

## Tax credit scholarship bill advanced after cloture vote



Sens. Lou Ann Linehan (left) and Wendy DeBoer discuss LB753 during floor debate March 6.

Nebraskans could receive a tax credit for contributions to organizations that grant scholarships to students to attend private school under a bill advanced from general file March 8.

Elkhorn Sen. Lou Ann Linehan introduced LB753 at the request of Gov. Jim Pillen. The measure would allow individuals, passthrough entities, estates, trusts and corporations to claim a nonrefundable income tax credit of up to 50 percent of their state income tax liability on contributions made to nonprofit organizations that grant scholarships to students to attend private school.

Only Nebraska residents would be eligible for the scholarships, which could be used to pay tuition and fees at a qualifying privately operated elementary or secondary school.

Linehan said school choice in Nebraska currently is limited to those who can afford to move to a new public school district or pay private school tuition. LB753 would give thousands of low-income families the same opportunity to choose the best education for their children, she said.

A Revenue Committee amendment, adopted 43-0, replaced the bill. Among other changes, it would allow the state Department of Revenue to grant \$25 million in credits in 2024, 2025 and 2026.

After that, if at least 90 percent of the credits in any given year are claimed, the annual limit would increase by 25 percent. Under the amendment, annual increases could continue until the total credit amount reaches \$100 million.

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## Variety of measures seek millions for affordable housing

The Appropriations Committee heard testimony March 8 on several measures aimed at addressing Nebraska's housing shortage by devoting more state funds to existing programs.

Among the proposals was LB789, sponsored by Sen. Justin Wayne of Omaha, which would appropriate \$50 million in general funds in fiscal year 2023-24 and FY2024-25 to the state Department of Economic Development to be used for innovative housing solutions.



Sen. Justin Wayne

Wayne said Nebraska's approach to the housing shortage must change. There are innovative ways to build homes, he said, and the state needs to incentivize them – whether that is off-site construction, 3-D printing, hemp bricks or other approaches.

“If we're going to solve this affordable housing crisis, we have to do it quicker, better and more efficient,” Wayne said. “What we're doing right now isn't working.”

Wayne Mortensen, CEO of NeighborWorks Lincoln, testified in favor of the proposal. A lack of affordable housing is a statewide problem, he said, noting that 44 percent of all households in Nebraska are “housing insecure,” defined as spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing-related expenses.

Rising construction costs and a lack of inventory are exacerbating the

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# Variety of measures seek millions for affordable housing

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problem, he said, and Lincoln alone is facing a looming shortage of 17,000 housing units by 2030.

“This is about recruiting local affordable housing developers, and perhaps some that are out of the region as well, to find the solutions necessary to stretch the resources we have in other [funding] pools more effectively,” Mortensen said.

Developer Ward Hoppe, who specializes in workforce housing, also supported the proposal. Builders constantly are seeking ways to bridge the roughly \$100,000 gap between what it costs to build a home and what working people can afford, he said. Most often, Hoppe said, the answer is incentives that allow builders to scale development, which can result in negotiated discounts on materials.

Both LB504, sponsored by Grand Island Sen. Raymond Aguilar, and LB741, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Tony Vargas, would appropriate \$50 million in general funds over the next two fiscal years to the Rural Workforce Housing Investment Fund to provide workforce housing grants.

LB741 also would appropriate \$50 million over two years to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to finance loans, grants, subsidies, credit enhancements and other financial assistance for community housing projects.

Vargas said Nebraska’s future success depends on solving the state’s housing crisis. The lack of quality, affordable housing has become a barrier to job

growth, economic development and overall quality of life for Nebraskans, he said, and “dramatic action” is needed.

LB504 and LB741 would double the capacity of two existing programs that have proven records of success, he said.

“These investments will accelerate the creation of more affordable housing and more workforce housing across Nebraska at a time when we desperately need it,” Vargas said. “The stakes cannot be overstated.”

Robin Ambrose of the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority testified in favor of both bills. The Rural Workforce Housing Fund is a flexible tool, she said, with projects selected at the local level and supported by matching local funds, and the Affordable Housing Trust Fund provides more options than federal programs, including the ability to rehabilitate existing residences.

Laura McAloon, Grand Island interim city administrator, also testified in favor on behalf of the city and several other organizations, including the League of Nebraska Municipalities. Grand Island is committed to using innovative tools, she said, such as public/private partnerships like Rural Workforce Housing Investment Fund grants.

McAloon said Grand Island employers are scrambling to fill 10,000 vacant jobs due to a lack of necessary housing. The city’s population has more than doubled over the last 25 years, she said, but housing has not kept pace.

“The average Grand Island resident struggles to find any housing at all,” she said, “let alone a single-family home that they can purchase.”

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



Sen. Raymond Aguilar



Sen. Tony Vargas



## UNICAMERAL UPDATE

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## Tax credit scholarship bill advanced after cloture vote

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The amendment also would cap contributions from individuals, passthrough entities and corporations at \$100,000 and limit contributions from estates or trusts to \$1 million.

The proposal would allow a taxpayer to carry forward any unused amount of the credit and apply it to their income tax liability for the next five years, but the credit could not be carried back. A taxpayer could not designate all or part of the contribution for the benefit of a certain student.

A scholarship granting organization would have to provide the department with sufficient information to show that it would use a tiered system that prioritizes certain students.

Students who received an education scholarship during the previous school year and their siblings would receive first priority. Students whose household income does not exceed 100 percent of the federal poverty level would be among those who receive second priority.

Sen. Tom Briese of Albion supported LB753, saying the proposed credit would encourage more people to donate to scholarship granting organizations, enabling more students to attend a school that fits their needs. He said the initial \$25 million credit allocation is small compared to the \$1.5 billion the state currently directs to public K-12 education.

"This is something that a large swath of Nebraskans ... really want, and it's time to respect their wishes on this," Briese said. "We're not going to harm public education one bit in doing this."

Omaha Sen. Terrell McKinney also supported the bill, saying the public school system historically has failed Black children in North Omaha. LB753 alone would not solve that

problem, he said, but more parents should have the opportunity to send their children to a private school if their public school is not working for them.

"Families and kids are tired of waiting ... for something to improve," McKinney said.

Sen. George Dungan of Lincoln opposed LB753, saying it would "whittle away" at

state revenue that is used to fund public schools. In other states that have adopted similar programs, Dungan added, nonprofits have formed to take advantage of the newly available scholarships only to close after a few years.

Several lawmakers who opposed the bill, including Omaha Sen. John Fredrickson, said it indirectly would use public funds to benefit private schools that are allowed to discriminate against students based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and other factors.

"It is not clear to me whether or not my son could attend a majority of these schools," he said, "not because of academic merit, but based on the fact that he has two dads."

Sen. Justin Wayne of Omaha, who supported LB753, said Nebraska's public schools also discriminate by suspending minority students at a disproportionate rate and declining to serve students with disabilities because of capacity limits.

Omaha Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh, an opponent of the bill, acknowledged



Omaha Sen. Justin Wayne said many North Omaha parents want an alternative to local public schools but cannot afford private school tuition.

that public schools discriminate in some cases but said it is not legal for them to do so.

"Instead of saying 'public schools discriminate against Black kids, so we should give money to private schools,'" she said, "how about we address the fact that public schools discriminate against Black kids?"

Sen. Megan Hunt of Omaha introduced an amendment that would prohibit education scholarships from being used at private schools that discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability and other criteria. The amendment failed on a vote of 15-31.

After eight hours of first-round debate over three days, Linehan filed a motion to invoke cloture, which ends debate and forces a vote on the bill and any pending amendments.

The motion succeeded on a vote of 33-12. Thirty-three votes were needed.

Lawmakers then advanced LB753 to select file on a vote of 31-12. ■

# MEET THE SENATOR

## Eclectic path brings Hardin to Legislature

A wooden business card holder sits on Sen. Brian Hardin's desk, engraved with his name and district number — a gift from U.S. Congressman Adrian Smith. It was Smith's father, Neal, who first suggested that Hardin run for the open seat in Legislative District 48.

The elder Smith was principal of the country grade school in Mitchell Valley that Hardin attended, and the two men ran into each other at church a few years ago. Hardin had been away from the area for 27 years, most of them in Denver, but had recently returned to Ger- ing following the death of his sister-in-law.

He'd always been close with his brother, Hardin said, and the chance to be near family again was a strong draw. So he and wife Lili, along with a geriatric, "unruly" Jack Russel Terrier named Layla, moved home.

Running into Neal Smith that day was, he says, like most things in his life, "more providential than planned."

After attending seminary in Denver and earning a master's degree, Hardin worked in ministry in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania for nearly seven years. While he loved the people and the natural beauty, he missed Nebraska and the "specific culture" of middle America.

A move back to Denver opened up a new door to the insurance industry, where Hardin thrived — eventually building a business with several thousand brokers across the country.

The insurance industry was pivotal in Hardin's life in

two ways. First it afforded him the freedom to pursue his music interests. But, additionally, a fateful public policy decision regarding the industry was the spark that got him interested in politics.

Hardin's love of music has resulted in a few hundred songs that he's written and a fair amount of time spent in Nashville. His cover band, Kid Shelleen — named after Lee Marvin's character in the classic film "Cat Ballou" — has gigs booked well into 2024.

"We're mostly a support group for old men," Hardin joked.

Professionally, everything changed for him with the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010.

"Governmental overreach ruined a business that I worked really hard building," Hardin said. "That gets your attention."

His frustration led to involvement in local politics in the Denver area and eventually to that fateful conversation with Adrian Smith's dad.

"He'd heard that I was involved with the G.O.P. in Colorado and while I initially ignored his suggestion about

running for office, I kept thinking about it," Hardin said.

Now that he's earned a seat in the Legislature, Hardin said he looks forward to working with fellow senators on legislation that reflects his constituents' conservative values — and to decorating his Capitol office with some of his many guitars.

"I think we can accomplish a lot of things that the majority of Nebraskans want," Hardin said. ■



Sen. Brian Hardin and family dog, Layla, take a snack break while enjoying a hike.

# APPROPRIATIONS

## Funds sought for foster care transition program

The Legislature would authorize funds to expand a program that assists youth transitioning out of the state's foster care system under a bill considered March 9 by the Appropriations Committee.

As introduced by Sen. Ben Hansen of Blair, LB573 would appropriate \$10 million in general funds in each of the next two fiscal years to the state Department of Economic Development. Funds would be used to offer matching grants to a nonprofit in a first-class city that uses a former college campus to provide services to youth exiting the foster care system.



Sen. Ben Hansen

Hansen said the nonprofit Angels Share currently operates a small program on the former Dana College campus in Blair, which serves young people who are former state wards. The program helps to secure housing, employment and other services for young people who are struggling with the adjustment to adulthood, he said.

A relatively small investment of state dollars in such programs can have a large impact on some of Nebraska's most vulnerable residents, Hansen said, adding that a large percentage of young people who age out of the foster system become homeless, are unemployed or end up in the state's correctional system.

"If we fail to provide support for former foster youth, the monetary and social cost to Nebraska is much greater," Hansen said.

He brought an amendment to the hearing that would lower the appropriation to \$10 million total and would include eligibility for programs that provide services to youth aging out of the state's juvenile justice system.

Chris Tonniges, president and CEO of Lutheran Family Services, testified in favor of the bill, which he said would provide an opportunity for more former foster youth to receive wrap-around services on the former Dana College campus.

About 140 young people age out of the state's foster system each year, Tonniges said, and often struggle due to the years of trauma they have experienced. Approximately 30 percent are homeless within the first nine months and 25 percent are caught up in the sex trade, he said.

"Youth aging out of the foster care system are often faced with difficult [or] impossible decisions just to survive, especially those who have limited or no social support network to fall back on," Tonniges said.

Spike Eickholt also spoke in support on behalf of Voices for Children in Nebraska. Eickholt singled out the amendment in his testimony, which would expand the bill's provisions to also assist youth exiting the state's juvenile justice system.

"This is a worthy investment and it's an important thing for the state to do," Eickholt said.

No one testified in opposition to LB573 and the committee took no immediate action on the bill.

# BANKING, COMMERCE & INSURANCE

## Insurance innovation program considered

The Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee heard testimony March 6 on a bill that would create a program to allow entities to temporarily test insurance products or services in Nebraska.

LB587, sponsored by Lincoln Sen. Anna Wishart, would create the Insurance Regulatory Sandbox Act to be administered by the state Department of Insurance.



Sen. Anna Wishart

The department would create a process through which entities could apply for a 12-month testing period related to a specific innovative insurance offering, such as a new product or technology, without having to obtain licensure or follow otherwise applicable state regulations.

Testing periods could be extending through approval by the department. Participating entities would be required to disclose risks to consumers and the department could end an entity's participation in the sandbox program at any time and for any reason.

Wishart said the first regulatory sandbox program was launched in the U.K. in 2015 and that 12 states have adopted similar programs in an attempt to be more welcoming to innovative companies and entrepreneurs. She said she's been working on similar legislation for several years and has limited LB587 to the insurance industry.

"It's just as important for lawmakers to look at how we can remove outdated policy as it is for us to be

introducing new laws,” Wishart said. “It is very beneficial for our state to take a hard look at these regulations and think about whether they’re truly needed or if they’re standing in the way of contemporary businesses and consumers and the environment that we live in today.”

Nicole Fox testified in support of the bill on behalf of the Platte Institute, saying it’s important to foster innovation in Nebraska. Tech entrepreneurs innovate in ways that outpace regulation, she said, and LB587 would provide them a way to test products and services with supervision from the department but with greater flexibility.

“A regulatory sandbox does not create a regulatory free-for-all, it doesn’t create an unlevel playing field and it does not put the public at risk,” Fox said.

Robert Bell, executive director of the Nebraska Insurance Federation, testified in favor of the bill on behalf of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and the American Property and Casualty Insurance Association.

Technology is changing how consumers interact with insurance, Bell said, with more people relying on mobile devices and young people purchasing their first insurance products. New technology, however, often is met with unnecessary “statutory roadblocks,” he said.

“Nebraska insurers believe that the sandbox program outlined in LB587 will serve as an important framework to let [companies] know that Nebraska is open for business,” Bell said.

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

## EDUCATION

### Changes to school suspension, expulsion considered

The Education Committee heard testimony March 7 on bills intended to prevent the suspension of young students and ensure expelled students are able to graduate on time.

Under LB632, introduced by Omaha Sen. Terrell McKinney, a school in a metropolitan class city could not suspend a student in pre-kindergarten through second grade. Omaha is the state’s only metropolitan class city.



Sen. Terrell McKinney

The bill also would require a school to develop a policy that includes disciplinary measures inside the school as an alternative to suspension.

McKinney said Omaha Public Schools disproportionately suspends and expels minority students. LB632 is intended to ensure that OPS uses alternatives to those practices, which can lead to poor academic outcomes and involvement in the juvenile or criminal justice systems, he said.

“Instead of pushing students out, teachers need more support and training for effective discipline,” McKinney said, “and schools need to use best practices for behavior modification and keep kids in schools where they belong.”

LB340, also sponsored by McKinney, would clarify that Nebraska school districts’ alternative schools, classes or educational programs for suspended or expelled students must enable a student to continue all academic work they otherwise would have had access to had they not been expelled.

Elizabeth Eynon-Kokrda testified in support of both bills on behalf of Education Rights Council. She said OPS suspends students in pre-kindergarten through second grade – particularly Black students and students with disabilities – at a much higher rate than older students.

Under LB632, Eynon-Kokrda said, young students who violate a school’s code of conduct by acting out would receive additional services and support instead of being removed from the classroom.

Eynon-Kokrda said LB340 would ensure that expulsion does not prevent a student from graduating by clarifying that schools must give expelled students the opportunity to obtain the credits they need.

“We have a myriad of ways that we can create and guarantee that children have the opportunity to access all of their credit while they are expelled,” she said.

Connie Edmond testified in support of LB632 on behalf of the Nebraska Commission on African American Affairs, saying suspension from school sends a “message of rejection” to young children that has a lasting effect on their emotional well-being.

She said children who are suspended or expelled between the ages of 4 and 8 are 25 percent more likely to drop out of school and 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime in later years.

“Suspension from school sets children up for failure,” Edmond said, “and there are no second chances.”

Also in support of LB632 was Anahí Salazar of Voices for Children in Nebraska. She said preschool children are three times more likely than K-12 students to be suspended, often due to nonviolent, developmentally appropriate behavior.

“Policing small students on minor

infractions, many or all of which they are still learning to control, sends the message to them that they are a problem, that they don't belong in school," Salazar said.

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

**Proposal would create Holocaust education grant program**

The Education Committee heard testimony March 6 on a bill intended to give Nebraska educators the support they need to teach about the Holocaust and other acts of genocide.

LB679, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Jen Day, would require the state Department of Education to establish and administer a program to provide grants to school districts and educational service units to train teachers with the goal of integrating Holocaust and genocide education into social studies standards.

Day said the proposal would supplement LB888, passed last year, which requires the State Board of Education to adopt academic content standards for education on the Holocaust and other acts of genocide.

She said the grant program would give schools the opportunity to provide workshops, teacher training, speakers and other ways to enhance the effectiveness of their Holocaust education curriculum.

The bill indicates legislative intent to appropriate \$2 million to the program for fiscal years 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Megan Helberg testified in support of the bill on behalf of the Nebraska

State Education Association. LB679 would ensure that Nebraska teachers have access to the high-quality, vetted resources they need to teach about the Holocaust, a topic that must be approached with respect and strong factual knowledge, she said.

Also in support was Ari Kohen, a member of the governance council of the Institute for Holocaust Education in Omaha. He said funding for Holocaust education is needed at a time when the U.S. is seeing a "dramatic resurgence of antisemitism."

"Without the funding provided by this bill," Kohen said, "we're asking schools and teachers to take on this challenge without giving them all the tools they need to do it well."

No one testified in opposition to LB679 and the committee took no immediate action on it.



Sen. Jen Day



**Proposal would return Nebraska to two-house legislature**

Nebraska no longer would be the nation's only one-house legislative system under a proposed constitutional amendment considered March 9 by the Executive Board.

LR2CA, introduced by Bayard Sen. Steve Erdman, would create a House of Representatives and a Senate within the Nebraska Legislature, beginning with the January 2027 legislative session. If approved by 30 senators, LR2CA would be placed on the ballot for voter approval at the November 2024 general election.



Sen. Steve Erdman

Membership in the proposed House of Representatives would be capped at 63 members and the Senate would contain 31 members. Each Senate district would comprise three contiguous counties.

Erdman said the current lawmaking system isn't working and that states similar to Nebraska with two-house legislatures have better tax systems and other policy outcomes.

The addition of a second chamber with membership based on geography rather than population would more fairly reflect the interests of the rural parts of the state, he said. Due to population shifts to the east, he said, Douglas, Sarpy and Lancaster counties currently contain 58 percent of Nebraska's population.

"I believe, as with all things we do in the Legislature, once in a while you need to take a review of what you've accomplished and [see] if it is doing what you expected it to do," Erdman said.

He brought an amendment to the hearing that would require state senators to be selected by an "appointment committee" rather than elected to their seats. Each three-member appointment committee would be made up of one individual from each county in a three-county district, selected to serve by the county board.

Jeanne Greisen was the lone testifier in support of the proposal. The state legislature is "failing" Nebraskans, she said, by not being responsive to voters' priorities.

"We've seen how this system works; it no longer works for the people," Greisen said.

Chloe Fowler, associate executive director of Nonpartisan Nebraska, testified against the measure on her own behalf. A former college page at the Legislature, Fowler said she felt compelled to join a nonprofit dedicated to preserving the Unicameral after

witnessing lawmakers work together across party lines.

“While I was a page ... I learned so much about Nebraska, how the policy process functions and, ultimately, human connection,” she said.

Citing concerns that LR2CA would “punish” urban residents by overrepresenting rural interests, Tyler Sondag of Omaha opposed the measure. Under the proposal, he said, Douglas, Sarpy and Dodge counties could be combined into one district in which more than 40 percent of Nebraska’s population would be represented by one state senator.

League of Women Voters representative Sheri St. Clair also testified in opposition, saying the current system’s rules and procedures are easy for Nebraskans to follow and allow for greater public access and awareness. A one-house system is simpler and more efficient, she said, and comes at a lower cost to taxpayers.

“Arguments made by George Norris in the [1930s] produced a government that’s responsive to the will of the people,” St. Clair said.

The committee took no immediate action on the proposal.

## HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

### Direct cash assistance increase proposed

A bill intended to increase access to direct cash assistance for low-income families in Nebraska was considered by the Health and Human Services Committee March 8.

LB290, introduced by Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh of Omaha, would increase the standard of need—a monthly

amount calculated to determine an individual’s basic subsistence expenses — for Aid to Dependent Children. The program provides direct cash assistance funded by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant.

The standard of need is considered in a participant’s initial income eligibility and used to calculate their benefit amount. ADC funds can be used to cover basic living expenses such as rent, utilities, food, clothing and other household necessities.

The bill would increase the standard of need for an individual to \$1,132.50 and \$393 for each additional eligible individual in a household. Cavanaugh said the current annual net income for a single person to qualify for ADC is \$7,212, which she said would increase to \$13,590 under her proposal.

Going forward, the bill also would require the state Department of Health and Human Services to adjust the standard of need annually to account for inflation.

Diane Amdor, staff attorney at Nebraska Appleseed, spoke in support of the proposal. DHHS currently has nearly \$131 million in TANF funds, she said, which are to be used to reduce poverty across the state. The Legislature’s top priority for that funding should be increasing the availability of direct cash assistance for the lowest income Nebraskans, she said.

“These programs affect real people living real lives,” Amdor said.

Also testifying in support of LB290 was Natalia Tu, research and policy analyst for the Women’s Fund of Omaha. Tu said a single, working adult in Nebraska would need to make



Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh

approximately \$2,200 per month to cover basic expenses and be considered economically secure — which includes setting extra money aside for retirement and emergencies.

Of the 70 percent of all Nebraska households that are considered economically secure, she said, only 24 percent comprise single women with children.

“This legislation is critical,” Tu said. “Economic security is foundational to achieving gender equity in our local communities.”

Testifying in opposition to the bill was Andrew Keck, deputy director of finance for the DHHS Division of Children and Family Services. He said LB290 not only would compromise the sustainability of other TANF-funded programs, but also could negatively impact the eligibility of certain families who utilize other income-based economic assistance programs.

Under federal law, he said, both the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Low-Income Heating Energy Assistance Program consider ADC payments as income when determining eligibility.

“An increase in ADC payment amounts could impact families’ eligibility for SNAP and LIHEAP, which could decrease benefits received for some households,” Keck said.

The committee took no immediate action on LB290.

### Bill would increase child welfare provider rates

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony March 8 on a bill that would increase child welfare provider rates in Nebraska.

LB510, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Danielle Conrad, would require the state Department of Health and Human Services to include annual cost of



living adjustments when calculating child welfare reimbursement rates.

Conrad said the bill would ensure that providers have the necessary

resources to continue delivering care to Nebraska’s most vulnerable children and families.

“Our state continues to grapple with ensuring we have the appropriate pieces in place to have a strong safety net for kids in need,” Conrad said. “Our child welfare providers are a big piece of that safety net and we need to make sure we’re doing all that we can so that they have the resources they need to recruit and retain top talent.”

Kelley Mast, director of family services at Compass, testified in support of LB510, saying current reimbursement rates have forced providers to deny cases that they lack adequate funding to support. Child welfare providers have been operating on a flat rate for nearly 10 years with no changes, he said, and that cannot continue.

“Over the last 10 or 12 years, your child welfare provider partners ... have done a lot more with a lot less money,” Mast said. “But we don’t have any more expenses to cut.”

Also testifying in support of the bill was Tim Hruza of the Children and Families Coalition of Nebraska. With no standard review process for reimbursement rates, he said, providers are “caught playing catch-up.”

“Not just in terms of the amount of the rate paid, but in terms of how we’re staffing — how many people we have [and] how many kids we can provide services to,” Hruza said. “When you go 10 years without a cost-of-living adjustment ... we fall behind really fast.”



Sen. Danielle Conrad

Andrew Keck, deputy director of finance for the DHHS Division of Children and Family Services, testified in opposition to the proposal. He said the change would create “unpredictable” budgetary needs for the department.

“LB510 would require an [annual cost of living] increase in addition to the cost of services identified by the provider,” Keck said. “This could result in service rates that are higher than the actual cost of providing the service.”

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

## JUDICIARY



### ‘Clean slate’ relief for tenants proposed

Tenants could have records of past wrongful eviction actions sealed under a bill considered by the Judiciary Committee March 8.

LB175, introduced by Lincoln Sen. George Dungan, would allow tenants to receive “clean slate relief” — or the automatic sealing of the court record — if a trial court issues an order dismissing an eviction proceeding against them.

The bill also would provide a cause of action for a tenant to seek clean slate relief if at least three years have passed since an eviction judgment was entered and restitution was paid, or if an eviction action:

- was never carried out;
- ended in dismissal but the record remained public; or
- resulted in a judgment that was later reversed or vacated.



Sen. George Dungan

Dungan said that under current law, an eviction case remains on a person’s record, even if it is dismissed, which can make finding future housing difficult.

“When cases are dismissed for whatever reason, that charge should not remain on their record,” he said.

Dungan said sealing eviction records would protect tenants from having their housing options limited arbitrarily based on a judicial action that didn’t result in an eviction or no longer accurately reflects the tenant’s conduct.

Destiny Fant, a tenant assistance specialist, spoke in support of the bill. When an eviction notice is filed, she said, it remains on an individual’s permanent record and counts as a strike against them when attempting to find alternate housing.

“It doesn’t matter if the eviction was filed wrongfully, incorrectly or dismissed before the case even came [to court],” Fant said. “For the cases that are heard before the court, a lot of times stipulations are made that the tenant agrees to, and the [property owner’s] attorney will vacate or dismiss the eviction.”

Scout Richters, speaking on behalf of the ACLU of Nebraska, also testified in support. Evictions can have devastating consequences, she said, including job loss, health issues, material hardship and homelessness.

“That lasting stigma of a prior eviction notice filing often compels poorer tenants to avoid court involvement at all costs rather than exercising their rights,” Richters said. “Many tenants endure horrible living conditions or comply with unlawful lease termination notices to avoid sustaining that permanent mark of an eviction filing.”

Lynn Fisher, representing the Nebraska Realtors Association and the Statewide Property Owners Associa-

tion, testified in opposition to LB175. The proposal would undermine the right of private property owners to choose the best possible tenant for their property, he said.

“This bill, if passed, would prevent an owner or property manager from finding the truth about an applicant’s past behavior as a tenant,” Fisher said.

Gene Eckel, testifying on behalf of the Nebraska Association of Commercial Property Owners and the Apartment Association of Nebraska, also spoke in opposition. LB175 would prevent housing providers from obtaining full access to a tenant’s history, he said, and that information is essential to ensuring the safety and security of all parties involved.

“It is important for owners to be able to evaluate pending previous filings, as they show a pattern of behavior,” Eckel said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

## TRANSPORTATION & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

### Bill would require two-person freight train crews

The Transportation and Telecommunications Committee heard testimony March 6 on a bill intended to improve train safety in Nebraska.

Under LB31, introduced by North Platte Sen. Mike Jacobson, a train or light engine used in the transportation of freight would be required to operate with a crew of at least two individuals. The Public Service Commission



Sen. Mike Jacobson

would enforce the bill’s provisions.

Jacobson said two-person crews currently are required under the collective bargaining agreement between railroad unions and their employers but state law does not require it. Because engineers must remain in the cab at all times, he said, conductors serve a necessary role in addressing any incident that occurs outside of the train.

“[Two-person crews] provide for the second crew member to immediately respond to any problems that may arise, including collisions, derailments and blocked crossings,” Jacobson said. “Conductors are a necessity for the safe, efficient operation of the railroad.”

Locomotive engineer AJ McAphee testified in support of LB31, emphasizing that a two-person crew could be the difference between life and death.

“There have been several instances in Nebraska where prompt actions by crew members have saved my coworkers’ lives,” he said. “Had those individuals been alone during those emergencies, they may not [be] alive today.”

Also speaking in support of the bill was Chris Bruns of the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners. Recent advancements in railroad technology have made the industry more economically competitive, Bruns said, but technology cannot decipher every scenario that could transpire over the course of a trip.

“It is in the best interest of all Nebraskans to advance this important public safety bill that maintains having two, independently thinking human beings able to supersede technology ... and quickly react to any potential emergency that may arise,” he said.

Pat Pfeifer, chairman of the legislative board for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, also testified in support of the proposal. Pfeifer noted similar concerns about recent developments in the

industry, and said he worries that current regulations are not enough to protect workers.

“Rules and regulations can be replaced,” he said. “We need laws.”

Testifying in opposition to LB31 was BNSF Railway representative, Jeff Davis, who said innovation is the driving force in rail safety.

“Infrastructure and technology investments have been essential to reducing the number of train accidents,” Davis said. “More than 400 shortline railroads in the United States, and at least two or three in Nebraska, have been safely operating with one engineer in the cab for two decades or longer with no reported accidents.”

The committee took no immediate action on LB31.

### Measure would require blocked crossing reports

Railroad companies would be required to report incidents of blocked crossings under a bill heard March 6 by the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee.

Under LB234, sponsored by Sen. Lynne Walz of Fremont, railroads would report annually to the Public Service Commission and the Nebraska State Patrol regarding blocked crossings, beginning Nov. 1, 2024.



Sen. Lynne Walz

Data would include the number of complaints received, the dates and locations of blocked crossings and any action taken by the companies to resolve those complaints. The PSC then would provide a report to the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee, including any recommendations, each Dec. 1.

Walz said she would offer an

amendment to have the report also provided to the state Department of Transportation and to specify that data would be gathered for incidents in which a railroad crossing is blocked for more than 10 minutes.

Such data reporting would help the Legislature understand the scope of the problem and how to address it, she said. Currently, senators rely on anecdotal information from their constituents regarding kids being made late for school, first responders delayed during emergency calls and people dying from trying to pass between rail cars, she said.

“While these stories are all too common, we don’t have the data to understand how common the issue is,” Walz said.

Lincoln County Commissioner Chris Bruns testified in support of the proposal. Blocked crossings occur in rural parts of the state on a regular basis, he said, and often there is not an alternative route that residents and first responders can take to get around those crossings.

“When I have emergency dispatchers contacting me to make me aware of rural crossings being blocked for hours – hours at a time – it’s easy to see how this issue quickly becomes a public safety issue,” Bruns said.

Amanda Snide, speaking on behalf of the Nebraska State Volunteer Firefighters Association and the Nebraska Fire Chiefs Association, also supported the bill. Snide, who also is a rail conductor and member of the Hershey volunteer fire department, said railroads currently aren’t held accountable for blocked crossings.

First responders in her area encounter the problem so often, Snide said, that a space has been added to their transport form to indicate if they were delayed by a train.

James Michael Bowers, member

of the Lincoln City Council and the Railroad Transportation Safety District, also testified in favor. Speaking on his own behalf, Bowers said local elected officials often are the first point of contact for people who have issues with blocked crossings. LB234 would provide neutral, data-driven information to help policymakers gain a better understanding of why blocked crossings are happening and how to address the problem, he said.

Jeff Davis testified against the bill on behalf of BNSF Railway. Blocked crossings are a problem for everyone, he said, but often the situation requires more than an operational change on the part of railroad companies. As such, simply compiling data won’t necessarily solve the problem, he said.

“In many cases, blocked crossings are an infrastructure problem that requires an infrastructure solution,” Davis said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

### **Transportation program expansion considered**

A bill that would increase the funding cap for a state road improvement program and expand it to include livestock production and processing was heard in the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee March 7.

The Economic Opportunity Program, which finances transportation improvements to attract new business, is administered by the state Department of Transportation in coordination with the state Department of Economic Development.

LB564, introduced by Adams Sen. Myron Dorn, would increase the program’s funding cap from \$20 million to \$40 million. The bill also

would add livestock production and processing operations to the list of businesses for which the program could finance transportation improvements.



Sen. Myron Dorn

If Nebraska wants great economic opportunities, Dorn said, it needs to have great transportation infrastructure.

“There are dairy operations that would like to come to Nebraska but they need paved roads to move their product safely and efficiently, as do other ag operations,” Dorn said.

In support of the bill was Kris Bousquet, executive director of the Nebraska Dairy Association, speaking on behalf of the Nebraska Ag Leaders Working Group. The dairy industry is expected to see significant growth in the next five to 10 years, he said, and data shows that recruiting a large dairy processor would bring \$1.7 billion worth of annual economic return to Nebraska.

“We have significant opportunities in livestock growth and LB564 will not only help counties bring economic vitality back to main street, but it will help them overcome infrastructure demands of economic development that often disqualifies them [from] the opportunity,” Bousquet said.

Jon Cannon, executive director of the Nebraska Association of County Officials, also testified in favor of the bill. Counties in western Nebraska are looking for ways to become livestock friendly, he said, and LB564 would help prepare their infrastructure to support expanded livestock production and processing.

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

**Proposal would expand transportation program to add infrastructure**

The Transportation and Telecommunications Committee heard testimony March 7 on a bill that would expand a state transportation program to include certain infrastructure improvements.

The Economic Opportunity Program, administered by the state Department of Transportation in coordination with the state Department of Economic Development, finances transportation improvements to attract new business in the state through the Transportation Infrastructure Bank Fund.

LB600, introduced by Central City Sen. Loren Lippincott, would expand the program to include infrastructure improvements for first and second class cities and villages for redevelopment plans approved under the state's Community Development Law.



Sen. Loren Lippincott

Lippincott said allowing funds to be used for infrastructure development would further the program's goal of driving economic development and would improve the physical landscape of rural communities. The key to having construction-ready sites is having infrastructure that can support the needs of highly lucrative businesses, he said.

Compared to neighboring states, he said, Nebraska lags in development of large sites that can attract major employers for regional manufacturing, processing, trade and logistics hubs.

"As a state, we're still failing investors, both within and outside the state, by limiting the use of these funds to transportation improvements alone," Lippincott said.

Former state senator Sue Crawford, representing the city of York and the York County Development Corporation, testified in favor of the bill. LB600 would expand infrastructure in rural communities, she said, something that cannot be overemphasized in economic development.

"LB600 allows for proactive infrastructure development," Crawford said. "You don't get on anybody's radar unless you have a lot ready."

Also in support was Lynn Rex. Speaking on behalf of the League of Nebraska Municipalities, she said the bill would support infrastructure development and provide incentives for businesses to locate in Nebraska.

In opposition to the bill was Vicki Kramer, director of the state Department of Transportation. She expressed concern that the proposal would create a precedent of requiring the department to fund infrastructure site development projects with funding intended for transportation.

"[LB600] also creates potential issues with funding by bringing state, federal and private funds into the Transportation Infrastructure Bank," Kramer said. "The department has worked hard to streamline the program to be agile and usable for communities by limiting it to state funds."

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

**URBAN AFFAIRS**

**New state housing department considered**

The Urban Affairs Committee heard testimony March 7 on a bill that would create an executive branch state agency focused on housing and urban

development in Nebraska.

LB424, introduced by Bennington Sen. Wendy DeBoer, would create the state Department of Housing and Urban Development to serve as the lead state agency for programs related to housing and homelessness.



Sen. Wendy DeBoer

A director would be appointed by the governor and subject to confirmation by the Legislature.

HUD would act as a clearinghouse for all state housing programs except for two federal programs and any located at the University of Nebraska.

The bill also would create a nine-member Housing Advisory Committee to assist the new department.

DeBoer said current housing policy and coordination efforts occur across multiple state agencies. This dispersed responsibility is inefficient and can create confusion for families and businesses who are looking for housing help, she said.

"LB424 is not an indictment of any of the work [of] our state agencies and what they have done with respect to housing," DeBoer said. "Rather, this bill is about creating a consolidated department to coordinate our state housing efforts."

Brad Meurrens, public policy director at Disability Rights Nebraska, testified in support of the bill. The overlap between disability and homelessness is significant, he said, and nearly one quarter of individuals experiencing homelessness have a physical, intellectual, developmental or mental disability.

"Poverty limits housing options and disabilities limit those options even further," Muerrens said. "Accessible, affordable housing for persons with disabilities is vital to supporting

their overall well-being.”

Social worker Jennifer Herting also spoke in support of LB424. Herting said she has conversations daily with families whose main concern is the lack of available housing that is accessible and manageable on a limited, fixed income. Families often live in homes that are not accessible for family members with disabilities, she said, but they make it work because they have to.

“Just because a person with a disability lives there, does not mean it’s accessible,” Herting said. “All Nebraskans should have safe, decent, affordable and accessible housing without limitation.”

Testifying in opposition to the bill was Gene Eckel, board member for the Nebraska Association of Commercial Property Owners and the Apartment Association of Nebraska. Instead of using state time and funds to create a new housing agency, Eckel said, the focus should be on constructing more affordable housing units.

“We believe that the state’s financial resources should be used to find ways to immediately subsidize and provide economic incentives for the development of more housing that could be offered to Nebraska citizens at an affordable price,” he said.

The committee took no immediate action on LB424.

### **Committee hears updates on Omaha pandemic funding**

The Urban Affairs Committee heard testimony March 7 on a bill that would update the Economic Recovery Act passed by the Legislature in 2022 to fund pandemic recovery projects, mainly in North and South Omaha.

The 2022 measure was designed to use federal American Rescue Plan Act funds, as well as transfers from the state’s cash reserve, to fund grant

programs through the Economic Recovery and Incentive Division of the state Department of Economic Development.

LB531, sponsored by Sen. Terrell McKinney of Omaha, would make several changes to division operations and further outline the funding process going forward. He said members of the Legislature’s Economic Recovery Special Committee are working on language for an amendment to further finalize details on how the grant program will work, but among the changes specified in the bill are provisions that:

- prioritize grants within the boundaries of a metropolitan class city;
- direct the division to rely on studies produced by the Legislature’s Economic Recovery Special Committee;
- prohibit DED from creating additional requirements other than those specified under ARPA;
- credit investment earnings from the Economic Recovery Contingency Fund back to the fund; and
- prohibit expenditures from the Economic Recovery Contingency Fund and \$80 million in ARPA appropriations until at least 30 days after the effective date of the bill.

McKinney said the special committee tasked the engineering firm Olsson with scoring proposals for grant funding. The firm selected 35 projects out of 365 proposals, he said, although those selections are not finalized.

The goal is economic development, he said, noting that North and South

Omaha historically have been underserved and “held back” by decades of economic neglect, mass incarceration, violence and poor educational outcomes.

“I had a front-row seat to the yearly erosion of my community,” McKinney said. “This community deserves a fair chance at the good life.”

Over two dozen testifiers supported the proposal, including both community leaders and business owners who were recommended for funding through Olsson’s scoring process and those who were not.

Kenny McMorris, CEO of Charles Drew Health Center in North Omaha, testified in support of the proposal. North and South Omaha historically have some of the highest needs in the state due to a history of discrimination, segregation and red-lining, he said.

The result is that those neighborhoods are some of the most economically deprived parts of Nebraska, he said, but the area is full of individuals who are ready to make a change.

“I’ve seen what’s possible, but we have a long way to go – and we can do more,” McMorris said. “North Omaha is ready to go.”

Leo Louis II, board member of the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation, also spoke in favor of the bill. The foundation was not recommended for funding by Olsson, Louis said, but he still supports the efforts of senators from North and South Omaha to bring development to the area and serve as role models for young people to become part of the solution.

“Individuals that I’ve seen growing up in my community have struggled for a long time to understand the political process and the economic ramifications of decisions made by individuals they have never met and never seen who sit in rooms like this,” Louis said.



Sen. Terrell McKinney

Also testifying in favor of the proposal was Steve Cerbeny, a deputy chief with the Omaha Police Department. The bill focuses on a community-oriented approach to solutions that would strengthen neighborhoods, solve problems and encourage growth, he said.

“From a law enforcement standpoint, it’s crucial to build up our communities,” Cerbeny said. “The success

of a police department relies entirely on the success of the communities the officers serve.”

Representing the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, Jennifer Creiger also supported the bill as a continuation of the process started last year.

“Investments in east Omaha ... which will ultimately be implemented by LB531 present an opportunity for

truly generational impact in parts of our city that have historically been underinvested and disinvested in,” Creiger said. “We all have a responsibility to get this done and get this done right.”

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

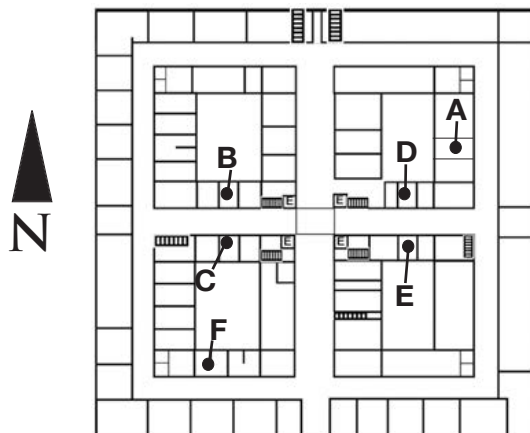
# PUBLIC HEARINGS

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

The weekly schedule of committee hearings is published on the last legislative day of the week throughout the legislative session. The schedule is available on a table in front of the Clerk’s Office, in the Sunday editions of the Lincoln Journal Star and the Omaha World-Herald, in the weekly Unicameral Update and at [NebraskaLegislature.gov](http://NebraskaLegislature.gov).

Hearing Room	Committee	Meeting Days
1524 (B)	Agriculture	Tu
1307 (A)	Appropriations	M, Tu, W, Th, F
1507 (E)	Banking, Commerce & Insurance	M, Tu
1524 (B)	Business & Labor	M
1525 (C)	Education	M, Tu
1510 (D)	General Affairs	M
1507 (E)	Government, Military & Veterans Affairs	W, Th, F
1510 (D)	Health & Human Services	W, Th, F
1113 (F)	Judiciary	W, Th, F
1525 (C)	Natural Resources	W, Th, F
1525 (C)	Nebraska Retirement Systems	(call of the chair)
1524 (B)	Revenue	W, Th, F
1113 (F)	Transportation & Telecommunications	M, Tu
1510 (D)	Urban Affairs	Tu

## FIRST FLOOR



\* Hearing rooms labeled by letter – see chart at right

# COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Current hearing schedules are available at: [NebraskaLegislature.gov/calendar](http://NebraskaLegislature.gov/calendar)

## **Monday, March 13**

### **Appropriations**

#### **Room 1307 - 1:30 PM**

- Agency 84: Dept. of Environmental Quality
- LB237 (Wayne) Appropriate funds to the Department of Environment and Energy
- LB534 (Slama) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Environment and Energy for community water systems
- LB571 (Lippincott) Appropriate funds to the Department of Environment and Energy to carry out the Water Well Standards and Contractors' Practice Act
- LB613 (McDonnell) State intent to appropriate funds to the Department of Environment and Energy
- LB672 (Hansen) Appropriate funds to the Department of Environment and Energy
- LB766 (DeKay) Appropriate Federal Funds to the Department of Environment and Energy for reverse osmosis systems

### **Banking, Commerce & Insurance**

#### **Room 1507 - 1:30 PM**

- LB354 (Raybould) Change uninsured or underinsured motor vehicle insurance provisions
- LB355 (Raybould) Change a requirement for transportation network company insurance
- LB423 (DeBoer) Provide for umbrella and excess insurance coverage to be stacked with uninsured and underinsured motorist coverage
- LB210 (Bostar) Adopt the Prior Authorization Reform Act
- LB446 (Bostar) Adopt the Peer-to-Peer Vehicle Sharing Program Act

### **Business & Labor**

#### **Room 1524 - 1:30 PM**

- LB489 (von Gillern) Exclude marketplace network contractors working for marketplace network platforms from the Employment Security Law
- LB665 (Riepe) Clarify language on rules and regulations under the Employment Security Law
- LB666 (Riepe) Change provisions of the

- Employment Security Law
- LB618 (McDonnell) Redefine public benefits and change provisions of the Employment Security Law relating to the disqualification of certain aliens
- LB459 (McDonnell) Require reimbursement by the State Fire Marshal for premiums for benefits provided pursuant to the Firefighter Cancer Benefits Act
- LB501 (M. Cavanaugh) Provide for compensation under the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act for cancers experienced by firefighters
- LB502 (M. Cavanaugh) Adopt the Warehouse Worker Protection Act
- LB752 (M. Cavanaugh) Prohibit discrimination in employment by any entity receiving state funding
- LB367 (Conrad) Adopt the Fair Chance Hiring Act

### **Education**

#### **Room 1525 - 1:30 PM**

- LB648 (McDonnell) Provide powers and duties to the State Department of Education relating to the development of a workforce diploma program
- LB724 (Vargas) Eliminate certain basic skill and content test requirements for eligibility for teaching certificates
- LB475 (Wayne) Adopt the Nebraska Education Formula and terminate the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act
- LB238 (Wayne) Include virtual school students in the state aid to schools formula
- LB522 (Walz) Change provisions relating to poverty allowances under the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act
- LB516 (Walz) Provide and change powers and duties for the State Department of Education, Commissioner of Education, State Board of Education, and the state school security director, provide grants to school districts for security-related infrastructure projects, and provide grants to educational service units and local public health departments to hire school psychologists and licensed mental health practitioners as prescribed

### **General Affairs**

#### **Room 1510 - 1:30 PM**

- LB148 (Jacobson) Change powers and duties of the State Racing and Gaming Commission related to licensed racetrack enclosures and change dates related to the required market analysis and socioeconomic-impact studies
- LB150 (Dover) Change provisions relating to entertainment districts under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act
- LB375 (Lowe) Authorize certain licensees to purchase alcoholic liquor for resale from a gas station, grocery store, liquor store, or similar establishment under certain circumstances as prescribed under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act
- LB403 (Vargas) Change provisions relating to a craft brewery license under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act
- LB404 (Vargas) Change provisions relating to agreements between wholesalers and suppliers for the distribution of beer
- LB493 (Dungan) Remove the prohibition that a lottery ticket cannot be sold through a vending or dispensing device under the State Lottery Act
- Appointment: Trent Loos - State Racing and Gaming Commission
- Appointment: Brian Botsford - Neb. Arts Council

## **Tuesday, March 14**

### **Appropriations**

#### **Room 1524 - 1:30 PM**

- Agency 29: Dept. of Natural Resources
- LB125 (Bostelman) Change provisions relating to interest earnings on the Surface Water Irrigation Infrastructure Fund
- LB401 (Dorn) State intent regarding appropriations to the Department of Natural Resources
- LB506 (Bostar) State intent to appropriate federal funds to the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Environment and Energy
- LB768 (DeKay) Transfer money from the Cash Reserve Fund to the Critical Infrastructure Facilities Cash Fund

# COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Current hearing schedules are available at: [NebraskaLegislature.gov/calendar](http://NebraskaLegislature.gov/calendar)

## Education

### Room 1525 - 1:30 PM

Appointment: Jerald Meyer - Board of Educational Lands and Funds

Appointment: Joshua P. Fields - Technical Advisory Committee for State-wide Assessment

Appointment: Courtney C. Wittstruck - Neb. Educational Telecommunications Commission

Appointment: Tamara D. Weber - Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

Appointment: Robert H. Kobza - Board of Educational Lands and Funds

Appointments: Carter Peterson, Adolfo Reynaga - Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges

LB627 (Bostar) Adopt the Free Student Meals Act

LB478 (Wayne) Change provisions relating to the Nebraska Juvenile Code and education programs in state institutions that house juveniles, provide powers and duties to the State Department of Education and the State Board of education to establish an educational division responsible for the education of certain juveniles, and provide a termination date for the superintendent of institutional schools

LB518 (Walz) Adopt the Reducing Education Risk Factors and Property Tax Relief Act and change provisions of the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act

## Urban Affairs

### Room 1510 - 1:30 PM

LB546 (Conrad) Provide requirements for bed and breakfast establishments regarding food, beverages, and fire safety

LB329 (Raybould) Prohibit the application of the state building code in a manner that would prohibit or limit the use of certain refrigerant

LB342 (Hardin) Change provisions relating to home inspectors

## Wednesday, March 15

### Appropriations

#### Room 1525 - 1:30 PM

Agency 13: Dept. of Education

LB48 (Dorn) Appropriate money to the State Department of Education for educational service units

LB319 (Bostar) Create funds, transfer funds from the Cash Reserve Fund, and provide for child care funding

LB610 (Lippincott) Appropriate funds to the State Department of Education

LB681 (Clements) Change provisions relating to a fund and provide for transfers under the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act

## Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

### Room 1507 - 1:30 PM

LR4CA (M. Cavanaugh) Constitutional amendment to remove felony convictions other than treason from being a disqualification for voting

LB764 (Lippincott) Change provisions relating to selection of and ballots cast by presidential electors

LB541 (Lowe) Provide for nomination and election of public power district and public power and irrigation district directors on the partisan ballot

LB364 (Hunt) Provide for election of election commissioners and eliminate certain deputy positions

## Health & Human Services

### Room 1510 - 1:00 PM

Appointments: Douglass Haas, Mark A. Latta, Phillip James Vuchetich - Health Information Technology Board

LB88 (Hunt) Change provisions relating to eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits

LB85 (Day) Provide for express lane eligibility under the Medical Assistance Act and the Children's Health Insurance Program

## Judiciary

### Room 1113 - 1:30 PM

LB549 (Ballard) Change restrictions based on age for certain health care, power of attorney, and financial documents

LB167 (Slama) Provide requirements for depositions of certain children

LB127 (Day) Change sentencing provisions for crimes committed by a person under eighteen years of age

LB620 (McDonnell) Change provisions

relating to arraignment and hearings for certain juveniles

LB717 (J. Cavanaugh) Provide for criminal prosecutions of persons under fourteen years of age for murder in the first or second degree and change jurisdiction under the Nebraska Juvenile Code

## Nebraska Retirement Systems

### Room 1307 - 12:30 PM

LB221 (Ibach) Redefine salary under the retirement plan for firefighters of a city of the first class

LB406 (Brandt) Change retirement system contribution rates for firefighters of cities of the first class

## Revenue

### Room 1524 - 1:30 PM

LB235 (Wayne) Change provisions relating to the use of tax credits under the ImagiNE Nebraska Act

LB350 (Wayne) Adopt the Pioneer Economic Tax Credit Act

LB185 (J. Cavanaugh) Require the Department of Revenue to distribute funds to individuals as prescribed

LB36 (DeBoer) Change individual income tax brackets and rates

LB211 (Blood) Adopt the Property Tax Circuit Breaker Act

## Thursday, March 16

### Appropriations

#### Room 1525 - 1:30 PM

Agency 65: Dept. of Administrative Services

LB411 (Dungan) Appropriate funds for Wyuka Cemetery

LB511 (Brewer) Appropriate funds to the Department of Administrative Services

LB547 (Conrad) Create the Capitol Preservation, Restoration, and Enhancement Endowment Fund for the courtyards of the State Capitol

LB612 (McDonnell) Appropriate funds to the Department of Administrative Services

LB651 (McDonnell) Provide for appropriations relating to cybersecurity improvements for state agencies and political subdivisions



# COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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LB812 (Clements) State intent to appropriate funds to the Department of Administrative Services

## **Government, Military & Veterans Affairs Room 1507 - 1:30 PM**

LB742 (Vargas) Change provisions relating to registration to vote and voting under the Election Act  
LB604 (Raybould) Change provisions relating to voting early under the Election Act  
LB365 (Hunt) Permit counties to conduct elections by mail

## **Health & Human Services**

### **Room 1510 - 1:30 PM**

LR18CA (Hunt) Constitutional amendment to protect the right to reproductive freedom  
LR19CA (Hunt) Constitutional amendment to protect the right to reproductive freedom and prohibit the state from taking adverse action for exercising or assisting in the exercise of such right

## **Judiciary**

### **Room 1113 - 1:30 PM**

LB162 (McDonnell) Prohibit tampering with electronic monitoring devices required by court order or as a condition of parole  
LB338 (McKinney) Change provisions relating to pretrial release, sentencing, failure to appear, revocation and sanctions under probation and parole, and suspension of licenses under the License Suspension Act  
LR27CA (McKinney) Constitutional amendment to change provisions relating to pardons and the Board of Pardons and to create the Board of Commutation  
LR17CA (McKinney) Constitutional amendment to prohibit the death penalty  
LB749 (M. Cavanaugh) Prohibit possession of deadly weapons in the State Capitol or on State Capitol grounds

## **Revenue**

### **Room 1524 - 1:30 PM**

LB623 (McDonnell) Redefine eligible sports arena facility under the

Sports Arena Facility Financing Assistance Act

LB100 (Erdman) Change provisions relating to qualified locations under the ImagiNE Nebraska Act  
LB118 (Brandt) Change provisions of the Nebraska Advantage Rural Development Act  
LB498 (Linehan) Provide a sales tax credit for certain franchise fees paid  
LR23CA (Riepe) Constitutional amendment to prohibit the levying of an inheritance tax

## **Tuesday, March 21**

### **Appropriations**

#### **Room 1524 - 1:30 PM**

Agency 25: Health & Human Services  
*(Note: Operations, Medicaid and Long Term Care, Children and Family Services)*  
LB112 (McDonnell) State intent regarding appropriations to the Department of Health & Human Services for child advocacy centers  
LB415 (Dorn) State intent regarding appropriations to the Department of Health & Human Services  
LB470 (McDonnell) State intent regarding an increase in reimbursement rates for child welfare service providers  
LB509 (Conrad) Provide for an increase for reimbursement rates for child welfare services  
LB663 (Riepe) State intent to appropriate funds to the Department of Health & Human Services  
LB739 (Raybould) State intent to appropriate funds to the Department of Health & Human Services

### **Banking, Commerce & Insurance**

#### **Room 1507 - 1:30 PM**

LB710 (Dungan) Change provisions of the Credit Union Act  
LB778 (Bostar) Change the Pharmacy Benefit Manager Licensure and Regulation Act  
LB448 (Bostar) Prohibit certain provisions in a health plan in relation to clinician-administered drugs  
LB538 (Slama) Change provisions relating to the board of directors of a bank

LB537 (Slama) Change provisions relating to the Nebraska Uniform Limited Liability Company Act

## **Urban Affairs**

### **Room 1510 - 1:30 PM**

LB481 (Raybould) Adopt the Housing Incentive District Act  
LB533 (McKinney) Change plumb-ing board membership for cities of the primary class and provide for licensure requirements for plumbers in certain cities and villages

## **Wednesday, March 22**

### **Appropriations**

#### **Room 1525 - 1:30 PM**

Agency 25: Health & Human Services  
*(Note: Division of Developmental Disabilities, Public Health, Behavioral Health)*  
LB362 (Dorn) State intent regarding appropriations for a rate increase for behavioral health services  
LB526 (Fredrickson) State intent to appropriate funds to the Department of Health & Human Services for Developmental Disability Aid  
LB601 (Dungan) State intent regarding increases to reimbursement rates paid to providers of developmental disability services

## **Thursday, March 23**

### **Appropriations**

#### **Room 1525 - 1:30 PM**

LB46 (Dorn) Appropriate funds to the Department of Health & Human Services for a provider rate study  
LB128 (Dorn) State intent regarding appropriations to the Department of Health & Human Services  
LB129 (Dorn) State intent regarding appropriations to the Department of Health & Human Services for medic-aid nursing facilities  
LB130 (Dorn) Create the medicaid nursing facilities services budgetary program  
LB131 (Dorn) State intent regarding appropriations to the Department of Health & Human Services for medic-aid assisted-living facilities

# COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Current hearing schedules are available at: [NebraskaLegislature.gov/calendar](http://NebraskaLegislature.gov/calendar)

LB149 (Jacobson) State intent regarding appropriations and rebasing rates under the medical assistance program  
LB525 (Fredrickson) State intent to appropriate funds to the Department of Health & Human Services for rate increases for psychiatric diagnostic evaluation

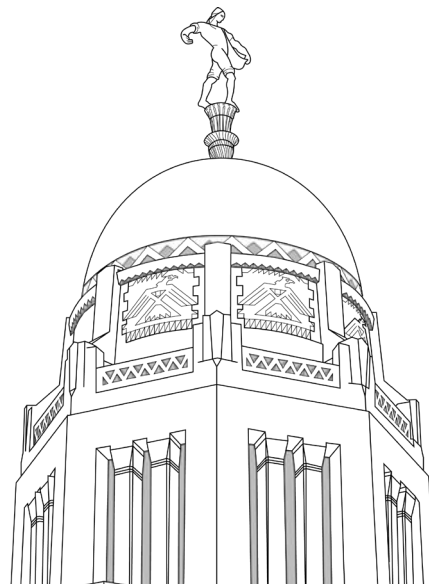
## **Friday, March 24**

### **Appropriations**

#### **Room 1525 - 1:30 PM**

LB108 (McDonnell) State intent regarding appropriations to the Department of Health & Human Services for community health centers  
LB114 (Vargas) State intent to appropriate funds to the Department of Health & Human Services for

evidence-based early intervention home visitation programs  
LB490 (von Gillern) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health & Human Services for health aid  
LB539 (Vargas) State intent regarding use of the Nebraska Health Care Cash Fund for the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program  
LB652 (McDonnell) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health & Human Services  
LB653 (McDonnell) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health & Human Services  
LB736 (Raybould) State intent to appropriate funds to the Department of Health & Human Services  
LB763 (DeBoer) Adopt the Emergency Food Assistance Act ■



## **Youth Legislature Registration Opens Soon**



High school students with an interest in law, government, leadership or public speaking are encouraged to register for the 2023 Unicameral Youth Legislature, which will convene June 11-14.

The Unicameral Youth Legislature is a four-day legislative simulation conducted at the State Capitol Building and coordinated by the Clerk's Office of the Nebraska Legislature. Student senators will sponsor bills, conduct committee hearings, debate legislation and discover the unique process of the nation's only unicameral.

Students will learn about the inner workings of the Legislature directly from senators and staff. Bills will be based on legislation considered during the current legislative session.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Extension 4-H Youth Development Office coordinates housing and recreational activities for the camp as part of their Big Red Summer Camps program.

Registration forms can be obtained in mid-March through the Legislature's Unicameral Youth Legislature page: [NebraskaLegislature.gov/uyl](http://NebraskaLegislature.gov/uyl). Note that all scholarships are awarded prior to registration. ■

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