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UPDATE

LGBT job discrimination bill heard

Employees would be protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation under a bill heard by the Judiciary Committee March 14.

LB485, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Danielle Conrad, would prohibit employers, employment agencies and labor unions from discriminating against individuals based on their sexual orientation. The bill would apply to employers with 15 or more employees, employers with state contracts, the State of Nebraska, governmental agencies and political subdivisions.

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

The facts are undeniable that transgender citizens face discrimination in the workplace, Conrad said, adding that discrimination is wrong and should not occur under any circumstance.

"I believe no one should be fired for who they are or who they love," she said. "This is a matter of justice and a matter of fairness."



Sen. Danielle Conrad said the bill is a matter of fairness.

Barbara Albers, executive director of the Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission, testified in support of the bill, saying the commission has received sexual orientation discrimination complaints. The current discrimina-

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Death penalty abolition discussed

The Judiciary Committee heard testimony March 13 on a bill that would repeal Nebraska's death penalty.

LB543, introduced by Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers, would replace death penalty provisions with the sentence of life without the possibility of parole. The provisions of the bill would apply retroactively to inmates currently serving capital punishment sentences. It

was the 37th time that Chambers has introduced such legislation.

The bill also would allow the court to require payment to be made to a victim's estate for any pain and suffering to the victim caused by the offense.

Chambers said the death penalty is arbitrarily administered and constitutes a legal means of torture. In addition to negatively influencing morality, the death penalty also has

exerted a degrading influence on the state's highest legal office, he said, referring to Nebraska's 2011 illegal purchase of sodium thiopental—a drug used for carrying out lethal injections.

The bill would eliminate the corrupt and unethical behaviors associated with death penalty sentences, Chambers said.

Representing the Nebraska Criminal Defense Attorneys Association,

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LGBT job discrimination bill heard

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tion law is too narrowly defined, she said, making it difficult to conduct an investigation.

Lincoln City Council member Carl Eskridge, testifying on behalf of himself, also supported the bill. Omaha implemented an ordinance that prohibits this type of discrimination last year, he said, but the protection should be extended statewide.

“Discrimination against the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community exists, and unless people happen to live in Omaha, they are not protected against it,” he said. “Providing protections is good for our state and sends the LGBT community and others the message that our doors are open and that we are a state that welcomes everyone.”

Todd Ruhter, a Grand Island citizen, also testified in support of the bill.

“No matter how good I am at my job and no matter how productive I am to my employer, as a gay man I am always at risk of losing my job,” he said.

LB485 would provide some relief for employees by providing assurance that they are judged by their qualifications and dedicated efforts in the workplace and not for their personal life choices, Ruhter said.

Lex Ann Roach, representing the Central Nebraska Human Rights Coalition, also testified in support of the bill. Six in 10 Americans acknowledge they have a gay or lesbian friend, she said, which indicates that over 1 million Nebraskans are connected to and impacted by decisions that affect the LGBT community.

People will choose not to live in Nebraska if equal treatment of its citizens is only implied, Roach said.

Mark Ashton, a pastor at Christ Community Church in Omaha, opposed the bill, saying it would create more discrimination than it would prevent. Businesses with a Christian mission would be required to hire people against their values, he said, so the bill would change from equal protection under the law to special protection under the law for certain populations.

Kellie Fiedorek, litigation counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom, also testified in opposition to the bill, saying that it would result in reverse discrimination.

“You do not leave your conscience and your faith at home when you go to work,” she said. “Passage of this bill would affirm discrimination against Nebraska individuals who hold sincere religious beliefs about marriage and about sexuality.”

The committee took no immediate action on the bill. ■



UNICAMERAL YOUTH LEGISLATURE



High school students with an interest in law, government, leadership or public speaking are encouraged to register for the 2013 Unicameral Youth Legislature, which will convene June 9-12.

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, staff and lobbyists. Bills will be based on legislation considered during the current legislative session.

Early-bird registration is available until April 1. Registration forms can be obtained from the Legislature's Unicameral Youth Legislature page: www.nebraskalegislature.gov/education/unicamyouth.php and the UNL Big Red Summer Academic Camps website: liferaydemo.unl.edu/web/4hcamps/bigredcamps. The registration deadline is May 15.

Death penalty abolition discussed

(continued from front page)

Jerry Soucie testified in support of the bill, saying that evidence shows a racial disparity among inmates who are sentenced to death. There is an incredibly disparate application of the death penalty toward Hispanics and African-Americans in the state, he said.

Laurel Johnson, member of the Nebraska Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, also supported the bill. The government sends the wrong message to its citizens when it inconsistently punishes people by death, she said.

“It cannot be said in good faith that the death penalty is serving justice when taking into account the racial disparities that exist,” she said. “A cycle of killing to show that killing is wrong makes no progress in our justice system.”

Curtis McCarty, a former Oklahoma death row inmate, testified in support of the bill, and said he spent 22 years in prison for a murder charge that later was dismissed when the crime scene’s DNA results were tested and did not match his.

Humans inherently make errors, McCarty said, yet society expects judges and law enforcement officers to be perfect. Such expectations have placed an unfair burden on them to determine whether or not a person should be sen-

tenced to death, he said.

Douglas County Attorney Don Kleine testified in opposition to the bill. Citing two heinous murders involving children and torture, he said some crimes are so extreme that the death penalty is the only appropriate response.

“In certain unique circumstances we need to have this ultimate punishment,” he said.

Richard Dieter, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center, offered neutral testimony on the bill, saying the death penalty costs about \$3 million per sentence

while life imprisonment without the possibility of parole costs about \$1.1 million per sentence.

Every step involved in a capital punishment case is more expensive than a typical trial, he said, including trial preparation, the sentencing process, multiple appeals and the higher cost of death row incarceration. The death penalty only saves the state money once an execution has occurred, Dieter said, and of Nebraska’s 35 death penalty sentences, only three have been carried out.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill. ■



Sen. Ernie Chambers introduced his 37th attempt to abolish Nebraska’s death penalty March 13.

MEET THE SENATOR



Sen. Murante and his wife Melissa enjoy the view from Pikes Peak.

A senator's life: politics and pizza

Having just been named CEO of his family's restaurant, new Senator John Murante and wife Melissa have a lot on their plate. The Gretna senator will divide his time between the Capitol in Lincoln and Big Fred's Pizza in Omaha.

This leaves little time for cooking at home.

"As business owners, we definitely eat out a lot," Murante said. "It's fun to try new places and see what other business are doing in the area."

While the role of senator certainly creates a more hectic schedule, Murante is accustomed to dividing his time be-

tween pizza and politics. Prior to being elected, he worked for five years as a legislative aide to Sen. John Nelson after having managed his 2006 campaign.

"Working here before becoming a senator really gave me a good appreciation of the process," he said. "On the other hand, there are a lot of meetings and briefings that staffers don't get to see. That's definitely been interesting."

Murante says politics has been a lifelong passion for him. As a student, he read all the books on former President John F. Kennedy that he could get his hands on.

"He's a person who appeals to folks

who have a grand vision of what society could be," Murante said.

He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.

With regard to his first legislative session, Murante is taking a thoughtful approach. He named tax reduction and the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy County as his primary interests, but said he intends to focus on listening more than talking his first year as a senator.

"I want to make sure to become an expert before diving in and tackling the tough issues," he said. ■

Agriculture

New formula for dairy board approved

The Nebraska Dairy Industry Development board is stabilized by a law passed by the Legislature March 14.

Membership on the board has been proportional to the number of milk producers in the state. The formula in place designates one board member for every 40 milk production units.

LB70, introduced by Ogallala Sen. Ken Schilz, prevents a decrease in the board's membership below its current level. If the formula results in fewer than seven members, the governor will appoint a member or members from nominees submitted by the board.

Senators passed the bill on a 45-0 vote.



Sen. Ken Schilz

Appropriations

Funds sought for child welfare advocate program

The Appropriations Committee heard testimony March 12 on a bill intended to support the expansion of Nebraska's Court Appointed Special Advocate Program (CASA).

LB126, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Amanda McGill, would transfer \$500,000 annually to the Court Appointed Special Advocate Fund in fiscal years 2013-14 and 2014-15. The bill also would specify that the fund could accept grants, donations, gifts



Sen. Amanda McGill

and bequests.

McGill said the CASA program has done an excellent job of utilizing funds from the Legislature during the last two fiscal years to recruit and train volunteers who serve as advocates for youth involved in the child welfare system.

Increased funding would allow the program to serve more children in need, she said.

"The issues that are facing families in this state are daunting," McGill said, "and CASA volunteers do an extraordinary job throughout the state."

CASA executive director Corrie Kielty testified in support of the bill. Services were added in four counties with funds received in the previous two fiscal years, she said, but CASA is able to provide services in only 37 of the state's 93 counties.

Compared with children without an advocate, Kielty said, children paired with a CASA volunteer spend an average of four to five fewer months in the child welfare system, have fewer changes of placement and re-enter the child welfare system at lower rates.

"CASA is an incredibly cost effective program," she said.

Dawn Rockey, executive director for CASA in Lancaster County, also supported the bill. Volunteers normally are assigned to one case at a time, she said, and often are able to dedicate more time to each child than a caseworker can.

However, the program currently is unable to provide services to all who need them, Rockey said.

"We are serving about 30 percent of the children eligible for a CASA volunteer in Lancaster County," she said.

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

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Small business pilot program extended

Senators gave final approval March 14 to a bill that alters and extends the Small Business Innovation Act pilot program.

LB628, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Danielle Conrad, reduces the number of full-time equivalent employees required to qualify for the pilot program from five to two. The bill also extends the sunset date for one year to Dec. 31, 2014.

The bill passed on a 44-0 vote.



Sen. Danielle Conrad

Education

School-based health centers proposed

The Education Committee heard testimony March 12 that would allow a school-based health center to serve as a child's primary care center.

LB275, introduced by Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, would authorize the creation of a grant program to fund health centers in eligible schools. The grants would be funded with an annual \$200,000 of lottery proceeds over the next two fiscal years.

Nordquist said meeting the health needs of children has many benefits.



Sen. Jeremy Nordquist

"If kids are not healthy, they can't learn," he said. "Studies have shown a reduction in tardiness and absenteeism in students who have access to school-based health centers."

Eligible school districts must be located in an area that has been designated as a health profession shortage area or a medically underserved area and have a majority of students that are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

The state Department of Education would administer the grant program, which would provide 50 percent matching funds to assist with capital construction and startup costs related to the centers. The school districts would furnish the remaining funds.

The grant program would be subject to a June 30, 2015 sunset date.

Andrea Skolkin, CEO of One World Community Health Centers, supported the bill, saying simple conditions can become significant health issues if left untreated.

"Health-related conditions interfere with academic success, healthy relationships and engagement in school," she said. "This will provide critical primary care access points for school-aged children who do not have them."

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

Sexual health education in public schools discussed

Public schools would be required to offer sexual health education under a bill heard by the Education Committee March 12.

LB619, introduced by Malcolm Sen. Ken Haar, would establish guidelines for schools to follow in providing sexual health education. Schools would



Sen. Ken Haar

select from a list of curricula available through the state Department of Education that meet these standards.

"This will provide age appropriate, medically accurate education for both families and young people," Haar said.

Instructional topics suggested by the bill include:

- avoiding peer and social pressure to engage in sexual activity;
- recognizing and managing inappropriate and unwanted sexual advances; and
- learning that it is wrong to exploit or take advantage of another person.

Students would be encouraged to talk with their parents or guardian about sexual health. Parents would have the right to review the curriculum and remove their child from instruction upon request.

Christopher Fisher, a public health professor from Omaha, supported the bill, saying it would provide necessary education for all young people.

"Having a uniform policy will help solidify a fundamental baseline of education for the youth of our state," he said. "The effectiveness of the proposed approach is supported in the scientific literature."

Janine Brignole of Lincoln also supported the bill. She identified herself as HIV positive and said she was not adequately informed about preventing sexually transmitted infections.

Representing the Nebraska Catholic Conference, Greg Schleppenbach testified in opposition to the bill. He said it has negative implications for teens.

"This gives a dismissive nod to abstinence while sometimes promoting contraception," he said. "It also dismisses a teenager's capacity to control themselves sexually."

Karen Bowling, associate director of the Nebraska Family Council, also opposed the bill, saying it would threaten local control.

"By forcing parents to opt out of

the curriculum requirements, we place them in an adverse position," she said, suggesting that parents instead be required to opt in.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

General Affairs

Cloture invoked, historic horse racing measure advances

After eight hours of discussion over four days, lawmakers voted March 13 to cease debate and advance a measure intended to pave the way for wagering on historic horse racing in Nebraska.

LR41CA, introduced by Omaha Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh, would place a proposed constitutional amendment on the November 2014 general election ballot regarding historic horse racing.



Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh

If approved by voters, the amendment would allow wagering on the results of live, replayed or delayed horse races at licensed racetracks where live racing occurs by a pari-mutuel method.

An historic horse race creates a pari-mutuel pool via instant racing terminals from wagers placed on a previously held race at a licensed racetrack, Lautenbaugh said. Information is supplied regarding the jockeys, horses and track conditions, he said, excluding information that would allow an individual placing a wager to identify the specific race.

During debate March 6, Lautenbaugh said he believes wagering on historic horse races to be legal under current Nebraska law, but introduced LR41CA to provide constitutional clarification for the horse racing industry.

"This would address the constitu-

tional concern that has been raised year after year on this issue,” he said.

On March 7, lawmakers rejected a motion by Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers to bracket the bill until May 30, 2013.

A motion by Omaha Sen. Beau McCoy to recommit the bill to the General Affairs Committee was defeated March 12 on an 11-16 vote.

A series of additional amendments were considered over the course of debate, with Chambers leading discussion against the proposal. He said gaming preys on those with compulsive tendencies and that the state’s constitution should not be “trifled with” in an effort to expand gambling in Nebraska.

“I’m opposed to gambling, no matter how they configure this particular constitutional proposal,” Chambers said.

Lautenbaugh offered an amendment March 12 to simplify the language of LR41CA.

“This would clarify [the proposal] and show that races that have been previously run would qualify as pari-mutuel wagering,” he said.

McCoy supported the Lautenbaugh amendment, though he remained opposed to LR41CA.

“I’ve made no bones about the fact that I don’t care for this issue,” he said. “But I’ve also said that if we are going to send something to the people of Nebraska to ask for their vote for or against, it ought to be in the most constitutionally sound manner.”

Lautenbaugh offered a cloture motion during debate March 13 on a Chambers floor amendment. A successful motion for cloture, which requires 33 votes, ceases debate and forces a vote on all pending action on the bill.

Following adoption of the cloture motion on a 33-13 vote, the Chambers amendment failed 3-28. Lawmakers then adopted the Lautenbaugh amendment 30-11 and voted 29-19 to advance the measure to select file.

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

State contract transparency proposal advances

Lawmakers gave first-round approval March 14 to a bill intended to increase transparency in the expenditure of state funds.

LB429, introduced by Bellevue Sen. Sue Crawford, would require the state to provide access to contract information via the Internet.

Crawford said the measure would build on the success of the Taxpayer Transparency Act passed in 2009 by allowing citizens to find and read contracts online that have been entered into by the state.

“Nebraska taxpayers deserve to know where their money is being spent,” Crawford said.

A Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee amendment, adopted 36-0, replaced the bill.

As amended, LB429 would require the state treasurer’s website to include a link to the state Department of Administrative Services’ (DAS) website, beginning July 1, 2014, which would contain a searchable database of all active contracts that are the basis for an expenditure of state funds.

All agencies and departments of the state would be required to provide DAS with an electronic copy of contracts that are active on or after Jan. 1, 2014.

References to all subcontracts would be removed and contracts entered into by the state Department of Health and Human Services as



Sen. Sue Crawford

letters of agreement for services to a specifically named individual would be exempt from the bill’s provisions.

Agencies would be allowed to redact certain information, such as:

- a social security number;
- federal identification number;
- protected public health information;
- information that may be withheld under public records law; or
- any information that is confidential under state or federal law.

Sen. Bill Avery of Lincoln, chairperson of the committee, said the amendment would substantially reduce the proposal’s fiscal impact by removing subcontracts from the bill’s provisions, while maintaining the intent of greater government transparency.

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

Health & Human Services

Expansion of education as welfare work requirement proposed

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony March 14 on a bill that would expand eligibility for using education to satisfy work requirements in order to qualify for certain public benefits.

Currently, the Welfare Reform Act allows participants younger than 24 to pursue a high school diploma or General Educational Development Test (GED) and remain in compliance with the Aid to Dependent Children Program’s (ADC) work requirements.

LB240, introduced by Scottsbluff Sen. John Harms, would remove the age restriction.

Harms said the change would allow

ADC participants over the age of 24 to access educational opportunities that will move them out of poverty and toward economic self-sufficiency.



Sen. John Harms

“Education is the only key to long-term stability for both the parents and the children,” Harms said. “Without that there is no hope.”

Beatty Brasch, executive director of the Center for People in Need, testified in support of the bill. Calling poverty a “tremendous problem” in Nebraska, she said removal of the age restriction would allow more low-income individuals to overcome their lack of educational achievement.

“That small change would help real people that I see every day at the Center who are caught in the web of poverty,” Brasch said.

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

Authority sought for schools to seek additional Medicaid reimbursement

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony March 14 on a measure that would allow schools to seek Medicaid reimbursement for a broader array of services delivered to Medicaid-eligible special education students.

LB276, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, would allow school districts to seek reimbursement for audiology services, counseling, psychological and behavioral services, nursing, nutritional ser-



Sen. Jeremy Nordquist

vices, personal assistance, transportation, social work and vision services.

Nordquist said many schools already are providing these services to special education students but are not allowed under Nebraska law to seek reimbursement from the federal government. Currently, schools are able to seek Medicaid reimbursement only for physical, occupational and speech therapy, he said.

The bill would maintain \$3 million in annual funding to the Early Intervention Act, with reimbursements in excess of that amount remitted to school districts and educational service units proportionally in relation to the amount of federal Medicaid funds received.

John Wurdeman, board member of Educational Service Unit 7 in Columbus and chairperson of the Nebraska Association of School Boards Medicaid Consortium, testified in support of the bill. He said school districts should be allowed to seek any federal funds available.

“It concerns me that we are leaving these federal reimbursement dollars ... on the table,” Wurdeman said.

Seamus Kelly of the Nebraska Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities also supported the bill, saying Medicaid reimbursement could serve as an incentive for schools to provide appropriate services early in a child’s education rather than seeking less expensive alternatives.

Kelly said some Nebraska families struggle to obtain costly services such as the extensive nursing care required by his 8-year-old daughter.

“We get great services now,” he said, “but not every family in the state with a child with special needs can make that same claim.”

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

Hygienists allowed to provide on-site services

Senators approved a bill March 14 that allows dental hygienists to provide certain services in health care facilities.

LB484, introduced by Wilber Sen. Russ Karpisek, allows dental hygienists to treat children in a public health care setting. The treatment is limited to include:



Sen. Russ Karpisek

- oral prophylaxis;
- pulp vitality testing; and
- preventive measures, including the application of fluoride, sealants and other agents that prevent oral disease.

The bill also allows a licensed dental hygienist with 3,000 hours of clinical experience to provide such treatments to adults in a health care facility.

The bill passed on a 45-0 vote.

Foster care reimbursement increases advanced

Senators gave first-round approval March 15 to a bill intended to overhaul Nebraska’s foster care reimbursement rate system.

Fullerton Sen. Annette Dubas said LB530 is a continuation of work begun last year to develop foster care reimbursement rates for the state that better reflect the actual cost of caring for children.



Sen. Annette Dubas

A temporary committee was established through legislation passed in 2012 to study foster care reimbursement rates, Dubas said, and this bill is based on the recommendations made by that committee.

“It addresses a significant shortfall

in the way that we compensate foster families across the state,” Dubas said.

As introduced, the bill would require the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to implement by July 1, 2013, the reimbursement rates recommended by the committee, which are:

- \$20 per day for children younger than five;
- \$23 per day for ages six to 11; and
- \$25 per day for ages 12 to 18.

DHHS also would be required to develop a pilot project to implement the standardized level of care assessment tools recommended by the committee. The department would be required to review the pilot program by April 1, 2014, and report to the Legislature.

A Health and Human Services Committee amendment, adopted 30-0, adds a July 1, 2013 deadline for development of the pilot project and requires that the project’s review report be directed to the state’s Children’s Commission.

Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell, chairperson of the committee, said the bill and the amendment are part of a well researched strategic plan.

“It represents the Legislature’s commitment to continuing watchful oversight and working with the department to improve our child welfare system,” she said.

Dubas offered an amendment, adopted 31-0, that delays the implementation date for the new base rates to July 1, 2014. The amendment also requires two preliminary reports on the pilot project.

She said the changes would give lawmakers time to assess the pilot program and would cause less disruption in a child welfare system that has experienced a great deal of upheaval in recent years.

“My plan is that this is a much

smoother transition,” Dubas said, adding that temporary, bridge payments to foster families would continue until the new rates are implemented.

Lincoln Sen. Kate Bolz spoke in support of the bill, saying other states have faced litigation for not ensuring that the basic needs of children in foster care are being met. Paying foster families more would be one part of an effective plan to ensure that Nebraska meets this federal requirement, she said.

“As a social worker, I know the value that foster parents give to children who are in difficult situations,” Bolz said.

The bill also would reauthorize the Foster Care Reimbursement Committee, which would make recommendations to DHHS regarding:

- the statewide foster care reimbursement rate structure;
- adoption assistance payments; and
- the statewide standardized level of care assessment.

The committee would report to the Legislature by July 1, 2016, and would re-evaluate the foster care payment system every four years.

The bill advanced to select file on a 28-0 vote.

Judiciary

Expansion of education as welfare work requirement proposed

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony March 14 on a bill that would expand eligibility for using education to satisfy work requirements in order to qualify for certain public benefits.

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Test (GED) and remain in compliance with the Aid to Dependent Children Program’s (ADC) work requirements.

LB240, introduced by Scottsbluff Sen. John Harms, would remove the age restriction.

Harms said the change would allow ADC participants over the age of 24 to access educational opportunities that will move them out of poverty and toward economic self-sufficiency.

“Education is the only key to long-term stability for both the parents and the children,” Harms said. “Without that there is no hope.”

Beatty Brasch, executive director of the Center for People in Need, testified in support of the bill. Calling poverty a “tremendous problem” in Nebraska, she said removal of the age restriction would allow more low-income individuals to overcome their lack of educational achievement.

“That small change would help real people that I see every day at the Center who are caught in the web of poverty,” Brasch said.

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

Eligibility extension for adoption, foster care proposed

The Judiciary Committee held a joint hearing March 14 on two bills that would prohibit sexual orientation discrimination in adoption and child placement cases.

Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist introduced LB385, which would prohibit the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) from discriminating based upon race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, marital status or national origin when determining the suitability for a juvenile’s out-of-home placement. The department would be

required to make placement decisions based on the health, safety and well being of the child.

Over 3,800 Nebraska children currently are placed in out-of-home care, Nordquist said, and half of them had lived in four or more foster homes in 2012.

“It is the overwhelming conclusion of mainstream child health institutions that nontraditional families can be as successful in the overall care of children as straight parents,” he said. “Good parenting skills are not reserved for those who are straight or of a specific race, religion or gender.”

Omaha Sen. Sara Howard introduced another bill—LB 380—which would provide adoption eligibility by two unmarried individuals without biological parents having to relinquish their legal rights to the child.



Sen. Sara Howard

Nebraska couples who co-parent are not eligible for medical and other benefits that would assist children in the event of a biological parent’s death, Howard said, so co-parents currently do not have sufficient tools to ensure the well being of their children.

“Children of unmarried parents love and rely on their parents regardless of the legal status of the relationship,” Howard said. “A government that stands as an obstacle to parents meeting the needs of their children is a destructive government.”

Amy Miller, a member of ACLU-Nebraska, testified in support of the bills, saying she has represented couples who were ineligible to adopt their children because they were unmarried.

The Nebraska Supreme Court determined that such couples were not unfit to be parents, she said, but current

law prohibited the court from allowing them to adopt. Current statutes need to be rewritten because the courts can interpret laws to protect children only to the extent the law allows, she said.

Tami Lewis-Ahrendt, a Lincoln resident, also testified in support of the bills. She said she and her spouse considered becoming foster parents but were discouraged after DHHS representatives suggested they would be ineligible due to their sexual orientation and marital status. Children are living in shelters when there are couples willing to provide them a safe home, she said.

“The only thing more despicable than neglect of a child is the willful neglect of a child based on discrimination,” Lewis-Ahrendt said. “It is a disservice to our community, system and the children who need us.”

Dave Bydalek, executive director of Family First Nebraska, testified in opposition to LB380, saying it would substantially change the adoption process.

“The practical effect of allowing an unmarried couple to jointly adopt a child would be to place that child into an environment with two entirely autonomous decision makers; that is two people, unconnected by law, with no legal obligations to one another,” he said. “If one of these individuals decided to end the relationship, there is no legally defined exit strategy to benefit the best interest of the child.”

The committee took no immediate action on the bills.

Bill would restrict sex offender residency near parks

The Judiciary Committee heard testimony March 13 on a bill meant to restrict certain sex offenders from living near parks.

The state’s Sexual Predator Resi-

dency Restriction Act currently allows a political subdivision to adopt regulations to restrict sexual predators from living within 500 feet of a school or child care facility.

LB473, sponsored by Hoskins Sen. Dave Bloomfield, would extend that authority to restrict residency near parks.



Sen. Dave Bloomfield

The bill defines a park is defined as a parcel of ground or a facility established by a political subdivision for recreational use by the public that covers at least 2,500 square feet.

The bill also expands the definition of sexual predator of children to include a sex offender who has been convicted of a crime that involved the penetration or direct genital touching of, oral to anal contact with or oral to genital contact with a person younger than 13 years old.

The residency restriction would not apply if a sexual predator had established a residence before the bill’s effective date and had not moved from that residence, or if a park triggering the restriction is established after the effective date.

Bloomfield said the bill was necessary because South Sioux City experienced an influx of sex offenders following passage of a similar bill in Iowa.

“This bill does nothing more than add parks to the list of places that can be restricted,” he said.

Ed Mahon of the South Sioux City Police Department testified in support of the bill, saying it would address concerns of parents in the area.

Between five and 10 individuals on Iowa’s sex offender registry recently have moved to South Sioux City due to Nebraska’s less stringent residency guidelines, he said.

Eric Baird of Papillion testified in opposition, saying residency restrictions create displacement of individuals on the sex offender registry without providing meaningful protection for children.

“It’s a symbolic law, not an effective law,” he said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Alternative response for low-risk children proposed

The Judiciary Committee heard testimony March 15 on a bill that would require the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Nebraska Children’s Commission to develop an alternative response implementation plan.

Alternative response is a practice that handles low-risk child welfare cases by empowering the families to build on their strengths, rather than criminally investigating them or placing them on the Child Abuse and Neglect Register. Caseworkers who suspect that a child’s safety is compromised would be required to refer the family to the department and law enforcement for investigation.

Under LB503, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Colby Coash, the department would be allowed to use the alternative response method in five designated locations, which could be expanded to five more locations on Jan. 1, 2015. Use of the alternative response method after May 15, 2016, would require approval by the Legislature.

Poverty currently is not a factor considered by DHHS when removing children from their homes in abuse and



Sen. Colby Coash

neglect cases, Coash said, although it often is a contributing factor to a child’s maltreatment. Removing children from their home often is more traumatic for them than the factors that led to their maltreatment, he said.

“What we have is a one-size-fits-all approach to investigating [child] abuse and neglect,” Coash said. “This [bill] gives the department a tool to help families and not criminalize them.”

Vicki Maca, deputy director for DHHS Children and Family Services, supported the bill, saying the department currently must conduct a criminal investigation in child abuse cases. The bill would provide the department an alternative process in low-risk situations and would encourage families to seek the necessary help before a child’s welfare is compromised, she said.

Sarah Forrest, policy coordinator for Voices for Children in Nebraska, testified in support of the bill, saying the current child abuse investigation process was implemented with the mindset that serious abuse was occurring. However, she said, 82 percent of Nebraska child abuse and neglect cases are related more to poverty than serious abuse.

Melanie Williams-Smotherman, executive director of the Family Advocacy Movement in Omaha, agreed.

“We must stop taking so many children out of their homes and away from their families because they are poor and unable to afford services for their children,” she said.

Sarah Helvey, director of Nebraska Appleseed Child Welfare, provided neutral testimony. The proposed alternative implementation plan will be successful only if the state provides adequate services for at-risk children and families, she said.

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

Revenue

Invasive species prevention funding proposed

Funds would be allocated to the state Game and Parks Commission to prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species under a bill heard by the Revenue Committee March 14.

Under a law passed in 2012, the commission is required to protect Nebraska’s water resources from the potential threat of aquatic invasive species. LB63, introduced this session by Ogallala Sen. Ken Schilz, would provide funding for the commission to comply with the law.



Sen. Ken Schilz

Schilz said the costs associated with an aquatic invasive species infestation are extremely high.

“In Nebraska we rely on limited water resources for power, agriculture, sport fishing and other forms of recreation,” he said. “Currently we have very limited funds to implement the regulations passed in 2012.”

Under LB63, half of the sales tax proceeds from the sale or lease of motorboats would be credited to the State Game Fund. The revenue would be earmarked primarily for aquatic invasive species management, with funds also devoted to motorboat access development.

Jeff Buettner, representing the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, testified in support of the bill, saying invasive species often attach to boats that are then transported into Nebraska.

“Inadvertent human transport is the main pathway for bringing aquatic invasive species into the state,” Buettner said. “We believe it’s in the state’s best interest

for the Legislature to take action.”

Representing the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Karie Decker also supported the bill. She said many of Nebraska’s surrounding states have active infestations of zebra mussels, classified as an aquatic invasive species.

“Nebraska receives many visitors from these surrounding states,” she said. “We have a unique opportunity to prevent the introduction of one of the most damaging aquatic invasive species.”

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

Expansion of community financing act advanced

Senators advanced a bill from general file March 14 that would expand the purpose of the Civic and Community Center Financing Act.

LB153, introduced by Fullerton Sen. Annette Dubas, would increase the types of projects that would qualify for funding under the act to include:

- construction, renovation or expansion of recreation centers;
- demolition of substandard and abandoned buildings for construction, renovation or expansion of civic or recreation centers; or
- engineering and technical studies directly related to these projects.

Dubas said there has been a lack of qualified projects and grants approved for use of the fund.

“We have more and more money coming in to the fund,” she said. “It’s going to be very important to make



Sen. Annette Dubas

our communities aware that these funds are available.”

Scottsbluff Sen. John Harms spoke in support of the bill, saying it is vital to rural Nebraska.

“For the first time, we can have an opportunity to see some really excellent things happen for rural Nebraska,” Harms said. “Being able to remodel and increase these centers fosters interaction, communication and growth in our communities.”

Omaha Sen. Steve Lathrop also supported the bill. He said it represents a cooperative effort by the entire Legislature.

“This is an example of rural and urban senators getting together and doing good for all areas of our state,” he said.

Following the adoption of a technical amendment on a 36-0 vote, senators voted to advance the bill to select file on a 35-0 vote.

Increased cigarette, tobacco taxes proposed

The Revenue Committee heard testimony March 13 that would increase cigarette and tobacco sales taxes.

LB439, introduced by Grand Island Sen. Mike Gloor, would increase the cigarette sales tax from 64 cents per pack to \$1.36 per pack. It also would increase the tax on other tobacco products from 20 percent to 31 percent of the wholesale price. Gloor said the increased tax revenue could go far in offsetting the costs of proposed Medicaid expansions, reducing the number of people who smoke and improving the health of Nebraskans.



Sen. Mike Gloor

“In this time of constant discussion

of health care, it seems appropriate to steer this revenue to address these significant issues,” he said.

At least 30 cents of the 72-cent increase in revenue, but not less than \$28 million, would be allocated to a newly-created Health Care and Human Service Provider Rate Stabilization Fund. The fund would support the reimbursement of service providers. The remainder would be distributed as follows:

- 23.5 cents, but not less than \$23.5 million, to the Nebraska Health Care Cash Fund;
- 5.5 cents, but not less than \$5 million, to the Tobacco Prevention and Control Cash Fund;
- 5 cents to the Volunteer Emergency Responders Incentive Act;
- 5 cents to the General Fund; and
- 3 cents to the Health and Human Services Cash Fund, doubling the current allocation.

Proceeds from the increase in tobacco tax would be allocated to the Tobacco Products Administration Cash Fund.

David Holmquist, representing the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, supported the bill, saying that increasing cigarette taxes is the only proven method of reducing tobacco consumption.

“Every year 2,200 Nebraskans die from tobacco use,” he said. “This is a win for public health because it will dramatically reduce tobacco use.”

Representing the Nebraska Grocery Industry Association, John Cederberg testified in opposition to the bill. He said the tax increase would lead to people crossing state borders to buy cheaper cigarettes.

“It would be expected to quadruple the amount of cigarettes into the state,” Cederberg said. “This is not a reliable tax on which to fund

programs.”

The bill includes an emergency clause and would take effect July 1, 2013.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Tax credit for volunteer emergency responders discussed

The Revenue Committee heard testimony March 13 on a bill that would provide an income tax credit for volunteer emergency responders.

LB440, introduced by Grand Island Sen. Mike Gloor, would authorize a \$500 refundable tax credit for volunteer emergency responders meeting established criteria. Gloor said the bill addresses a public safety issue.

“When we’re in an accident, the first person we see isn’t the thoracic surgeon; it’s the first responders,” he said. “And we’re having trouble finding people to fill these positions.”

To qualify for the credit, volunteers must earn at least 50 out of 100 points during one year of service. Volunteers could earn:

- 25 points for responding to 10 percent of emergency response calls from their assigned station;
- up to 25 points for participation in training courses;
- one point for participation in each drill lasting at least two hours, with a maximum total of 20 points;
- one point for attendance at an official meeting of the volunteer department or mutual aid organization, up to 10 points;
- 10 points for completion of a term in certain elected or appointed positions; and
- one point for participation in each public fire prevention activity.

A refundable tax credit of \$500 also would be available for any volunteer who qualifies as an active emergency responder, rescue squad member or firefighter under the Volunteer Emergency Responders Incentive Act.

Representing the Nebraska Volunteer Firefighters Association, Micheal Dwyer testified in support of the bill. He said volunteer first responders place themselves in danger for very little compensation.

“Over 70 percent of Nebraska is covered by volunteer firefighters and rescue staff,” he said. “These men and women leave family dinner sitting on the table to protect the lives and property of fellow Nebraskans.”

Deb Von Seggern, representing the Nebraska Emergency Medical Services Association, also supported the bill, saying that volunteers take on significant time and financial burdens when they decide to serve.

“We are constantly looking for ways to recruit and retain volunteers,” she said. “We have trouble finding young people to volunteer because of the time commitment and low pay. The one thing that has always worked is incentives.”

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

Soda tax proposed

The Revenue Committee heard testimony March 15 on a bill that would levy sales taxes on soft drinks.

LB447, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Bill Avery, would amend the definition of food to exclude soft drinks, which would make them subject to sales taxes. Avery said ending subsidies on soft drinks



Sen. Bill Avery

would be a first step toward addressing childhood obesity.

“We cannot ignore the fact that childhood obesity is a staggering epidemic nationwide,” he said. “This is a tax loophole that subsidizes an industry that contributes to obesity and a whole host of related diseases among children.”

The bill would create the Nebraska Healthy Kids Fund and allocate 67 percent of sales tax revenue from the sale of soft drinks to the fund. The first \$500,000 would be distributed to the University of Nebraska at Kearney Student Health Initiative Fund to develop and maintain a database for collection of data relating to student fitness.

After that distribution, 70 percent of the Nebraska Healthy Kids Fund would be distributed to the state Department of Education Student Health Initiative Fund, which would be administered as follows:

- the first \$100,000 to monitor school compliance and define qualifications for wellness coordinators;
- then \$10,000 to each school district; and
- the remaining funds would be distributed pro rata to districts based on most recent fall school membership.

The remaining 30 percent would be distributed to the state Department of Health and Human Services Child Health Initiative Fund, which would allocate \$40,000 to each local health department. Any remaining funds would be distributed to local health departments pro rata based on the most recent census data regarding population served.

Representing the Nebraska Medical Association, Bob Rauner supported the bill. He said changes like those proposed in the bill have proven

to be successful nationwide, naming a program in Kearney as the most successful example in the country.

Kate Heelan, director of the Human Performance Lab at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, also supported the bill. She agreed that efforts to improve children's health in the Kearney Public Schools has been incredibly successful.

"Over the last 30 years, obesity rates have doubled for preschool-aged children," she said. "You won't see weekly bake sales as fundraisers anymore. Now you can buy from a garden in one of our local greenhouses as a fundraiser."

Wayne Parks, president of the Nebraska Beverage Association, testified in opposition to the bill. He said it would not solve the problem it seeks to address.

"Childhood obesity is a complex problem with no simple solution," Parks said. "Singling out one particular product for taxation is not going to solve the problem."

Representing the state Chamber of Commerce, Steve Ford also opposed the bill, saying it represents an unnecessary broadening of sales taxes.

"We cannot tax our way to better health," he said. "Additional taxation on soft drinks will not make people healthier."

LB447 also would create the Evidence-Based Practice Grant Fund, which would distribute 33 percent of sales tax revenue from the sale of soft drinks. The fund would be managed by the Evidence-Based Practice Grant Fund Committee and comprise:

- the director of the Children and Family Services Division of DHHS;
- the director of the Behavioral Health Division of DHHS;
- the chief medical officer;
- the chairperson of the Nebraska

- Children's Commission;
- the vice chairperson of the Nebraska Children's Commission;
- the commissioner of education;
- the probation administrator of the Office of Probation Administration; and
- the director of the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools.

The committee would provide grants from the fund for evidence-based practices for prevention and intervention services for at-risk children in Nebraska.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Transportation & Telecommunications

Notification requirements for excavation, soil sampling discussed

The Transportation and Telecommunications Committee heard testimony March 12 on two bills that would amend provisions of the One Call Notification Systems Act.

Great Plains One Call Service is a system used by excavators to identify and locate underground facilities prior to excavation to protect the facilities from damage. A notice to the service center currently is required prior to performing an excavation or bar test survey.

Syracuse Sen. Dan Watermeier introduced LB589, which would exempt gas operators, pipeline facilities and excavators from the notification requirements if they are performing



Sen. Dan Watermeier

excavations or bar test surveys in response to an emergency gas or hazardous liquid leak. The operator would be required to give excavation notification as soon as practical, but such notification would not be required to precede the emergency excavation.

The service center may take up to two days to respond to a notification, Watermeier said, but emergency leaks may be dangerous and require immediate action.

Andy Pollock, representing Northwestern Energy in Nebraska, testified in support of the bill, saying the current notification requirement causes uncertainty for utility companies responding to emergency pipeline leaks.

"The bill allows companies to take immediate action when there is a pipeline leak that presents a danger to public safety," he said.

Rick Kubat, attorney for Omaha's Metropolitan Utilities District, also testified in support, saying it would provide residential protection.

"When there is a natural gas leak, the first thing we want to do is ensure the safety of the residents in the area," he said. "The bill helps [utility companies] with that process."

No one testified in opposition to the bill.

The second bill, introduced by Fullerton Sen. Annette Dubas, would limit the current notification requirement exemptions for agricultural tilling.

Under LB358, landowners, tenants or third parties who do not charge fees would be exempt from notifying the service center for soil tilling and gardening for agricultural seeding.

Since the 1994 implementation of the notification requirement, Dubas said, agricultural technology has advanced and farmers increasingly are hiring third parties to conduct soil sampling.

Pipeline explosions are devastating and costly, she said, so tilling agricultural land without knowledge of its underground line location is a real public safety concern.

John Lindsay, representing Northern Natural Gas in Omaha, testified in support of the bill, saying the notification exemption should be limited to landowners because they are familiar with underground facility locations on their land.

Ray Ward, owner of Ward Laboratories in Kearney, disagreed in his opposition testimony. Over 95 percent of agricultural soil samples are taken by crop consultants, he said, and often are more familiar with the land they are sampling than the farmers themselves.

Tim Mundorf, representing Midwest Laboratories, Inc. in Nebraska, also testified in opposition to the bill. More than 141,000 fields would have to be approved for sampling annually, he said, and the service center is not capable of providing adequate and efficient services at that level.

The committee took no immediate action on the bills.

Urban Affairs

Handicapped parking permit changes pass

Senators passed a bill March 14

that amends provisions for temporary handicapped parking permits.

Under LB31, introduced by Kearney Sen. Galen Hadley, a medical professional may issue a temporary handicapped parking permit for either a three- or six-month period. The permit may be renewed once and cannot exceed one year.

The bill passed on a 44-0 vote. ■



Sen. Galen Hadley

UNICAMERAL UPDATE ONLINE

While the Unicameral Update print edition is mailed out weekly, the Web version of the publication, located at update.legislature.ne.gov, is updated continually throughout the legislative day.

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RECENT HEADLINES: [Bills introduced Jan. 11](#)

Governor gives the State of the State address

Published January 13th, 2011, in [Ceremonies](#)

With a vision of making Nebraska the ideal place to create jobs, build a business, obtain an education and have a family, Gov. Dave Heineman delivered his State of the State address to lawmakers Jan. 13. "Our state is in a position to make these goals a reality because of what we have accomplished together [[Read more ...](#)]

Economic forecasting board reduces revenue projections

Published October 29th, 2010, in [Appropriations](#)

The Nebraska Economic Forecasting Board met Oct. 29 to revise its forecast for the current fiscal year and adopt projections for the next biennium. The board provides an advisory forecast of General Fund receipts on which the Legislature crafts the state's budget. During its February meeting, the board projected that state revenues would amount to [[Read more ...](#)]

Bills introduced Jan. 13

Published January 13th, 2011, in [Ceremonies](#)

Possible liquor law changes discussed

January 2011						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						01
02	03	04	05	06	07	08
09	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

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PRIORITY BILLS

Priority bills generally are scheduled for debate before other bills. Each senator may select one priority bill and each committee may select two priority bills. The Speaker may select up to 25 priority bills per session.

Senator priority bills

Priority	Bill	Introducer	One-line description
Adams	LB438	Adams	Provide for priority schools, operating councils and community schools
Ashford	LB464	Ashford	Change court jurisdiction over juveniles and indictment procedures
Avery	LB362	Avery	Change state park entry permit provisions and provide for a motor vehicle registration fee
Bloomfield	LB393	Bloomfield	Change helmet and eye protection provisions regarding motorcycles
Bolz	LB507	Campbell	Adopt the Step Up to Quality Child Care Act
Brasch	LB296	Hadley	Change provisions of the educational savings plan relating to income tax reductions and participation agreements
Campbell	LB577	Campbell	Change provisions relating to the medical assistance program
Carlson	LB517	Carlson	Create the Water Sustainability Project Task Force
Chambers	LB543	Chambers	Change a penalty from death to life imprisonment or life imprisonment without possibility of parole
Christensen	LB522	Christensen	Provide state financial assistance to irrigation districts to compensate water appropriators
Coash	LB505	Coash	Provide requirement for insurance coverage of autism spectrum disorders
Conrad	LB625	Conrad	Change income eligibility provisions relating to federal child care assistance
Cook	LB366	Cook	Adopt the Remedial Adult Education Innovation Act
Crawford	LB429	Crawford	Require disclosure of state contracts
Davis	LB634	Davis	Adopt the Wildfire Control Act of 2013
Dubas	LB530	Dubas	Add, change, and eliminate provisions relating to foster care reimbursements
Gloor	LB439	Gloor	Change cigarette and tobacco tax provisions
Haar	LB583	Haar	Change provisions relating to membership on the Climate Assessment Response Committee and provide duties for the committee
Hadley	LB23	Hadley	Change allocations of the ICF/MR Reimbursement Protection Fund
Hansen	LB96	Dubas	Exempt repair or replacement parts for agricultural machinery and equipment from sales and use tax
Harms	LB240	Harms	Change work activity requirements for self-sufficiency contracts under the Welfare Reform Act
Harr	LB573	Harr	Change provisions relating to an adjustment to income for certain capital gains and extraordinary dividends
Howard	LB528	Howard	Provide for partner treatment relating to sexually transmitted diseases
Janssen	LB75	Janssen	Exempt military retirement benefits from taxation as prescribed
Johnson	LB153	Dubas	Change the Civic and Community Center Financing Act
Karpisek	LB22	Hadley	Change Parenting Act provisions relating to parenting plans
Kintner	LB293	Kintner	Prohibit disclosure of any applicant or permit holder information regarding firearms registration, possession, sale or use as prescribed
Kolowski	LB276	Nordquist	Change reimbursement provisions under the Early Intervention Act and require a medicaid state plan amendment
Krist	LB140	Krist	Change provisions of the Airport Zoning Act
Larson	LB57	Larson	Change provisions relating to grants from the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund
Lathrop	LB104	Lathrop	Provide tax incentives under the Nebraska Advantage Act for renewable energy projects
Lautenbaugh	LB354	Larson	Adopt the Nebraska Corn Promotion Act
McCoy	LB613	Schumacher	Create the Tax Modernization Commission
McGill	LB556	McGill	Provide for telehealth services for children, change the medical assistance program and provide duties for the Department of Health and Human Services
Mello	LB97	Mello	Adopt the Nebraska Municipal Land Bank Act and authorize land banks to acquire tax-delinquent properties
Murante	LB646	Murante	Change election provisions for public power districts
Nelson	LB231	Nelson	Establish a uniform reimbursement rate for adult day services
Nordquist	LB191	Nordquist	Adopt the Nebraska Job Creation and Mainstreet Revitalization Act and provide tax credits
Pirsch	LB224	Janssen	Provide veterans preference for public contracts as prescribed
Price	LB595	Price	Provide for a Public Service Commission study of next-generation 911
Scheer	LB203	Scheer	Change provisions relating to solid waste under the Environmental Protection Act
Schilz	LB551	Schilz	Change recreational liability provisions
Schumacher	LB82	Schumacher	Adopt the Taxpayer Investment Program
Seiler	LB299	Seiler	Change political subdivision election provisions
Smith	LB585	Smith	Provide, change, and eliminate provisions relating to learning councils
Sullivan	LB497	Sullivan	Change distribution and provide for a study of the Education Innovation Fund
Wallman	LB637	Wallman	Require an economic analysis of rules and regulations proposed by the Department of Environmental Quality
Watermeier	LB308	Schumacher	Change income tax calculations relating to the federal alternative minimum tax
Wightman	LB487	Wightman	Change health care certificate of need provisions

PRIORITY BILLS

Priority bills generally are scheduled for debate before other bills. Each senator may select one priority bill and each committee may select two priority bills. The Speaker may select up to 25 priority bills per session.

Committee priority bills

Priority	Bill	Introducer	One-line description
Agriculture	LB423	Agriculture	Change seizure provisions of the Livestock Animal Welfare Act
Agriculture	LB68	Schilz	Change provisions of the Plant Protection and Plant Pest Act
Appropriations	LB629	Conrad	Provide an additional requirement for the Governor's budget submission
Banking, Commerce & Insurance	LB205	Schumacher	Change provisions relating to application of the Securities Act of Nebraska
Banking, Commerce & Insurance	LB568	Harr	Provide for licensure of insurance navigators
Business & Labor	LB476	Carlson	Change provisions relating to grants for internships
Business & Labor	LB310	Bolz	Clarify compensation for shoulder injuries under the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act
Education	LB410	Sullivan	Change and eliminate provisions relating to education
Education	LB407	Sullivan	Change calculation provisions under the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act
Executive Board	LB242	Howard	Change provisions relating to adoption of administrative rules and regulations
Executive Board	LB612	Schumacher	Require the Department of Revenue to present reports to legislative committees
General Affairs	LB230	Karpisek	Change shipping license provisions under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act
General Affairs	LB579	Karpisek	Provide a duty regarding administration and enforcement of the Nebraska Liquor Control Act
Government, Military & Veterans Affairs	LB79	Avery	Change political accountability and disclosure provisions and repeal campaign finance laws
Government, Military & Veterans Affairs	LB271	Lautenbaugh	Change provisions relating to early voting
Health & Human Services	LB216	McGill	Adopt the Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support Act
Health & Human Services	LB269	Campbell	Change provisions relating to children and families
Judiciary	LB44	Ashford	Change penalty provisions with respect to Class IA felonies committed by persons under the age of eighteen
Judiciary	LB561	Ashford	State findings and intent for changes to the juvenile justice system and a funding mechanism
Performance Audit	LB563	Krist	Change provisions relating to contracts for services
Natural Resources	LB388	Natural Resources	Change provisions relating to public power and provide for construction of certain transmission lines
Natural Resources	LB402	Mello	Change power purchase agreement provisions relating to rural community-based energy development
Retirement	LB263	Retirement	Change provisions relating to government retirement systems
Retirement	LB553	Nordquist	Change provisions relating to school employee retirement
Revenue	LB341	Wightman	Change tax sale procedures
Revenue	LB281	Pirsch	Change the amount of tax credits allowed under the Angel Investment Tax Credit Act
Transportation & Telecommunications	LB93	Dubas	Provide for notation of veteran status on drivers' licenses and state identification cards
Transportation & Telecommunications	LB158	Seiler	Change provisions relating to eligibility for and use of ignition interlock devices
Urban Affairs	LB66	Schilz	Authorize cities of the first class to annex certain noncontiguous property
Urban Affairs	LR29CA	Adams	Constitutional amendment to change provisions relating to redevelopment projects

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

Monday, March 18

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB334 (Nordquist) Appropriate funds for the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Program

LB400 (Lautenbaugh) Appropriate funds for aid to community colleges
Agency 48: Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education
Agency 50: Neb. State College System
Agency 83: Community College Aid

Business & Labor

Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Cole, Charles - Boiler Safety Code Advisory Board
Appointment: Kasl, Martin - Boiler Safety Code Advisory Board
Appointment: Stewart, Kenneth - Boiler Safety Code Advisory Board
Appointment: Eberspacher, Kurt - Boiler Safety Code Advisory Board
LB307 (Nelson) Change provisions of the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act
LB324 (Lautenbaugh) Change provisions of the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act
LB584 (Smith) Change Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act medical guidelines and independent medical examiner provisions
LB536 (Business & Labor) Approve claims against the state
LB537 (Business & Labor) Deny claims against the state

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB540 (Chambers) Prohibit rules and regulations requiring teachers to lead pledge of allegiance
LB575 (B. Harr) Provide for professional development training for school board and learning community coordinating council members
LB356 (Karpisek) Prohibit participation in extracurricular and co-curricular activities as prescribed
LB365 (Avery) Require instruction in certain emergency procedures as a prerequisite to high school graduation

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB84 (Schumacher) Change provisions

relating to the operation of utility-type vehicles
LB223 (Janssen) Redefine utility-type vehicles
LB650 (Karpisek) Include asphalt crack filler trailers in the definition of trailer under the Motor Vehicle Registration Act

Tuesday, March 19

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB114 (B. Harr) State intent relating to an appropriation to the University of Nebraska at Omaha
LB184 (K. Haar) Appropriate funds for the Neb. Wind Applications Center
Agency 47: Neb. Educational Telecommunications Commission
Agency 51: University of Nebraska System

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB566 (Karpisek) Create the Educational Technology Infrastructure Grant Program
LB511 (Scheer) Change allocation provisions relating to the Education Innovation Fund
LB495 (Sullivan) Change provisions relating to the Education Innovation Fund and early childhood grant reporting
LB496 (Sullivan) Change provisions relating to school reorganization incentive payments
LB497 (Sullivan) Change distribution and provide for a study of the Education Innovation Fund

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Hammack, Donna - Neb. Information Technology Commission
Appointment: Moline, Brad - Neb. Information Technology Commission
LB617 (Schumacher) Change provisions of the Nebraska Telecommunications Universal Service Fund Act

Wednesday, March 20

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 24: Dept. of Motor Vehicles
Agency 40: Neb. Motor Vehicle Licensing Board
Agency 17: Dept. of Aeronautics
Agency 27: Dept. of Roads

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB395 (Conrad) Redefine the term "school-based health center" for purposes of the Medical Assistance Act
LB452 (Conrad) Require a medicaid waiver to provide coverage for family planning services
LR22 (Campbell) Provide the Health & Human Services Committee and the Banking, Commerce & Insurance Committee be designated to convene a Partnership Towards Nebraska's Health Care System Transformation

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB293 (Kintner) Prohibit disclosure of any applicant or permit holder information regarding firearms registration, possession, sale, or use as prescribed
LB451 (Janssen) Prohibit federal restrictions on firearms, magazines, and firearm accessories as prescribed
LB602 (Bloomfield) Adopt the Nebraska Firearms Freedom Act
LB352 (Christensen) Provide signage requirements and duties for the Neb. State Patrol under the Concealed Handgun Permit Act

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB581 (Crawford) Change the sales and use tax collection fees
LB333 (Schumacher) Change the sales and use tax collection fees
LB618 (Karpisek) Create the Agricultural Land Valuation Task Force
LB414 (Schumacher) Change funding for the Municipal Equalization Fund
LB558 (Kintner) Change provisions relating to certain declaratory judgments and illegal taxes paid

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

LB486 (Dubas) Appropriate funds to the Legislative Council to pay dues under the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact
Agency 7: Governor
Agency 9: Secretary of State
Agency 10: Auditor of Public Accounts
Agency 11: Attorney General
Agency 14: Public Service Commission

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

Agency 3: Legislative Council
Agency 8: Lieutenant Governor

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB518 (Janssen) Change certain eligibility provisions of the medical assistance program

LB526 (Howard) Change optometry licensure and certification to perform minor surgery and use pharmaceutical agents

LB527 (Howard) Change optometry licensure and certification to use pharmaceutical agents

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB171 (Bloomfield) Provide for an expedited concealed handgun permit process for applicants who are victims of domestic violence

LB592 (Lautenbaugh) Authorize the carrying of concealed handguns by qualified law enforcement officers and qualified retired law enforcement officers

LB392 (Lathrop) Eliminate certain firearms provisions no longer authorized by federal law

LB319 (McGill) Change certain permit-holder penalty provisions under the Concealed Handgun Permit Act

LB335 (Christensen) Authorize possession of firearms as prescribed

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LR2CA (Pirsch) Constitutional amendment to require that any bill that imposes or increases a tax be approved by a majority of the members of the Legislature plus four

LB317 (Price) Change a duty of county assessors relating to real property valuation

LB62 (Schilz) Change levy provisions for rural and suburban fire protection districts

Monday, March 25

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB4 (Krist) Change Nebraska Health Care Cash Fund transfer provisions

LB285 (Conrad) Change authorized transfers to the Nebraska Health Care Cash Fund

LB119 (Cook) State intent relating to appropriations for Public Health Aid

LB157 (Cook) State intent relating to the appropriation of funds in support of dental services

LB187 (Nelson) Appropriate funds to the Department of Health & Human Services to fund the Dental Health Director

LB20 (Nordquist) State intent relating to appropriations for the rural health provider incentive program

LB234 (Howard) State intent relating to appropriations for nurse visitation

Agency 25: Dept. of Health & Human Services

Agency 25: Dept. of HHS - Operations

Agency 25: Dept. of HHS - Medicaid and Long Term Care

Agency 25: Dept. of HHS - Public Health

Agency 25: Dept. of HHS - Veterans Homes

Tuesday, March 26

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB375 (Lathrop) Appropriate funds to the Department of Health & Human Services to be used for services for persons with developmental disabilities

LB268 (Campbell) State intent to appropriate funds for upgrade of an electronic data collection system related to child welfare and other economic assistance programs

LB425 (Campbell) State intent to appropriate funds for intervention services for at-risk children and youth

Agency 25: Dept. of Health & Human Services

Agency 25: Dept. of HHS - Developmental Disabilities

Agency 25: Dept. of HHS - Children and Family Services

Agency 25: Dept. of HHS - Behavioral Health

Wednesday, March 27

Nebraska Retirement Systems

Room 1525 - 12:00 p.m.

Presentation of Annual Reports: Neb. Public Employees Retirement Systems and Neb. Investment Council ■

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