. Kathleen Kauth, would create the Let Them Grow Act, which would take effect on Oct. 1, 2023. The bill would prohibit physicians in Nebraska from performing or referring an individual for gender alteration procedures, including surgical procedures, hormone treatment and puberty blockers, if the individual is under the age of 19.

A physician who knowingly violates the bill's provisions would be subject to review by the state's medical licensing board. An individual who received a gender altering procedure while under the age of 19, or their parent or guardian, could bring a civil action

against the physician within two years of a procedure.

The distribution or use of state funds for any entity, organization or individual that provides gender altering procedures to minors also would be prohibited under the bill's provisions.

Kauth said she introduced LB574 to give children the necessary time to work through their feelings of gender dysphoria and any other complicating issues that may impact their gender perception.

"More than 85 percent of kids with gender dysphoria will desist if left alone in a process called 'watchful waiting,'" she said. "These children need therapy to deal with the coexisting mental and emotional struggles they are experiencing — not irreversible, harmful and experimental medi-
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and address the federal government’s failure to reimburse school districts for their special education expenses at the promised level.

“It is time for the state to step up and fill the gap,” he said.

State budget administrator Lee Will also testified in support, saying the bill would direct an additional \$300 million to K-12 school funding annually, a nearly 30 percent increase.

He said foundation aid primarily would benefit districts that do not receive equalization aid, which is state aid intended to cover the difference between a district’s needs and its local resources, such as property taxes. This additional state funding would help those districts reduce their reliance on property taxes, Will said.

Edison McDonald testified in support of the bill on behalf of The Arc of Nebraska. He said it would be a “historic investment” in special education at a time when overworked teachers and staff are unable to properly support students with intellectual and physical disabilities.



Sen. Rita Sanders introduces LB583 to the Education Committee Feb. 7.

Josh Fields, superintendent of Seward Public Schools, testified in support of LB583 on behalf of an organization representing 18 midsize Nebraska school districts. Although the proposed foundation aid would be a net benefit only to unequalized school districts, he said, the additional special education aid would “help all boats rise.”

With the increased state support from LB583, the schools his organization represents could decrease their property tax levies by 5 to 20 cents, Fields said.

Testifying in opposition to the bill was Rebecca Firestone of OpenSky Policy Institute. When combined with a cap on school districts’ revenue growth as proposed under LB589, introduced by Albion Sen. Tom Briese, LB583 could result in some districts losing revenue despite the increased state aid, she said.

Additionally, Firestone said, the bill would not designate a dedicated revenue source for the additional K-12 funding.

Spencer Head testified in opposition to LB583 on behalf of Omaha Public Schools. Although OPS supports the proposed special education aid, he said, foundation aid goes against the principle of equalization within the state’s school funding system.

“LB583 and various other bills over the years that seek to add foundation aid ... are simply efforts to reallocate state resources to districts that under current law don’t require additional state resources,” Head said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill. ■

UNICAMERAL UPDATE

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Ban on gender altering procedures for minors proposed

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cal procedures.”

In addition, Kauth referenced recent developments in countries that previously have been on the forefront of progressive LGBTQ+ policies. Kauth said Sweden and Finland — which previously offered comprehensive gender alteration care — now prohibit the use of hormone therapy, puberty blockers and surgical procedures for anyone under the age of 18.

“We owe it to our children to pay attention to what these countries, who are decades ahead of us on this journey, are doing and why,” she said.

Supporters of the bill noted a lack of information regarding the long-term effects of hormone therapy and puberty blockers, and argued that minors are unable to appreciate the seriousness of irreversible medical decisions.

Jaime Dodge, a family practitioner in Nebraska, said several studies examining the relationship between gender altering care and mental health failed to include a control group, leaving gaps in understanding the long-term consequences and effectiveness of various gender altering interventions.

Without this information, Dodge said, patients, families and clinicians are unable to make truly informed health care decisions.

“[LB574] would pause our current approach and allow us to fill in the gaps in our knowledge, focus care on social and emotional development and mental health and pursue further studies in the long-term effects of medical and surgical interventions,” Dodge said.

Also testifying in support of LB574 was Erin Brewer, who said she began to identify as male in the first grade after experiencing a sexual assault.

Brewer said she would have done anything at that time to obtain puberty blockers or hormones, and that she believed transitioning then would have allowed her to dissociate and create a new person, detached from the trauma.

“If I had been medically transitioned, I wouldn’t have gotten the help I needed to work through my fear, self-hatred and shame,” Brewer said. “I never would have realized that my transgender identity was a coping mechanism.”

Angie Eberspacher, an early childhood educator, also spoke in support of the bill. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, she said, the area of the brain responsible for planning, prioritizing and controlling impulses is one of the last to develop.

“[The brain] does not finish developing and maturing until the mid to late twenties,” Eberspacher said. “Because these skills are still developing, teens are more likely to engage in risky behaviors without considering the potential results of their decisions.”

Marni Hodgen also testified in support of LB574, saying that Nebraska already has a number of laws in place to protect minors from potentially harmful actions.

“We don’t allow our children to drive until 16; we don’t allow them to purchase tobacco, get tattoos or vote until they’re 18 or buy alcohol until 21,” she said. “These laws protect children until they’re deemed an age mature enough to understand and handle responsibilities and consequences of partaking in certain actions.”

Opponents of the bill argued that medical decisions belong in the hands of families and medical professionals and emphasized the negative impact

LB574 could have on the health and safety of transgender youth in Nebraska.

Testifying in opposition on behalf of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Elizabeth Constance explained that studies examining gender affirming care for children do not include a control group because doing so is considered medically unethical.

“Gender affirming care is such established medicine at this point in time that no institutional review board will approve a research study for transgender kids that has a control group,” Constance said.

She added that some treatments, such as puberty blockers, are reversible and have not been shown to have any long-term negative health consequences.

Camie Nitzel, licensed psychologist and founder of Kindred Psychology, also testified in opposition, saying LB574 would be in direct conflict with the profession’s code of ethics.

“Gender affirming care is recognized as best practice from both a medical and psychological perspective,” Nitzel said. “If I practice ethically according to the standards of my field then I will be practicing illegally according to the bill.”

Opponent Alek Duncan credited his access to gender affirming health care at 16 for saving his life. When starting puberty, Duncan said he felt like his body had betrayed him. After spending early adolescence feeling “broken and disgusted” with himself, Duncan said his family found the help they needed.

“After trying basically anything else to prevent me from dying, my

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Ban on gender altering procedures for minors proposed

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mom called a psychologist who was renowned for her gender and sexuality expertise,” Duncan said. “If I had not found her when I did, I know I would not have made it to 18.”

Also speaking in opposition to LB574 was Isabella Manhart. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, they said, early gender affirming care is crucial to the

overall health and well-being of transgender children.

Manhart also cited a study conducted by the Trevor Project, which found that 58 percent of transgender and nonbinary youth in Nebraska seriously considered attempting suicide in 2022.

“I’m not exaggerating when I say gender affirming care saves lives,”

they said. “The Journal of the American Medical Association reported that when trans kids received gender affirming care, odds of severe depression were lowered by 60 percent and odds of suicidality were lowered by 73 percent.”

The committee took no immediate action on LB574. ■

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MEET THE SENATOR

Jacobson focuses energy on growth

Sen. Mike Jacobson is a self-described “anomaly” — a banker who doesn’t golf. Instead, he spends what free time he can find as a bank president and state senator engaged in his lifelong passion: farming.

Although he’s been in banking for nearly 43 years, 25 of them as founder and CEO of NebraskaLand Bank in North Platte, farming has always been in Jacobson’s blood. His parents worked land in Clay County and Jacobson knew from the age of five that he wanted to be a farmer.

“I grew up on a rented farm with seven brothers and sisters and we were dirt poor,” Jacobson said. “There’s no reason why I should ever have been successful.”

Because the family didn’t own land that he could come back and take over, Jacobson knew that he’d have to find another way to earn a living while keeping his connection to the land — to the joy he felt planting seeds with his mother in their garden and his natural affinity for “tinkering” with farm equipment.

So, after earning a degree at UNL with majors in agricultural economics and agricultural education, he started out as a vocational agricultural instructor in Red Cloud and Shickley. During that time his wife, Julie, was working as a research chemist for the USDA meat animal research facility in Clay Center.

After a few years of teaching, Jacobson found a new career in banking. It was a change of pace to be sure, but a profession through which he could help people grow their businesses and succeed during difficult economic times, while still making time to get his hands in the Clay County soil.

“Over the years, I kept my passion for farming and ended up buying land down in Clay County where I grew up,” Jacobson said. “I’ve been actively involved in farming all along the way.”

His other forays into public service have also focused on growth — specifically, growing rural Nebraska. When Jacobson was transferred by the bank to North Platte after a decade in Lincoln, one of the first things he noticed was the lack of investment.

“Everything seemed to be happening in the eastern third of Nebraska and the bulk of the 3rd Congressional District was really kind of an afterthought,” he said. “So, a big focus of mine is that I want to see that out-migration reversed — and we do that by creating better quality jobs.”



Sen. Mike Jacobson engaging in one of his favorite projects — the fall harvest in Clay County.

Jacobson worked toward that goal in part by chairing the Community Redevelopment Authority in North Platte for 24 years and through a stint as chairman of the Nebraska Bankers Association.

Now as a state senator, Jacobson has a new opportunity to encourage growth throughout his legislative district. Appointed in early 2022 to replace former Sen. Mike Groene, who resigned, Jacobson was elected to his first full term in November of that same year. He said his experience during the 2022 legislative session as a “redshirt freshman who saw playing time” gives him an advantage among his incoming class.

“I could come in here on day one and be focused on the legislative session and what I wanted to get done,” he said. “I already had an office and a great staff in place.”

But even as he concentrates on economic development and job creation through legislation, farming is never far from his mind.

“To me, it’s therapy,” Jacobson said. “Julie can attest that whenever I’ve had a stressful week at the bank, she would want me to go down to the farm for the weekend, and I’d come back refreshed and renewed.” ■

BANKING, COMMERCE & INSURANCE



Bills would cap insulin costs

The Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee heard joint testimony Feb. 7 on two bills that would cap what insured Nebraskans pay for an insulin prescription.

LB142, sponsored by Albion Sen. Tom Briese, would cap the price of insulin that a Nebraskan with insurance would be required to pay at \$100 for a 30-day supply.



Sen. Tom Briese

Briese said many Nebraskans have limited insurance coverage and have difficulty affording the cost of prescription medications, including insulin.

“There is a wide swath of Nebraskans that this can have a very beneficial impact for,” he said.

Lincoln Sen. Eliot Bostar agreed. In introducing his LB779, Bostar said Nebraskans with diabetes have medical expenses roughly 2.3 times higher than individuals who do not. Twenty-two states have passed similar legislation attempting to address the problem, he said, calling diabetes one of the “most pervasive, deadly and expensive diseases in the U.S.”

“The increasing cost for this lifesaving medication is creating hardships on Nebraska families,” Bostar said. “LB779 seeks to address this problem and alleviate the financial burden on diabetic Nebraskans by capping the out-of-pocket costs of insulin to insured individuals.”

Under LB779, a Nebraskan with an insurance plan that provides reimbursement for prescription insulin

drugs could not be charged more than \$35 for a 30-day supply, regardless of the amount or type of insulin needed to fill the individual’s prescription.

As introduced, both bills would take effect beginning Jan. 1, 2024.

Bostar brought an amendment to the hearing that would cap the cost of a provider’s “base” tier of insulin, which he said would remove insurance providers’ earlier objections to the proposal.

Leslie Spry, a physician testifying on behalf of the Nebraska Medical Association, supported both bills. The cost of insulin rose 54 percent from 2014 to 2019, he said. Such a drastic price increase can lead patients to ration their insulin supply, Spry said, which in turn can lead to an increase in cardiovascular complications, emergency room visits, hospitalizations, amputations and deaths.

“No person should have to choose whether they receive lifesaving medication solely based on cost,” Spry said.

Suzan DeCamp, state volunteer president for AARP Nebraska, also testified in support of both bills. An AARP report showed that 29 percent of Nebraska residents in 2017 stopped taking prescribed medication due to cost, she said.

Roughly 141,500 people in Nebraska – or 9.6 percent of the adult population – are diabetic, DeCamp said, and the monthly expense to an individual with diabetes averages between \$450 and \$500.

“Approximately 90 percent of insulin sold is manufactured by only three companies,” she said, “which limits competition and therefore results in higher costs to patients.”

Jeremiah Blake of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska testified in a neutral position on both bills. The company announced in 2022 that members with diabetes covered under

a Blue Cross and Blue Shield plan would have access to insulin at no cost to them, he said.

Blake said LB142 and LB779 with Bostar’s amendment would allow the company to continue to offer this zero-dollar cost share on insulin.

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

Safeguards considered for genetic information privacy

Nebraskans would have more control over the use of their genetic information under a bill considered Feb. 7 by the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee.

Under LB308, sponsored by Lincoln Sen. Eliot Bostar, express consent would be required from Nebraska residents for the sharing, storage and use of any consumer genetic data by direct-to-consumer genetic testing services.



Sen. Eliot Bostar

Under the bill, a direct-to-consumer genetic testing company could not disclose a consumer’s genetic data to any entity offering health, life or long-term care insurance or to an employer without written consent. The measure also would require a process by which consumers could delete their accounts and their genetic data.

Bostar said direct-to-consumer genetic test are becoming more popular and that roughly one in five Americans has taken one. This increase in popularity has led to growing concerns about how that data is used, he said, because it is not regulated in the same manner as genetic data arising from medical tests.

Ancestry and 23andMe developed

privacy best practices in 2018, Bostar said, which were translated into model legislation that has been adopted by six states so far.

“Genetic information consists of our most sensitive and personal information,” he said. “It uniquely identifies an individual, reveals their propensity to develop certain diseases and gives insight on family, ethnic and cultural background.”

Ritchie Engelhardt, head of government affairs at Ancestry, testified in support of the measure on behalf of the Coalition for Genetic Data Protection. Ancestry and 23andMe have always adhered to the provisions laid out in the bill, he said, and the proposal would ensure that all other companies do the same.

“LB308 ensures that consumers are in control of how their genetic data is collected, processed and shared for the duration of their relationship with one of our companies,” Engelhardt said.

Jane Seu of the ACLU of Nebraska also testified in favor of the bill, which she said would bolster the limited consumer protections currently in place.

“Medical and genetic information can reveal some of the most personal and private data about us and maintaining control over that information is crucial,” Seu said.

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Bill would provide greater access to legislative video

Nebraskans would have expanded access to video of legislative proceedings under a bill heard Feb. 10 by the

Executive Board.

Nebraska Public Media currently broadcasts and live-streams video coverage of legislative public committee hearings and floor debate. LB254, sponsored by Gordon Sen. Tom Brewer, would require the Executive Board to develop and maintain a publicly accessible, digital internet archive of closed-captioned video of that coverage, indexed by bill number or date, beginning with coverage of the 2025 legislative session.

Brewer said a video archive would give Nebraskans — the Unicameral’s “second house” — the ability to watch legislative proceedings at their convenience.

“We live in a world where folks are working multiple jobs,” he said, “and it is physically, in many cases, impossible to come here and be a part of that second house.”

The archive would not be considered the official record of legislative proceedings and archival video from previous years would be added as available from NPM’s prior coverage. Any government website offering access to legislative audio and video recordings would be required to notify users that such recordings cannot be used for political or commercial purposes.

The bill would authorize use of American Rescue Plan Act funds for the development and maintenance of the digital archive.

Nicole Fox testified in support of LB254 on behalf of the Platte Institute, saying Nebraska is one of only four states that does not maintain an audio or video archive of legislative proceedings. Transcripts of those proceedings are not immediately available, she said, and even Nebraskans



Sen. Tom Brewer

who are able to attend public hearings may find that two bills of interest are being heard at the same time.

If they are unable to watch real-time coverage of the Legislature, Fox said, Nebraskans must rely on secondhand accounts of the policy decisions being made.

“Sometimes these secondhand accounts may only be short snippets, they may contain biases and they may not ... reflect the true context of the issue that is being heard or debated,” she said.

Mikel Lauber testified in support of the bill on behalf of Media of Nebraska, saying the volume of lawmakers’ work makes it impossible for the media to cover it all.

“[An archive] would provide historical context that could be referenced and researched for years to come,” he said, “and it would be a tool for journalists in the Nebraska news media who may want to view or review debates and hearings to better inform their reporting.”

Also in support was Heidi Uhing of Civic Nebraska. She said an archive would allow nonprofits, schools, the media and advocacy groups to educate Nebraskans about policy and the legislative process.

“The fact is that what you do here is interesting to people,” Uhing said, “and it’s an appropriate courtesy to the public to make viewing it accessible.”

Brandon Metzler, clerk of the Legislature, provided neutral testimony on the proposal. He recommended that lawmakers omit the provision requiring notification that recordings could not be used for political or commercial purposes, as similar restrictions in other states have been found to violate the First Amendment.

If LB254 is implemented, Metzler suggested that the Executive Board create a policy specifying how long

video would be retained and which measures, such as a watermark, would be used to deter others from using footage in political attack ads.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Bill would require Medicaid breast milk coverage

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony Feb. 8 on a bill intended to increase access to donor breast milk for Nebraska families covered by Medicaid.

LB13, sponsored by Bellevue Sen. Carol Blood, would include human breast milk as a required Medicaid-covered service for eligible recipients with a prescription. An infant would be eligible if breast milk is medically necessary and the mother's milk is medically contraindicated or the mother is physically unable to produce sufficient quantities of breast milk to meet the infant's need.



Sen. Carol Blood

Additional requirements would depend on the age of the recipient. An eligible infant younger than six months must have one of the following conditions to apply:

- sepsis;
- birth weight at or below 1,500 grams;
- has or will have an organ transplant;
- infant hypoglycemia; or
- congenital heart disease.

An eligible infant between six and

12 months of age must have one of the following conditions to apply:

- spinal muscular atrophy;
- has or will have an organ transplant; or
- low birth weight coupled with long-term feeding or gastrointestinal complications related to prematurity.

An eligible child 12 months or older must have spinal muscular atrophy to apply.

Under the bill, donor breast milk would be required to come from a donor bank that meets quality guidelines established by the Human Milk Banking Association of North America or is licensed by the state Department of Health and Human Services.

Blood said the bill is in the best long-term interests of infants and families on Medicaid. Many families in need of donated breast milk cannot afford the cost, she said, which can run between \$3 and \$5 per ounce — and babies consume between 32 and 48 ounces of milk per day.

“[My] intent with LB13 is to address the ongoing issues with prescribed breast milk for at-risk infants covered by Medicaid,” she said. “Barriers to donor milk disproportionately affect mothers insured by Medicaid as well as Black infants and Native American or Alaska Native infants due to their higher pre-term birth rates.”

Because of the expense, Blood said, families without insurance coverage sometimes buy unregulated breast milk online or receive donated milk from friends or family — which runs the risk of contamination.

Julie Wagner, a clinical dietician in an Omaha neonatal intensive care unit, testified in support of LB13, provided that some revisions be made. The bill should be amended to include coverage of FDA-regulated, shelf-stable donor milk, she said, which Nebraska

NICUs already use.

In addition, Wagner said, while breast milk is important for infants to thrive, donor milk is inferior to a mother's own milk — primarily due to the extensive processing necessary to ensure its safety. Long-term use of donor milk without close medical management could put infants at risk for vitamin deficiencies and growth failure, she said.

“I suggest that the language of LB13 be revised to exclude donor milk coverage for infants over six months of age,” Wagner said. “A gestational age or weight-based coverage limit also could be considered to prevent excessive and unnecessary donor milk use.”

Representing the Nebraska Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative, medical director Ann Anderson Berry also testified in support of the bill. Donor milk frequently is used as a bridge to mother's own milk in the hospital, she said, because it is not an ideal source of sole nutrition for a newborn in the NICU.

Anderson Berry also suggested excluding infants over age six months from the bill's provisions, saying there is no medical evidence they would benefit from donor milk and that donor milk use within that population carries a significant risk of malnutrition.

“Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for newborns, especially for those who are ill or premature,” Anderson Berry said. “It provides all the necessary nutrients for growth and development and contains antibodies and other immune boosting factors that can protect against infection.”

No one testified in opposition to LB13 and the committee took no immediate action on the bill.

JUDICIARY

Bill would create Indigenous peoples' liaison office

The Judiciary Committee heard testimony Feb. 8 on a bill that would create an office to help coordinate efforts to investigate certain crimes against Indigenous people in Nebraska.

LB328, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Jane Raybould, would create the Office of Liaison for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons within the Nebraska Attorney General's Office.



Sen. Jane Raybould

The attorney general and the Commission on Indian Affairs would partner in selecting a full-time specialist to staff the office, giving preference to applicants of Indigenous descent.

The specialist's duties would include identifying, collecting and directing resources and information to aid in combating the prevalence of missing and murdered Indigenous people in Nebraska. This would include synthesizing information from state, local, tribal and federal law enforcement entities involved in those cases and reporting information to tribes, communities, media and the public as appropriate.

The bill state's legislative intent to provide state general funds to cover the office's costs, but LB328 also would require the attorney general to pursue any available funding and provide legal guidance and coordination.

Raybould said research shows that Native Americans experience higher rates of crime and victimization than non-Native people, and

violence against Native women and children is of particular concern. Native American women are murdered at an extraordinarily high rate, she said, nearly 10 times the national average on some reservations.

A lack of data standardization contributes to a lack of reporting on missing and murdered Native people, Raybould said. Jurisdictional issues, the dynamic nature of missing persons cases and questions over who should investigate — whether a tribal or non-tribal organization — also contribute to the problem, she said.

"The Nebraska State Patrol and tribal and non-tribal law enforcement cooperation needs to be increased," Raybould said. "We need to enhance the awareness of reporting options and mechanisms to the Native American communities and we need to be aware of the potential interrelatedness of missing persons to human trafficking and other social challenges."

Cheyenne Robinson, testifying on behalf of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, spoke in support of the bill. It's important for tribes and Indigenous organizations to have the right point of contact with state officials, she said, but it's even more important for public safety organizations to be culturally aware of how tribes and Indigenous organizations operate.

"Generally, there's a lot of animosity between tribal citizens and law enforcement, but having [an] office that can understand and address time-sensitive cases could quickly bring together tribal, county and state officials to work as one," Robinson said.

Rose Godinez, speaking on behalf of the ACLU of Nebraska, also testified in favor of the bill.

Recent data shows that Omaha ranks 8th among cities for the highest number of missing and murdered Indigenous women, she said, and

Nebraska ranked 7th among states.

"In this instance, historical issues regarding jurisdiction, the misunderstanding of race, ethnicity and political affiliation and the inconsistencies in databases on gender have led to a persistent and widespread lack of appropriate responses," Godinez said. "A liaison between all key stakeholders, as set out in LB328, is an important step to address this ongoing crisis."

Judi gaiashkibos, executive director of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs, spoke in support of the proposal. She said it would be important for the liaison specialist to be Native American or someone who has worked with the Native American community to ensure the individual is culturally sensitive to the issues that Native Americans face.

Glen Parks, assistant attorney general and coordinator for the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force, spoke in a neutral capacity on LB328.

The attorney general's office supports the bill's objective, Parks said, but he noted several logistical concerns. For example, he said, the attorney general's office generally does not seek federal funding for tasks and would like that provision removed.

Parks also asked for clarification regarding the proposed specialist's required qualifications, the attorney general's role in providing legal counsel and the possibility of achieving the bill's purpose without creating a separate office.

No one testified in opposition to LB328 and the committee took no immediate action on it.

Marijuana legalization, decriminalization considered

The Judiciary Committee heard testimony Feb. 9 on two bills that would lift certain marijuana restric-

tions in the state.

LB634, introduced by Omaha Sen. Terrell McKinney, would allow for the commercial sale of recreational cannabis in Nebraska for individuals 21 and older. The bill would create a framework for growing, selling and distributing marijuana and would give priority to individuals seeking to start certain cannabis companies in low-income and disenfranchised communities and areas impacted by high rates of drug charges.



Sen. Terrell McKinney

Among other provisions, the bill would decriminalize the possession, transport and purchase of no more than one ounce of cannabis by individuals 21 and over. It would prohibit smoking or otherwise consuming cannabis products in public spaces or motor vehicles.

Additionally, LB634 would allow for an individual to obtain clean slate relief – the removal of a qualified marijuana conviction from their record – if the offense was committed on or after Jan. 1, 2010, and if the offender completes their sentence and pays all court-ordered fees by June 1, 2024.

McKinney said Black people are four times more likely to be arrested for cannabis charges than whites even though white people are just as likely to sell and use cannabis. Cannabis prohibitions cause more problems than they solve, he said, and clean state programs can give many people a second chance at decent jobs and the ability to find housing and support their families.

“With the clean slate laws, we eliminate barriers by offering relief from systematic measures that have kept so many behind and [can introduce] them to a life where mistakes no

longer define their futures,” McKinney said. “We can give them a shot at redemption.”

Bill Hawkins, director of the Nebraska Hemp Company, spoke in support of LB634. It’s time to start taxing and regulating marijuana users in Nebraska, Hawkins said, which he estimated is approximately 10 to 20 percent of the state’s population.

“By taxing and regulating [cannabis], we are taking it away from the black market,” he said. “LB634 is very strict and very detailed and it gives Nebraska a chance to stand up and accept the fact that the war on drugs has not worked and it’s time to end the prohibition of this plant.”

LB22, introduced by Omaha Sen. Justin Wayne, would go a step further and fully decriminalize the possession and use of marijuana in Nebraska. Items used or intended for use in the consumption, manufacture, cultivation or processing of marijuana would not be considered drug paraphernalia under the bill.



Sen. Justin Wayne

Wayne said marijuana has been used throughout history, and while there may be a level of risk of abuse should the drug become legal – as there is with painkillers or alcohol – the issue comes down to personal responsibility.

David Swarts of Palmyra testified in support of LB22. Where there is demand, Swarts said, there will be a supply. Decriminalization would allow individuals to grow cannabis for personal use, which would cut out marijuana companies and the black market, he said.

“[Marijuana] prohibition guarantees a market for cartels, the mafia and street gangs,” Swarts said. “Cannabis

is not dangerous, but buying from the cartel is and, unfortunately, police actions to enforce the war on drugs can also be dangerous.”

Joe Nigro testified in support of both bills. Marijuana prohibition has turned millions of Americans into criminals and has provided the opportunity for organized crime to make millions of dollars, he said, all for a substance that is not nearly as harmful as alcohol.

“The prohibition of marijuana has been especially harmful for Black people,” Nigro said. “In Lancaster County, Black people are nearly seven times as likely [as white people] to be cited or arrested for marijuana and we’re not even the worst county.”

Spike Eickholt, testifying on behalf of the ACLU of Nebraska and the Nebraska Criminal Defense Attorneys Association, also spoke in support of both bills. Both proposals would be beneficial because they address decriminalization of marijuana or, in the case of LB634, provide marijuana regulation.

Additionally, Eickholt said, polls consistently show that Nebraskans want cannabis legalized in some form.

Roger Donovan, chief medical officer with the state Department of Health and Human Services, spoke in opposition to both bills. Currently, marijuana is not approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration for any medical purposes, he said.

“Increased usage [of marijuana] may lead to increased negative health impacts and a greater strain on our health systems within the state,” Donovan said. “Legalization and commercialization puts the health and safety of Nebraskans at risk.”

Lorelle Mueting, representing Heartland Family Service, also spoke against both bills. Sound public policy should be based on science

and research with public safety at the forefront, she said, and not based solely on what people want. “This ... is not good public policy because it puts public safety at risk,” Muetting said. “The marijuana that this legislation would bring to our state is highly potent and highly addictive ... marijuana is a psychoactive substance that causes a high, and when under the influence of THC, a person does not have the ability to make good decisions.”

Corey O’Brien, chief prosecutor at the Nebraska Attorney General’s Office, testified against the proposals. Legalization of marijuana is wrong for Nebraska and is unconstitutional, he said. Marijuana — the highly concentrated and potent THC products that would be legalized under the bills — is listed as a Schedule I drug under Nebraska state law and federal law, he said.

“Any bill that would conflict with the federal law violates the Supremacy Clause,” O’Brien said.

The committee took no immediate action on LB22 or LB634.

Medical cannabis legalization proposed

A bill that would legalize certain forms of cannabis for medical use was considered by the Judiciary Committee Feb. 9.

LB588, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Anna Wishart, would create a framework for legalizing medical cannabis in Nebraska. To qualify for the medical cannabis registry program under the bill, a patient with a qualifying medical condition must receive written consent from a health



Sen. Anna Wishart

care practitioner indicating that cannabis would improve their condition.

In 2020 and 2022, Wishart led two initiative petition drives — that combined obtained nearly 400,000 signatures — that would have put medical cannabis on the November ballot for each corresponding year. Both initiatives failed after facing legal and financial challenges.

Wishart said that despite those challenges, it is clear that medical cannabis is an issue that matters to Nebraskans. Research shows that cannabis is effective for the treatment of several chronic illnesses, she said, including epilepsy, post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries. In addition, she said, LB588 would be one of the most conservative medical cannabis laws in the country.

“Compared to many prescription drugs, including opioid pain medications — which is one of the leading causes of death in the United States — medical cannabis is far safer and far less addictive,” Wishart said. “No family should have to flee [the state] to get access to medical cannabis for themselves or a loved one.”

Under the bill, a cannabis dispensary would be required to hire a pharmacist to advise and educate patients about dosage and usage in person or by telemedicine. Registered medical cannabis users would be allowed up to 2.5 ounces of cannabis — unless otherwise directed by a health care provider — or cannabis infused products with no more than 2,000 milligrams of THC.

Vaporization and smoking of medical cannabis would not be allowed under the bill. Edibles — other than a pill — also would not be allowed. The bill would prohibit an individual from using cannabis while operating a motor vehicle, aircraft, train or motorboat, or working on a transportation

property, equipment or facility while under the influence of cannabis.

Finally, LB588 would create the Medical Cannabis Board and a Cannabis Enforcement Department to oversee the bill’s implementation.

Amanda McKinney, a physician and educator who specializes in medical cannabis, spoke in favor of LB588. Medical cannabis is safe, she said, especially in comparison to modern Western medicine.

“There have never been any reported overdose deaths from cannabis use, while there are over 10,000 deaths annually from 17 FDA-approved drugs that are often used when cannabis could be used instead,” McKinney said.

Amy Marasco, representing Americans for Safe Access, also spoke in support.

Currently, there are over 6 million legal medical cannabis patients across the country, she said, but Nebraska is one of only two states that does not provide any access to medical cannabis.

“These patients are not nameless, faceless people — they are our parents, grandparents, children, colleagues and our revered veterans,” Marasco said. “They deserve the same access to medical cannabis options as patients have in the states that surround Nebraska.”

Heather Bernard, executive director of Epilepsy Foundation Nebraska, testified in support of the proposal. There are roughly 19,600 people with epilepsy and seizure disorder in Nebraska, she said, and it is the 4th most common neurological disorder in the U.S.

Currently, use of medical cannabis is legal under state law in a majority of states, Bernard said, and a number of people living with epilepsy in those states report beneficial effects, including a decrease in seizure activity, when using cannabis.

Testifying in opposition to the bill was Nebraska Attorney General Mike Hilgers. When state law conflicts with federal law, the state law is voided under the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution, he said. Congress has classified marijuana as a Schedule I drug, Hilgers said, meaning it cannot be sold or used for any purpose — therefore, the sale and distribution of marijuana, even for medicinal purposes, is unconstitutional.

Col. John Bolduc, superintendent of the Nebraska State Patrol, also spoke in opposition to LB588. He said a recent study found that three-fourths of legally produced marijuana was diverted to the black market, and that legalizing medical marijuana in Nebraska would burden the state patrol's crime lab.

“Because of the demand and potential profit, decriminalizing the possession and distribution of medical marijuana contributes to the dangerous problem the black market poses to public safety,” Bolduc said.

Roger Donovan, chief medical officer with the state Department of Health and Human Services, testified against the proposal. Legalizing marijuana for any purpose, including medicinal use, poses risks to the health and safety of Nebraska residents, he said.

“Substances in Schedule I are listed as highly addictive and have no currently accepted medical uses,” Donovan said.

John Massey testified in a neutral capacity on behalf of the Nebraska Medical Association. In past years, the NMA was in opposition to similar legislation, he said, but LB588 addresses earlier concerns by including a list of qualifying medical conditions.

Massey added that although medical cannabis may be effective in a narrow set of circumstances and for certain diseases, more research is

needed on its therapeutic effects.

The committee took no immediate action on the proposal.



Bounty program for pheasant nest predators considered

The state would establish a bounty program intended to increase the number of ring-necked pheasants in Nebraska under a bill heard Feb. 8 by the Natural Resources Committee.

Under LB400, introduced by Sen. Tom Brewer of Gordon, the state Game and Parks Commission would pay a \$10 bounty on each badger, coyote, opossum, raccoon, red fox and striped skunk harvested from March 1 to July 1 each year. The commission could pay a maximum of 50,000 bounties per year.



Sen. Tom Brewer

Individuals 16 and older could participate in the program if they have an unexpired fur harvesting permit and habitat stamp.

Brewer said the game birds, once plentiful across Nebraska, have become difficult to find in recent years as their numbers have dwindled. Without a wild pheasant population, he said, the state is missing out on economic activity derived from pheasant hunting.

John Ross, a hunter and hunter educator, testified in support of the bill. He attributed declining pheasant populations to habitat loss and an increase in predator numbers caused by a drop in fur prices.

“Predator control should be used

as a management tool,” Ross said. “That would help balance the number of predators to the number of prey in the habitat.”

Spike Eickholt also testified in support, saying the proposed bounty program could be part of the state's approach to reversing the decline in pheasant numbers. He said the lack of birds makes it difficult to interest young people in hunting.

“You've got a whole generation that is not experiencing this sport,” Eickholt said.

Alicia Hardin testified in opposition to LB400 on behalf of the state Game and Parks Commission. She said suitable habitat and weather conditions during brooding and nesting times — not predator numbers — are the most important factors in pheasant survival.

Most studies have found that removing predators rarely succeeds in increasing the number of ground nesting birds, Hardin said.

“Dollars spent on habitat would have much longer-lasting impacts than paying for bounties,” she said.

Also testifying in opposition was Drew Larsen of Pheasants Forever. A bounty program likely would not make a significant impact on predator numbers, he said, as Nebraska already has a furbearer trapping season.

Larsen said Pheasants Forever is concerned that the proposed bounty program inadvertently would divert funding from existing habitat improvement programs that have been proven to increase pheasant populations.

Katie Torpy of the Nature Conservancy also opposed the bill, saying land use change is “far and away” the biggest cause of declining pheasant numbers. Fragmentation of Nebraska's grasslands and encroachment of species such as eastern redcedar have left less habitat for pheasants while

increasing habitat for predators, she said.

“High annual losses of pheasants to predators should not be misconstrued to mean that predation is the driver when the cause of those predator numbers [is] equally driven by habitat structural change,” Torpy said.

Additionally, she said, lawmakers should consider omitting coyotes from any bounty program because their suppression has been shown to have negative effects on a number of other species.

The committee took no immediate action on LB400.

REVENUE



State child tax credit proposed

Nebraska families could receive a state tax credit of \$1,000 per child under a bill heard Feb. 8 by the Revenue Committee.

Under LB294, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Danielle Conrad, the refundable credit would be available for taxpayers with a child who is under 18 at the end of the taxable year, is claimed as a dependent on the individual’s federal tax return and has been issued a Social Security number or taxpayer identification number.

Conrad said the credit would help low- and middle-income Nebraska families cover the cost of raising children during a time of high inflation. As introduced, she said, LB294 would benefit approximately 81 percent of Nebraska children.

“Given our state’s healthy fiscal

condition,” Conrad said, “I think the time is right to enact a policy that provides needed support to hundreds of thousands of children and Nebraska residents.”

Under LB294, taxpayers who are married filing jointly with a federal adjusted gross income of \$110,000 or less would receive \$1,000 per child. Individuals who file as head of household and earn \$92,500 or less and individuals with any other filing status who earn \$75,000 or less also would qualify for the full credit.

Depending on filing status, the credit amount would be reduced by 5 percent for each \$2,000, \$1,500 or \$1,000 by which the taxpayer’s income exceeds those thresholds.

The credit amounts, thresholds and increments would be adjusted for inflation each year.

LB294 would require the state Department of Revenue to submit an annual report to the Legislature that includes the number of taxpayers who claimed the credit, the total amount of credits claimed and other information.

The department estimates that the bill would reduce state general fund revenue by \$514 million in fiscal year 2023-24 and \$373 million in FY2024-25.

Diane Amdor testified in support of LB294 on behalf of Nebraska Appleseed. She said the state credit is modeled on the expanded federal child tax credit that, in conjunction with other measures, cut child poverty in the U.S. nearly in half from 2020 to 2021.

Because the credit is not tied to a specific purpose, Amdor said, it would give parents and guardians flexibility to spend it on what they choose, whether that is child care or necessities such as food and clothing.

“There’s no better way to invest

the current revenue surplus than to give these funds back to Nebraska’s children,” she said.

Cindy Meyer of Omaha also testified in support. She said the expanded federal child tax credit helped her pay for unanticipated school supplies for her two children.

Garret Swanson testified in support of the bill on behalf of the Holland Children’s Movement, saying the expanded federal child tax credit had a positive effect on children’s health and education.

“By providing families with more financial stability and resources,” he said, “the credit helped improve children’s access to healthy food, stable housing, quality child care and other essentials that are important for a child’s development.”

Now that the expansion has ended, Swanson said, the Legislature could support children in poverty by creating a state-level credit.

Representing the Nebraska Catholic Conference, Tom Venzor also testified in support of the bill. As lawmakers debate a proposal to further restrict abortion in Nebraska this year, he said, they also should consider measures like LB294 that would offer support to families that “say ‘yes’ to life.”

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

TRANSPORTATION & TELECOMMUNICATIONS



Creation of broadband services office considered

The Transportation and Telecommunications Committee heard



Sen. Danielle Conrad

testimony Feb. 7 on a bill that would establish a state broadband office.

LB683, introduced by the committee, would create the Nebraska Broadband Office for the purpose of administering and maintaining broadband services in Nebraska. Under the bill, a broadband director would be appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Legislature to lead the office, which would operate administratively under the Nebraska Department of Transportation.

Brainard Sen. Bruce Bostelman, a committee member, said lawmakers “struggled” when initially deciding where to house an office dedicated to statewide broadband issues before settling on the Public Service Commission. While the PSC has done a good job, he said, another state agency may be a better fit going forward than the regulatory commission would be.

Among other provisions, LB683 would require the new broadband office to:

- collaborate with stakeholders and state and local officials;
- develop the strategic broadband plan to maximize use of public and private resources;
- coordinate state broadband infrastructure deployment, operation and maintenance;
- conduct state advocacy on broadband issues at the federal level, including mapping and speed data;
- ensure funds are used cost-effectively;
- provide resources and assistance for local and regional broadband planning;
- coordinate programs for broadband users, such as libraries and schools and digital equity and inclusion projects; and
- provide resources and information to the public through a

website and other communication modes.

Finally, the bill would transfer the creation and maintenance of the state broadband map from the Public Service Commission to the new Nebraska Broadband Office.

NDOT director Vicki Kramer spoke in support of the bill. The state needs a structured entity to dispense incoming federal broadband funds in an efficient and transparent manner, Kramer said, and the department’s demonstrated experience working with federal funds can assist the new broadband office to successfully manage and distribute those funds.

“Through the broadband office, the NDOT is uniquely positioned to serve as the lead partner in managing the buildout of the broadband network for Nebraska’s unserved and underserved communities,” Kramer said.

Also in support of LB683 was Sarah Meier, representing the Nebraska Rural Broadband Alliance. Collaboration will be imperative at all levels of broadband implementation going forward, she said, and the state can’t continue to “cobble together” broadband infrastructure.

“Rapid, large-scale deployment will be essential and we have to be smart about it. Other states and regions are competing for funding as well as resources, such as fiber and labor,” Meier said. “Nebraska needs a leader [that] is singularly dedicated to setting and implementing bold broadband policy and strategy.”

Lash Chaffin, speaking on behalf of the League of Nebraska Municipalities, also spoke in favor of the bill. Currently, Chaffin said, residents are confused regarding who to contact about broadband services in Nebraska. Having a consolidated office would help steer people to the right

place, he said.

Public Service Commissioner Dan Watermeier testified in a neutral capacity on LB683. He said he is “fine” creating the office within the NDOT but expressed concern that the state’s application for the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment Program — a federal funding program used for broadband expansion that the PSC currently manages — could face administrative challenges with the transfer.

“While BEAD funding will present a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deploy broadband infrastructure throughout Nebraska, we need to keep in mind there are already grant-funded and universal service-supported broadband networks in various stages of maturity which will require oversight and, additionally, all these networks need to be sustained in the long-term,” Watermeier said.

Watermeier also recommended that lawmakers consider allowing the PSC to continue to review data relating to the state broadband map.

Also testifying in a neutral capacity was Andrew Vinton, representing ALLO Communications. ALLO’s primary concern with the proposed broadband office is that it may be difficult to “ramp up” staffing and expertise in time to distribute incoming federal broadband funds, he said.

“Due to the constrained time frame of developing a state action plan and distributing federal broadband funds, the broadband office may be best suited to operate as a community outreach, policy creation and advocacy body, while the PSC — who are the subject matter experts — remain the ultimate distributor of grant funding,” Vinton said.

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

Broadband regulations considered

A bill that would clarify broadband regulations in order to avoid infrastructure overbuilding was heard in the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee Feb. 7.

LB722, introduced by Brainard Sen. Bruce Bostelman, would give the Public Service Commission authority to make the following determinations before any award, grant or redirection of funds is made under the Nebraska Telecommunications Universal Service Fund Act, Nebraska Broadband Bridge Act or certain federal programs:



Sen. Bruce Bostelman

- the smooth transition of services to ratepayers and customers;
- undepreciated investment in existing infrastructure owned by the incumbent local exchange carrier;
- transfer of federal and state eligible telecommunications carrier designations and responsibilities; and
- whether rural ratepayers and customers in the service area and nearby services areas are receiving broadband services.

Bostelman said that both the Legislature and the PSC recognize the importance of avoiding overbuilding, or subsidizing new infrastructure where existing infrastructure already exists. The bill would address cases when two companies are being subsidized and therefore would help avoid cases of overbuilding, he said.

“This bill addresses the issue of overbuilding by simply making it clear that the commission has the authority to consider and decide issues critical

to the smooth transition of customers in larger geographic areas,” Bostelman said. “With a significant amount of funding that will be coming to the state, we cannot afford to take the time to dissect Nebraska on a case-by-case basis.”

In support of LB722 was Sarah Meier, speaking on behalf of the Nebraska Rural Broadband Alliance. Nebraska is set to receive a once-in-a-generation infusion of federal funds for the deployment of broadband infrastructure through a number of programs, she said, and the state is faced with a limited timeframe to ramp up broadband deployment.

“As Nebraska expends a tremendous amount of federal funding to deploy broadband infrastructure across large rural areas, it is crucial that the deployment strategy and implementation is cost-effective and done in a way to avoid overbuilding and also ensures that we are capable of, and prepared to, sustain this vastly increased network over time,” Meier said. “LB722

accomplishes these objectives.”

Public Service Commissioner Dan Watermeier also spoke in support of the bill. The large amount of federal funding for broadband will lead to a “great deal of change” in the state, he said, and while the progress is necessary, it is also important to ensure that residents “don’t get lost in the shuffle.”

Candace Meredith testified in support of LB722 on behalf of the Nebraska Association of County Officials, saying it’s important for the PSC to have the authority to assist with an efficient transition of affordable service to rural customers.

John Wyvill, representing Cox Communications, spoke in opposition to the bill in its present form. Wyvill said the primary concern is that the bill inadvertently would provide carriers of last resort responsibilities to cable companies. He said Cox would be in support of LB722 if this could be addressed.

The committee took no immediate action on LB722. ■

FIND LEGISLATIVE DOCUMENTS

Committee hearing schedules, daily agendas and more can be viewed using the calendar on NebraskaLegislature.gov.

Clicking the “Calendar” link on the left side of the website’s homepage will open a calendar that is constantly updated with new information.

January 2023						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
01	02	03	04 Day 1 108th Leg. 1st Session	05 Day 2 108th Leg. 1st Session	06 Day 3 108th Leg. 1st Session	07
08	09 Day 4 108th Leg. 1st Session	10 Day 5 108th Leg. 1st Session	11 Day 6 108th Leg. 1st Session	12 Day 7 108th Leg. 1st Session	13 Day 8 108th Leg. 1st Session	14
15	16	17 Day 9 108th Leg. 1st Session	18 Day 10 108th Leg. 1st Session	19 Day 11 108th Leg. 1st Session	20 Day 12 108th Leg. 1st Session	21

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Current hearing schedules are available at: NebraskaLegislature.gov/calendar

Monday, Feb. 13

Appropriations

Room 1307 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB813 (Arch) Provide, change, and eliminate provisions relating to appropriations
- LB814 (Arch) Appropriate funds for the expenses of Nebraska State Government for the biennium ending June 30, 2025, and appropriate Federal Funds allocated to the State of Nebraska pursuant to the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021
- LB815 (Arch) Appropriate funds for salaries of members of the Legislature
- LB816 (Arch) Appropriate funds for salaries of constitutional officers
- LB817 (Arch) Appropriate funds for capital construction
- LB818 (Arch) Provide for transfers of funds and change and eliminate provisions regarding the sources, uses, and transfers of funds
- LB819 (Arch) Change provisions relating to the Cash Reserve Fund

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB152 (Dover) Eliminate registration requirements under the Membership Campground Act
- LB392 (Ballard) Authorize the electronic delivery of certain health benefit plan documents
- LB437 (Ballard) Change the renewal period for business entity licenses under the Insurance Producers Licensing Act
- LB256 (Brewer) Change provisions related to insurance coverage of telehealth
- LB730 (Holdcroft) Adopt the Fair Access to Financial Services Act
- LB743 (Kauth) Adopt the Investment Neutrality in Public Funds Act

Business & Labor

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB639 (Blood) Change provisions of Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act relating to rules and regulations, case progression standards, and summons and eliminate requirements to distribute copies of certain materials

LB5 (Blood) Provide for compensability under Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act for mental injuries resulting from workplace violence

LB101 (Erdman) Provide for an exemption from the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act for certain agricultural operations (reschedule)

LB393 (Erdman) Change regulation of detasseling and roguing and hybrid seed corn (reschedule)

LB327 (Raybould) Change provisions relating to the minimum wage under the Wage and Hour Act

LB678 (Day) Change provisions and definitions of the Nebraska Fair Employment Practice Act relating to disability

LB671 (Hansen) Allow the Nebraska Training and Support Cash Fund to be used for retention of existing employees of Nebraska businesses

LB670 (Hunt) Prohibit discrimination under the Nebraska Fair Employment Practice Act on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation and prohibit discrimination by employers regardless of size

LB335 (Halloran) Adopt the Health Care Staffing Agency Registration Act

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB99 (M. Cavanaugh) Adopt the Hunger-Free Schools Act
- LB201 (Vargas) Provide a high school graduation requirement relating to federal student aid
- LB575 (Kauth) Adopt the Sports and Spaces Act

General Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB72 (Aguilar) Redefine the term gross proceeds for purposes of the Nebraska County and City Lottery Act
- LB73 (Aguilar) Change provisions relating to authorized uses for a County Visitors Improvement Fund
- LB168 (Bostar) Change provisions relating to sports wagering and distribution of taxes collected from sports wagering on in-state collegiate sporting events
- LB232 (J. Cavanaugh) Change provisions relating to keno and provide for the sale of digital-on-premises tickets

LB775 (Lowe) Redefine a term under the Nebraska Racetrack Gaming Act and change and provide powers and duties for the State Racing and Gaming Commission

LB311 (Lowe) Change dates related to the required market analysis and socioeconomic-impact studies under the Nebraska Racetrack Gaming Act

LB685 (Briese) Rename, transfer, and change provisions relating to the Mechanical Amusement Device Tax Act, transfer powers from the Department of Revenue to the State Racing and Gaming Commission, provide a tax on cash devices, and eliminate provisions relating to the power to tax under the Mechanical Amusement Device Tax Act

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

- Appointment:* John C. Ernst - Motor Vehicle Industry Licensing Board
- LB773 (Vargas) Require voter approval of taxes on wireless services
- LB26 (Wayne) Adopt the Rural Municipal Broadband Access Act
- LB607 (McDonnell) Change provisions relating to grants for the 211 Information and Referral Network

Tuesday, Feb. 14

Agriculture

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB662 (Ballard) Change provisions of the Nebraska Right to Farm Act relating to certain public or private nuisances
- LB740 (Vargas) Change provisions of the Nebraska Pure Food Act

Appropriations

Room 1307 - 1:30 p.m.

- Agency 32: Board of Educational Lands and Funds
- Agency 34: Neb. Library Commission
- Agency 47: Neb. Educational Telecommunications Commission
- Agency 75: Neb. Investment Council
- Agency 85: Neb. Public Employees Retirement Board
- Agency 41: State Real Estate Commission
- Agency 53: Real Property Appraiser Board

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Current hearing schedules are available at: NebraskaLegislature.gov/calendar

Agency 63: Neb. Board of Public Accountancy

Agency 58: Board of Engineers and Architects

Agency 59: Board of Geologists

Agency 62: State Board of Examiners for Land Surveyors

Agency 66: Abstracters Board of Examiners

Agency 73: State Board of Landscape Architects

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB647 (McDonnell) Change provisions relating to the purchase and loan of textbooks for children enrolled in kindergarten to grade twelve of a private school

LB630 (McKinney) Provide a duty to the State Department of Education and require a school board to adopt a written dress code

LB487 (Hunt) Prohibit any school in Nebraska receiving public funds from discriminating as prescribed

LB320 (Brandt) Change provisions of the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act

Nebraska Retirement Systems

Room 1525 - 12:00 p.m.

LB160 (McDonnell) Change contribution rates relating to supplemental retirement plans for certain law enforcement personnel under the County Employees Retirement Act

LB103 (McDonnell) Change provisions of the School Employees Retirement Act and the State Employees Retirement Act

LB658 (McDonnell) Change provisions relating to the Public Employees Retirement Board

LB659 (McDonnell) Change provisions relating to the Public Employees Retirement Board

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: James Ediger - Neb. Information Technology Commission

LB63 (Bostar) Require withholding of distributions to telecommunications companies from the Nebraska Tele-

communications Universal Service Fund

LB625 (McDonnell) Provide requirements for operation of autonomous vehicles

LB199 (Brewer) Provide for a driving privilege card for federally authorized aliens

LB807 (von Gillern) Provide for one license plate per vehicle

LB738 (Raybould) Change provisions in the Nebraska Rules of the Road relating to electric bicycles

Urban Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB274 (Holdcroft) Provide for persons with disabled veterans license plates to park in handicapped parking spaces

LB346 (Brandt) Redefine qualifying business under the Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act

LB691 (Linehan) Require the city or owner of a fixed rail or streetcar system to pay project-related costs for utilities

LB693 (Linehan) Require an authority under the Community Development Law to pay project-related costs for utility work for a fixed rail or streetcar system

Wednesday, Feb. 15

Appropriations

Room 1307 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 3: Legislative Council

Agency 11: Attorney General

Agency 30: State Electrical Board

Agency 57: Neb. Oil and Gas Conservation Commission

Agency 74: Neb. Power Review Board

LB323 (Linehan) Appropriate funds for a salary increase for legislative employees

LB597 (Clements) Appropriate funds to the Legislative Council

LB654 (McDonnell) Appropriate funds to the Legislative Council

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB408 (M. Cavanaugh) Change provisions relating to conflicts of interest

under the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act

LB410 (M. Cavanaugh) Change provisions relating to conflicts of interest under the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act

LB409 (M. Cavanaugh) Change provisions relating to individuals required to file a statement of financial interests under the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act

LB569 (Bostelman) Prohibit financial interests by certain county officers and family members in electric generation facilities

LB302 (Linehan) Change provisions relating to conflicts of interest by certain officeholders and public employees

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB431 (Halloran) Change provisions relating to criminal history record information checks under the Uniform Credentialing Act

LB421 (Kauth) Provide procedures for directed health measures

LB500 (M. Cavanaugh) Change provisions relating to the family support program for persons with developmental disabilities and their families

LB402 (Ballard) Redefine home health agency under Health Care Facility Licensure Act

LB661 (Ibach) Appropriate funds to the Department of Health and Human Services

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB30 (Dungan) Provide for answers of no contest in adjudication hearings under the Nebraska Juvenile Code

LB60 (J. Cavanaugh) Change provisions relating to room confinement of juveniles and required reports

LB184 (J. Cavanaugh) Provide for inadmissibility of statements of juveniles during transfer proceedings

LB507 (Conrad) Change provisions relating to truancy, juvenile courts, the Community-based Juvenile Services Aid Program, and compulsory education

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Current hearing schedules are available at: NebraskaLegislature.gov/calendar

LB473 (Geist) Create a grant program to operate a safe and secure treatment center for youth

LB339 (McKinney) Provide for confidentiality of prosecutions and adjudications of minors, extend jurisdiction under the Nebraska Juvenile Code, provide requirements for custodial interrogations of juveniles and young adults, prohibit use of certain statements, prohibit sending juveniles out of state, provide for use and reimbursement of reporting centers, and establish a family resource and juvenile assessment center pilot program

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB281 (Jacobson) Require the Department of Economic Development to provide grants for youth outdoor education camp facilities

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB602 (Linehan) Exclude certain pensions and annuities from income taxes (*reschedule*)

LB416 (Kauth) Change provisions relating to the taxation of nonresident income

LB38 (Blood) Provide an income tax adjustment relating to federal retirement annuities (*reschedule*)

Thursday, Feb. 16

Appropriations

Room 1307 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 36: State Racing Commission
Agency 56: Neb. Wheat Board
Agency 60: Neb. Ethanol Board
Agency 61: Neb. Dairy Industry Development Board
Agency 86: Dry Bean Commission
Agency 88: Corn Development, Utilization and Marketing Board
Agency 92: Neb. Grain Sorghum Board
Agency 95: Dry Pea & Lentil Commission
Agency 97: Hemp Commission

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

LB111 (McDonnell) Adopt the Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission Act
LB655 (McDonnell) Appropriate funds

to the State Fire Marshal
LB297 (Sanders) Adopt the Personal Privacy Protection Act

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB422 (Kauth) Exempt certain activities from disciplinary action under the Uniform Credentialing Act

LB592 (Hardin) Adopt the Social Care Information Privacy Act

LB680 (Day) Change provisions of the Parkinson's Disease Registry Act

LB358 (Walz) State intent to increase dental services reimbursement under the Medical Assistance Act

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB687 (M. Cavanaugh) Create the Nebraska Integrated Juvenile Data Governing Body and the Nebraska Integrated Juvenile Data and Information System

LB306 (Hunt) Create the Nebraska Youth in Care Bill of Rights

LB34 (Dungan) Provide for a presumption of disposition under the Nebraska Juvenile Code for crimes committed by defendants under eighteen years of age and change the definition of juvenile under the code

LB435 (Geist) Provide for court appointed parental advisers

LB240 (Wayne) Provide for modification of disposition orders or conditions of probation upon motion by juvenile under the Nebraska Juvenile Code

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB120 (Bostelman) Eliminate obsolete provisions relating to a Nebraska Power Review Board study

LB121 (Bostelman) Repeal the Trail Development Assistance Act

LB568 (Bostelman) Adopt the Nuclear and Hydrogen Development Act

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB370 (Linehan) Require a notice relating to the availability of certain tax credits

LB704 (Murman) Provide for distribution of certain account balances upon death under the achieving a

better life experience program
LB317 (von Gillern) Change provisions relating to inspection of real property by count

Tuesday Feb. 21

Agriculture

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB263 (Agriculture) Change provisions of the Nebraska Hemp Farming Act
LB336 (Halloran) Terminate the Nebraska Hemp Commission, create the Nebraska Hemp Advisory Board, and eliminate a fee and penalty

LB735 (Blood) Create a work group and establish the Nebraska Stewardship Program under the Nebraska Apiary Act

Appropriations

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 46: Dept. of Correctional Services

Agency 64: State Patrol

Agency 94: Commission on Public Advocacy

LB439 (Raybould) State intent regarding appropriations to the Department of Correctional Services for domestic violence programming

LB554 (J. Cavanaugh) Appropriate funds to the Commission on Public Advocacy

LB660 (Ibach) Appropriate funds to the Commission on Public Advocacy

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointments: Leah Barrett, Katie Niemoller, Zachary J. Mellender - Neb. Information Technology Commission

LB61 (Brandt) Authorize leasing of dark fiber and eliminate certain powers of the Public Service Commission

LB134 (J. Cavanaugh) Provide requirements under the Small Wireless Facilities Deployment Act

LB733 (Bostar) Adopt the Broadband Pole Placement and Undergrounding Fund Act

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Current hearing schedules are available at: NebraskaLegislature.gov/calendar

**Urban Affairs Room
1510 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB171 (McKinney) Name the Metropolitan Utilities District Act and transfer and change provisions relating to metropolitan utilities districts
 LB45 (Dorn) Create the Revitalize Rural Nebraska Grant Fund
 LB224 (McKinney) Adopt the Aid to Municipalities Act
 LB707 (Dungan) Provide for grants to cities of the primary class from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund
 LB629 (McKinney) Change provisions of the Middle Income Workforce Housing Investment Act and the Economic Recovery Act

Wednesday, Feb. 22

Appropriations

Room 1307 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 18: Dept. of Agriculture
 Agency 18: Dept. of Agriculture, Department of (*Note: Potato Board & Poultry/Egg*)
 Agency 39: Neb. Brand Committee
 Agency 19: Dept. of Banking
 Agency 22: Dept. of Insurance
 Agency 67: Equal Opportunity Commission
 Agency 82: Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
 Agency 81: Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
 Agency 23: Dept. of Labor
 LB614 (McDonnell) Appropriate funds to the Department of Agriculture

LB755 (Vargas) Appropriate funds to the Department of Labor

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB255 (Brewer) Change eminent domain and renewable energy generation provisions relating to certain power suppliers
 LB399 (Brewer) Change provisions relating to privately developed renewable energy generation facilities and other electric generation facilities

Thursday, Feb. 23

Appropriations

Room 1307 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 5: Supreme Court
 Agency 15: Neb. Board of Parole
 Agency 78: Neb. Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice
 LB176 (Dungan) State intent regarding appropriations to the Supreme Court for interpreter services
 LB508 (Conrad) Appropriate funds to the Supreme Court for the Office of Dispute Resolution
 LB761 (DeBoer) Appropriate funds to the Supreme Court for the Office of Public Guardian

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB40 (Blood) Adopt the Riparian and Water Quality Practices Act
 LB729 (McDonnell) Change provisions

relating to the Jobs and Economic Development Initiative Fund

Friday, Feb. 24

Appropriations

Room 1307 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 7: Governor
 Agency 8: Lt. Governor
 Agency 9: Secretary of State
 Agency 10: Auditor of Public Accounts
 Agency 12: State Treasurer
 Agency 87: Accountability and Disclosure Commission
 LB477 (Wayne) Appropriate funds to the Omaha Streetcar Authority
 LB551 (J. Cavanaugh) State intent to appropriate funds to certain counties for long-term care facility operations and services
 LB578 (DeBoer) Appropriate funds to the Auditor of Public Accounts
 LB598 (Clements) Eliminate obsolete provisions relating to the Cash Reserve Fund

Executive Board

Room 1525 - 12:00 p.m.

LR21 (Brewer) Provide for a special committee of the Legislature to be known as the Small Modular Nuclear Reactor Study Committee
 LB566 (Bostelman) Require a study and report by the Natural Resources Committee of the Legislature regarding intermittent renewable energy generation ■



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Hundreds lined the Capitol hallways Feb. 8 waiting for an opportunity to testify on LB574.