

Corrections reform measures proposed



Sen. Heath Mello said interim hearings helped generate the prison reform measures.

Bills addressing prison overcrowding and oversight of Nebraska's correctional system were heard by the Judiciary Committee Feb. 20. Both were introduced by Omaha Sen. Heath Mello.

Mello said the policy changes were recommended to the Nebraska Justice Reinvestment Working Group—created by LB907 in 2014—through a report provided by the Council of State Governments Justice Center.

LB605 would make numerous changes to Nebraska's penal system. These would include:

- adding a new felony classification and penalties;
- updating property offense amount thresholds to account for inflation;
- requiring that all sentences of

one year or more be served in a state prison and sentences less than one year be served a county jail;

- requiring the Office of Parole Administration to establish a process to determine the risk a parolee may pose to a community and the level of supervision required;
- creating the Committee on Justice Reinvestment Oversight to develop and review Nebraska's criminal justice policies; and
- appropriating \$30,000 to the Nebraska Supreme Court to create a sentencing information database.

Additionally, the bill outlines how probation violations would be punished, rates for restitution payments

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Voter ID bill bracketed

Lawmakers voted Feb. 18 to bracket a bill that would require voter identification in Nebraska, effectively ending debate on the issue this session.

LB111, as introduced by O'Neill Sen. Tyson Larson, would require voters to provide a government-issued photographic identification before voting. Under the bill, either a driver's license or state ID card issued by the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) would be required.

If a voter indicates that he or she is indigent, the DMV would offer a state identification card at no cost for purposes of voting under the Election Act.

Voters casting a ballot in elections held by mail or who vote early would not be required to provide a photo ID unless it was their first time voting. A voter who does not present a valid ID at the polls would be permitted to cast a provisional ballot.

Larson said Nebraskans overwhelmingly support requiring ID to vote as a means of safeguarding the electoral process.

"We are sent here to represent our constituents and, again and again, they support voter ID," he said, adding that the bill's provisions would not place an undue burden on voters.

Larson said 98 percent of Nebraska registered voters already possess a driver's license or state ID card.

A pending Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee

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Voter identification bill bracketed

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amendment would allow:

- use of an official photo ID issued by an Indian tribe when voting;
- use of a voter registration identification card when voting; and
- issuance of a photo ID for use in voting regardless of income.

Gretna Sen. John Murante, chairperson of the committee, said the amendment should alleviate concerns that LB111 would be burdensome for

Nebraska voters.

“At the end of the day, I genuinely do not believe that a single voter will be turned away from the polls,” Murante said, adding that the bill also would improve Nebraskans’ perception of the electoral process.

“We need to have systems of government that people believe work,” he said. “And there is a lack of confidence in the electoral system that we have now.”

Sen. Adam Morfeld of Lincoln opposed the bill, saying the state needs more than a perception of voter fraud in order to place additional restrictions on the constitutional right to vote.

“When there is a fundamental, constitutional right—in order to infringe upon that right—the state must have a compelling interest,” Morfeld said.

Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers offered a motion to bracket LB111 until June 5, saying the bill’s primary purpose is vote suppression.

“There is no right more treasured in a democracy than the right to vote,” he said.

Omaha Sen. John McCollister supported the bracket motion, saying studies have shown that voter fraud is not an issue in Nebraska. As a result, he said, the bill would send the wrong message.

“LB111 is unmistakable,” McCollister said, “it would indicate that Nebraska wants to disenfranchise voters—and we certainly don’t want to do that.”

The motion was approved on a 25-15 vote, making the bill unlikely to be debated again this session. ■



Sen. Tyson Larson (right), introducer of LB111, discusses the bill with Sen. John Murante, chairperson of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

UNICAMERAL UPDATE

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Prison reform measures proposed

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and how criminal history information would be disseminated.

Mello said revisions to sentencing and incarceration policies would reduce prison populations and make Nebraska safe.

“This bill is one part of a broad effort to have the space and tools to promote public safety and hold offenders accountable,” Mello said.



Scott Frakes, Correctional Services Department director

Scott Frakes, the new director of the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, testified in support of the bill, saying that expanding supervised release options would have an immediate impact on prison overcrowding.

Jim Vokal, executive director of the Platte Institute, also spoke in favor of the bill, saying it is critical for Nebraska to address prison overcrowding now. Unless something is done to control growth, he said, the state’s prison population is expected to increase to 170 percent of capacity by 2020.

No one spoke in opposition to LB605.

LB606, also introduced by Mello, would create the Office of Inspector

General of the Nebraska Correctional System. Appointed and supervised by the Office of Public Counsel, the inspector general would serve a five-year term and receive a \$96,000 annual salary.

Duties of the inspector general would include conducting investigations, audits, inspections and other reviews of the Nebraska correctional system. The inspector would be

required to provide a summary of all reports and investigations on or before Sept. 15 each year to the Judiciary Committee and governor.

Additionally, the bill would require the governor to declare an overcrowding emergency when the director of correctional services certifies that the prison population is over 140 percent of

design capacity.

Currently, the governor has the option on whether or not to declare an emergency when the population reaches the 140 percent threshold. Declaration of an overcrowding emergency mandates that the state Parole Board immediately consider all eligible inmates for parole.

Mello said the report produced by the Legislature’s special investigative committee made it clear that Nebraska’s current policies regarding prison overcrowding are not working.

“Nebraska’s situation proves it is unreasonable to expect the governor to declare an overpopulation emergency out in the open,” Mello said.

Marshall Lux, director of the state’s

Ombudsman’s Office, testified in support of the bill, saying that the inspector general position created for the child welfare department has worked successfully. He said an inspector general of corrections would be an equally efficient way for the Legislature to monitor the state’s prison system.

“The Department of Corrections needs a lot of oversight from this



Sen. Ernie Chambers

institution and an [inspector general] would provide that,” he said.

Mike Marvin, executive director of the Nebraska Association of Public Employees, also spoke in favor of the bill. Overcrowding is one of the most dangerous situations for corrections employees, he said, so requiring an emergency declaration is a safety issue.

“A situation like that needs to be addressed as soon as it happens,” he said.

Frakes testified in opposition to LB606, saying the overcrowding emergency provision could result in dangerous inmates being released on parole.

“This is not a responsible way to reduce prison population,” he said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bills. ■

MEET THE SENATOR

Hilkemann puts his best foot forward

Two pieces of artwork that rest atop the radiator in Omaha Sen. Robert Hilkemann's Capitol office provide insight into the guiding forces in the new senator's life: a solid grounding in small town life and a determination never to stop learning.

On the left, a painting of a one-room schoolhouse, like the kind Hilkemann attended during his elementary years near Randolph. In the painting, done by a local artist, a young student stands at the chalkboard, repeatedly writing, "I will not talk in class."

Hilkemann joked that he "probably had the opportunity" to engage in similar activity in his youth. With an average of four students sharing his grade, Hilkemann said the lessons in cooperation learned in that schoolhouse served him well later in life.

"You learn to share resources, to help each other and that you have to get along in order to succeed," he said. "I think it was a fabulous way to learn."

The other framed piece is a photo of Hilkemann's small airplane—his most recent hobby. He noted that there likely won't be much time for flying with his new duties as a state senator, so the plane recently was sold.

The retired podiatrist also puts his feet in the pedals when he can. Among the events Hilkemann enjoys is the annual BRAN—Bicycle Ride Across Nebraska, which he has participated in for the last three years.



Sen. Hilkemann (right) and his late brother Larry take a break along the route of the Bicycle Ride Across Nebraska.

"I'm a life-long learner," Hilkemann said, "and I do some of my best thinking on a bike."

After graduating from Randolph High School, Hilkemann became a high school science teacher and football coach. While he enjoyed both professions, Hilkemann said he had long known that he wanted a career in podiatry.

So, he and wife Julie headed to Chicago for medical school and Milwaukee for residency—knowing that returning to Nebraska was always in the cards.

"There's no place like it," he said, adding that it was a stimulating environment in which to work and a good home base for the couple's three children: Todd, Elizabeth and Sara.

After working with the Legislature to modernize the practice of podiatry in the state and being active in church

and community service, Hilkemann decided to run for an open seat after retirement.

Now that he's settling into a new routine at the Capitol, Hilkemann said he's excited to serve on the Appropriations Committee, which he described as an opportunity to explore and understand the vast inner workings of state government.

"A former senator told me, if you really want to know what's going on, get a seat on the Appropriations Committee," Hilkemann said.

He added that the common thread he's found among his fellow senators is a genuine desire to help the people of Nebraska—a desire he understands well.

"I don't have an agenda," Hilkemann said. "I'm not a one-issue guy. I want to be part of the process and part of finding solutions to the state's challenges." ■

AGRICULTURE

New commercial pet breeder regulations considered

Members of the Agriculture Committee heard testimony Feb. 17 on three bills that would change the Commercial Dog and Cat Operator Inspection Act.

LB360, introduced by Wahoo Sen. Jerry Johnson, would list the following as examples of “significant threat” to the health or safety of dogs or cats:



Sen. Jerry Johnson

- not providing shelter or protection from extreme weather;
- refusing to seek treatment for acute injuries involving potentially life-threatening, hemorrhaging or medical emergencies;
- not providing food or water resulting in starvation or severe dehydration;
- egregious abuse resulting in trauma from beating, torturing, mutilating or burning; or
- failing to maintain sanitation standards that result in animals walking, lying or standing in feces.

“This currently undefined term is utilized in existing [statute] as a standard authorizing interventions by the Department of Agriculture of seizure and referral to law enforcement when inspectors observe inhumane conditions,” Johnson said. “[LB360] would add in the new clarification so new issues can be addressed.”

The bill also would establish an annual fee beyond the initial license fee, on a graduated schedule starting at \$150 for facilities with up to 10 dogs

or cats and up to \$2,000 for facilities housing 500 or more animals.

Judy Varner, president and CEO of the Nebraska Humane Society, spoke in favor of the bill.

“In a perfect world, [the definition] might be stronger, but it is a very important step to move forward for the safety of animals in breeding situations,” she said.

Pauline Balta, a volunteer for Hearts United for Animals, opposed the bill, saying that it would allow substandard conditions to continue.

“As a 13-year volunteer, I have witnessed dogs arriving covered in excrement, urine or suffering from parasites,” she said. “[This bill] sets a ridiculously low standard where ongoing suffering will be allowed to continue with no action taken.”

The committee considered two additional proposals to increase fees levied on commercial breeders.

Currently, facilities with 11 or more dogs or cats must pay an annual license fee according to a graduated fee schedule, which levies an additional \$50 on each increment of 50 breeding dogs or cats that is greater than 10. LB389, introduced by Heartwell Sen. John Kuehn, would instead institute an annual fee of \$150 plus an additional \$10 for each animal numbering more than 11.



Sen. John Kuehn

The bill also would increase the initial license fee for all breeders from \$125 to \$150. A re-inspection fee of \$150 would be established, plus mileage charges necessary to complete the re-inspection. The changes are estimated to increase state revenue by \$74,000.

Kuehn said that the cost of increased oversight should be borne by

the breeders that violate the law.

“The front line in addressing and rectifying animal welfare problems is identifying the facilities not in compliance with state standards,” he said. “The financial resources of this program continue to be strained while the demand for oversight continues to increase.”

Jason Paine, a Hearts United for Animals volunteer, supported the bill, saying that breeders should pay a larger share to fund the oversight program.

“[LB389] is a good start to solving the problem [of bad breeders],” Paine said. “The fee increase should cause minimal hardship to those making money off of selling the offspring of [breeder dogs].”

Clem Disterhaupt, president of the Nebraska Professional Pet Breeders Association, opposed the bill. He said it would leave reputable breeders with less money for associated costs, including veterinary care.

“Under the current fee structure, if you own 50 dogs you pay \$200,” he said. “But under this bill, it would be \$150 plus \$10 for each dog [above 11]. That’s more than triple what I pay now.”

Johnson also introduced LB359, which would increase the local animal license fee from \$1 to \$1.25 and dedicate \$1.22 from each fee to the state’s Commercial Dog and Cat Operator Inspection Program. Johnson said the increase would help to continue funding the oversight of commercial breeders in the state.

“This bill would help keep the fund from going into the red and keep us from having to increase the fees again later on,” he said.

Varner testified in support of the bill, saying that the Nebraska Humane Society is happy to dedicate more of its revenue to increased oversight.

“We sell approximately 150,000 li-

censes in Omaha. This increase would bring in anywhere between \$35,000 and \$45,000 in Omaha alone,” she said. “We’ve stopped collecting the 3 percent processing fee that we’re entitled to because we want the money going to this program.”

No one testified in opposition to LB359 and the committee took no immediate action on any of the bills.

APPROPRIATIONS

DHHS fund transfer advanced

A bill intended to correct an error in appropriation for the Nebraska Children’s Commission was amended and advanced from select file Feb. 19.

LB430, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Heath Mello, was introduced to correct an error in funding for the Nebraska Children’s Commission.



Sen. Heath Mello

In 2013, the Legislature moved the commission from the state Department of Health and Services (DHHS) to the Foster Care Review Office. However, \$94,000 of the commission’s appropriation was inadvertently left in the DHHS budget and LB430 would move that amount to the Foster Care Review Office.

Mello brought an amendment, adopted 37-0, to address an issue discovered after LB430 was advanced to select file. The amendment would transfer \$7 million of unexpended general funds from the DHHS public assistance program to the child welfare program.

Mello said the transfer was necessary to cover a funding shortfall in

the state’s child welfare program and would be revenue neutral.

“The amendment is an emergency measure that was brought to the Legislature by the Department of Health and Human Services,” he said. “If we don’t pass this amendment today, child welfare will shut down April 15.”

Mello said the department indicated that a number of factors—including changes in foster care provider rates, funding for state wards who remain in the office of juvenile services and a federal penalty—had caused the child welfare budget shortfall.

Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell, chairperson of the Health and Human Services Committee, expressed frustration with DHHS and the previous administration’s handling of the department’s budget. She said DHHS told the Legislature last year that they did not require additional funds to address a \$17 million penalty for mismanaging federal child welfare funds.

“This is unheralded in the time that I have been in the Legislature,” Campbell said. “We are paying for the problems that we had in the past.”

Following adoption of the amendment, LB430 was advanced to final reading by voice vote.

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Cigar shop bill passed

Senators approved a bill Feb. 20 that exempts cigar and tobacco shops from the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act.

The bill was brought this session in response to a 2014 Nebraska Supreme Court decision that declared unconstitutional the Legislature’s previous exemption of cigar bars and tobacco

retail outlets from the statewide smoking ban.

Introduced by O’Neill Sen. Tyson Larson, LB118 grants businesses that exclusively sell smoking products an exemption and permits a cigar shop to apply for a liquor license if the establishment:



Sen. Tyson Larson

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

The bill outlines the differences between cigars and cigarettes, prohibits anyone under 21 years old from purchasing products or smoking in cigar shops and requires cigar shops to post signs prohibiting cigarette smoking.

It also requires cigar shop employees to sign a form acknowledging that they will be exposed to secondhand smoke and know the health risks involved.

The bill passed with an emergency clause on a 45-3 vote.

Statehood license plates approved

Lawmakers passed a bill Feb. 20 that authorizes specialty license plates in celebration of Nebraska’s 150th anniversary of statehood in 2017.

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

county designators.

The plates will be available from Oct. 1, 2015 to Dec. 31, 2022. An initial application and renewal fee of \$70 will be required.

Fifty-seven percent of the fee will be credited to the Nebraska 150 Sesqui-centennial License Plate Fund, also created by the bill.

The bill passed on a 49-0 vote.

Underage drinking proposal advanced

Senators gave first-round approval Feb. 17 to a bill intended to encourage assistance for underage drinkers in need of medical help.

LB439, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Adam Morfeld, would grant limited legal immunity to minors seeking help for themselves or someone else in need of immediate attention due to alcohol poisoning. The bill would apply only to minors who request assistance after such an emergency is apparent and who fully cooperate with medical assistance and law enforcement.

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

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



Sen. Jim Smith

“I believe this is good policy,” Morfeld said, “and if we can save one life, I believe this bill will be worth it.”

Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell spoke in favor of the bill, saying it is critical not to leave someone alone who has had too much to drink.

“So often young people feel they can’t stay with the person—nor take them to the hospital, nor call 911—because of the penalties they would incur,” she said. “It is a critical bill and it will save lives.”

Sen. Kate Sullivan of Cedar Rapids also supported the bill, but said lawmakers should consider extending the MIP immunity to more than just the individual who calls for help. Situations in which an underage person needs assistance for excessive drinking often involve groups of young people, she said.

“I think we need to keep in mind that what we’re after, most of all, is that the person who is in harm’s way is given the medical assistance they need,” she said.

The bill advanced to select file on a 40-0 vote.



Sen. Adam Morfeld



Electronic petition signatures proposed

Electronic signatures would be accepted on petitions under a bill heard by the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee Feb. 18.

LB214, introduced by Columbus Sen. Paul Schumacher, would require the secretary of state to accept verified electronic signatures on all petitions. Schumacher said that accepting electronic signatures would make the

petition process more accessible to citizens.

“The Constitution says that the initiative petition process is the first right of the people reserved,” he said. “It is the right of the people to initiate legislation and to make changes in their document, the Constitution.”

Any person wishing to sign a petition electronically would be required to also provide their name, address, county of residence, political party affiliation and date of birth. The signature would then be matched and verified with current voter registration information.

Kent Bernbeck of Omaha spoke in favor of the bill, saying that allowing people to sign a petition in the comfort of their home or office would make the process better.

“[LB214 would allow people] to go home and read an issue, research the issue and then sign a petition without the pressure of a petition circulator holding a clipboard in front of you,” he said. “I think it would be advantageous to the system and make it so that regular people can participate.”

The secretary of state would mail a postcard to an electronic signer, notifying the person that their signature was received, identifying the petition to which the signature was attached and providing the signer 10 days to dispute the validity of an electronic signature.

Neal Erickson, deputy secretary of state, opposed the bill. He said that the state should monitor current pilot projects before deploying the provisions of the bill.

“The process of using online petitions is in its infancy,” he said. “We think it’s best to start in a smaller arena rather than the initiative refer-



Sen. Paul Schumacher

endum process where adjustments and fixes could be achieved.”

The bill also would establish a filing fee of \$10,000 for constitutional amendment initiatives and a \$5,000 fee for all other petitions if the sponsor intends to accept electronic signatures. Any petition sponsor could opt out of accepting electronic signatures when filing their petition with the secretary of state.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Lower public office age requirement advanced

A measure that would allow an 18 year old to hold any public office in Nebraska was advanced to general file Feb. 20 by the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Introduced by O’Neill Sen. Tyson Larson, LR26CA would place a proposed constitutional amendment on the November 2016 general election ballot that would change age eligibility for public office in Nebraska to the federal voting age. Eligibility requirements other than age would not be changed by the proposed amendment.



Sen. Tyson Larson

Currently, an individual must be at least 21 to serve in the Legislature and 30 to serve as governor, lieutenant governor or as a Nebraska Supreme Court judge.

The right to vote should be accompanied by the ability to run for office, Larson said, adding that removing age restrictions would broaden the pool of potential candidates and ensure that young people can fully participate in the democratic process.

“Nebraskans should be able to choose who would best represent them in the Nebraska Legislature as well as

any constitutional office,” he said.

The committee voted 7-1 to advance the measure to general file.



Carbon monoxide detection advanced

Carbon monoxide detectors would be required in residences by a bill advanced from general file Feb. 18.

LB34, introduced by Omaha Sen. Sara Howard, would require the installation and maintenance of carbon monoxide detectors in any residence sold, rented or receiving a building permit after Jan. 1, 2017.



Sen. Sara Howard

The bill would apply only to single- and multi-family dwellings with a fuel-fired heater, fireplace or attached garage. Building owners would be required to install detectors with alarms on every habitable floor or according to applicable building codes.

Instances of carbon monoxide poisoning are increasing in Nebraska, Howard said. She cited 167 calls made to the state’s poison control center about the gas in 2014, compared to 107 calls made in 2013.

The bill is vital for the protection of Nebraska families, Howard said, because detectors are the only way to identify the invisible, odorless gas, which is emitted from common appliances such as furnaces and water heaters.

“The key to solving this problem is early detection,” Howard said.

Senators advanced the bill to select file on a 31-1 vote.

Nursing background checks advanced

New nursing license applicants would be subject to a criminal background check under a bill advanced to select file Feb. 18.

LB129, introduced by Omaha Sen. Burke Harr, would require a criminal background check of applicants for an initial license to practice as a registered or licensed practical nurse.



Sen. Burke Harr

Harr said it is national best practice for nurses to be subject to a thorough criminal background check, and 34 states require them. Currently, nursing licensure applicants are subject only to a name check and review for in-state convictions, he said.

“This [current process] does not provide any information about an applicant’s actions that took place outside the state of Nebraska,” Harr said.

The bill advanced on a 32-0 vote.

Medical residency loan program considered

A bill that would create a loan repayment program for medical residents was considered by the Health and Human Services Committee Feb. 20.

LB196, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell, would amend the Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act by creating a resident loan repayment program.



Sen. Kathy Campbell

Campbell said the program would serve as an incentive to medical residents to practice their specialties in

designated shortage areas in Nebraska.

Under the bill, a qualified applicant must be enrolled or accepted in an approved medical specialty residency program in Nebraska and agree to one year of full-time practice in a designated health profession shortage area. The medical resident also would be required to accept Medicaid patients in his or her practice.

Loan repayment would be limited to \$40,000 per each year of residency, not to exceed \$120,000 per recipient. A resident who did not adhere to the terms of the act would be required to repay the state 150 percent of the outstanding loan principal at an 8 percent annual interest rate from the date of default.

Campbell said adding residents to the state's health care provider incentive program would help Nebraska create a stronger health care system.

"[The] chief goal is to create an incentive for health professionals to practice in shortage areas," she said.

Rowen Zetterman of the Nebraska Medical Association testified in support of the bill, saying a loan program would make Nebraska more competitive when recruiting medical residents. The ability to begin tackling student loan debt while in residency translates to a significant savings in interest over time, he said.

"Most people don't start paying back during residency because they can't afford it," Zetterman said, "so the total just increases."

The bill also would increase the financial assistance limits of two existing programs under the act.

Limits on student loans would increase from \$20,000 to \$30,000 per year, not to exceed \$120,000 for medical, dental or doctoral-level mental health students. Limits on loan repayment for physicians, dentists and psychologists would increase from

\$20,000 to \$30,000 per year of full-time practice in a designated health profession shortage area, not to exceed \$90,000 per recipient.

Loan repayment limits would increase from \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year, not to exceed \$45,000 per recipient, for physician assistants, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, physical therapists, occupational therapists and mental health practitioners.

Justin Shirk, a third year dental student at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, testified in support of raising the limits on current incentive programs. Dentists graduate with an average of \$200,000 in debt, he said, and the average cost of purchasing a practice is \$300,000 to \$500,000.

In addition, he said, opening a rural practice is not lucrative because the patient populations often are self-employed and without dental insurance.

"My classmates and I are looking at some pretty staggering [amounts] of indebtedness," Shirk said. "Having this bill in place would make a rural practice more attractive."

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

Home care consumer protections proposed

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony Feb. 18 on a bill that seeks to enhance protections for individuals who receive in-home care services.

Omaha Sen. Heath Mello, sponsor of LB607, said the measure was the result of a recommendation from the Legislature's Aging Nebraskans



Sen. Heath Mello

Task Force. The bill would create the Home Care Consumer Bill of Rights, which would apply to individuals 60 and older, or those 18 and older with a disability, who receive home care services.

Mello said he intended to amend the bill's language to include minors who receive in-home care services.

Among other provisions, a consumer of home care services would have the right to:

- refuse service;
- participate in the approval of services and any changes in service;
- freedom from exploitation;
- freedom of choice in service providers; and
- information on rights and responsibilities in an agreement between the consumer and the service provider.

A company that fails to provide the information to consumers receiving in-home services as required by LB607 would be subject to a Class V misdemeanor.

Mello said it is a growing concern that seniors and others often employ caregivers without realizing that they are considered contract employees, which can involve significant liabilities.

"LB607 would provide increased clarity and responsibility moving forward for both consumers and providers," Mello said.

Michaela Valentin, representing Home Instead Senior Care, testified in support of the bill. If a caregiver is a contract employee—rather than an employee of an agency—the consumer is responsible for taxes, payroll and scheduling and has no recourse for theft or property damage, she said.

Kristi Benning, operations manager for Right at Home in Omaha, agreed. Testifying in support of the

bill, she said consumers often do not know which type of employee is working in their home.

“Potential clients should understand what they’re receiving and what to expect from a home care company,” Benning said.

Kathy Hoell of the Nebraska State-wide Independent Living Council also testified in support, saying people with disabilities have the right to independence and inclusion in their care decisions.

“One of the basic tenets of independent living is that people with disabilities and seniors should be allowed to live in their own homes and communities and receive proper care,” Hoell said.

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

JUDICIARY

Custodial plans created for children of deployed parents

Military parents can establish custodial plans for their children during deployment under a bill passed by senators Feb. 20.

LB219, introduced by Bellevue Sen. Sue Crawford, provides a legal framework for parents and judges regarding care for children when a military parent is deployed. The law also clarifies parenting arrangements required when a deployed parent returns.

The law allows families with deployed parents to create a temporary custodial agreement that specifies how



Sen. Sue Crawford

decisions for the child will be made, the frequency and duration of contact with parents and nonparents and how the agreement could be changed.

Courts may grant temporary caretaking authority to parents or nonparents, grant decision-making authority to nonparents and enforce a prior written agreement by the parents regarding custodial responsibility.

Lawmakers passed the bill on a 49-0 vote.

Inmate earned time, electronic monitoring considered

Inmate rehabilitation and supervision after release from prison were the topics of two bills considered by the Judiciary Committee Feb. 18.

Under LB425, introduced by Ralston Sen. Merv Riepe, prisoners could earn up to 15 days of sentence reductions for every 30 days they participate in a vocational, educational, work or treatment program. The state Department of Correctional Services could apply the reductions only toward eligibility for parole or mandatory supervision.

The bill also would mandate that inmates who violate department rules could have their accrued sentence reductions forfeited or suspended. Sentence reductions granted as part of the department’s existing “good time” program, which automatically reduces sentences by 50 percent, would be subject to the same policy.

Riepe said he introduced the bill to contribute to the ongoing discussion of Nebraska’s prison reform efforts. Requiring inmates to earn sentence reductions via program participation, he said, will better prepare them to



Sen. Merv Riepe

rejoin society.

Todd Schmaderer, Omaha police chief, testified in support of the bill, saying Nebraska has the highest number of inmates in the country who are released without preparatory programs or supervision. The department’s current good-time system only reinforces good behavior among individuals still in prison, Schmaderer said. Participation in rehabilitation programs as part of an earned-time system could result in reduced recidivism after inmates are released, he said.

“Good time could be used for so much more than just controlling behavior,” he said.

Alan Peterson, representing American Civil Liberties Union Nebraska, testified in opposition to the bill, saying the department is not prepared to establish such a program. He said that without the required rehabilitation and socialization programs in place, inmates could not earn sentence reductions.

LB426, also introduced by Riepe, would require inmates convicted of violent crimes to be enrolled by the Office of Parole Administration in an electronic monitoring plan for at least 90 days when released on furlough or parole. The bill would apply only to inmates convicted of first and second degree murder, manslaughter, first degree assault, kidnapping, first degree sexual assault or robbery.

Electronic monitoring of recently released parolees would create safer communities, Riepe said, because they are most likely to reoffend in the first 90 days following their release.

Marty Bilek of the Omaha Mayor’s Office testified in support of the bill, saying that in 2013, 1,006 inmates were released in Nebraska without parole or supervision. With better monitoring, Bilek said, parolees would more likely avoid reverting to a crimi-

nal lifestyle. Without supervision, he said, “they are set up for failure.”

Peterson also spoke in opposition to LB426, saying the bill’s language is vague regarding how long monitoring devices must be worn, and that a provision allowing the department to charge parolees a fee to defray the monitoring program may be unconstitutional.

The committee took no immediate action on the bills.

Mental health services proposed for inmates

Inmates would have better access to mental health care under a bill heard by the Judiciary Committee Feb. 20.

LB592, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Kate Bolz, would require the state Department of Correctional Services to administer a mental health evaluation to all inmates within the first two weeks of their incarceration. Those diagnosed as mentally ill would be required to receive mental health treatment and be re-evaluated prior to their release.



Sen. Kate Bolz

The bill would require the department to notify law enforcement and other state and county officials at least 90 days in advance of the parole or release of a potentially dangerous or mentally ill inmate. Additionally, the measure would require the department to give two weeks’ notice to law enforcement when potentially dangerous or mentally ill inmates are released on furlough.

The department’s Parole Administration Office would be placed under the supervision of the state Board of Parole to enable more autonomy.

Originally, the bill contained a pro-

vision that would have expanded the definition of mental illness to include personality disorders, but Bolz said an amendment to revise the definition is forthcoming.

Bolz said the bill is designed to improve how mentally ill inmates are identified, treated and monitored after release. Bolz said she was disheartened by the lack of accountability revealed by testifiers during interim hearings convened to study the circumstances of a former prison inmate charged with multiple murders. Nebraska’s correctional system needs to protect citizens better, she said.

“This bill strengthens our gatekeeper role,” Bolz said.

Brad Meurrens of Nebraska Advocacy Services testified in support of the bill. Calling prisons the country’s “new asylums,” Meurrens said that only 5.4 percent of the general population can be classified as mentally ill, compared to 16 percent of the prison population. Better access to mental health is crucial to reducing recidivism upon inmates’ release, he added.

“If there is no treatment, inmates will cycle in and out of corrections,” Meurrens said.

Mike Marvin, executive director of the Nebraska Association of Public Employees, also spoke in support of the bill. Evaluating inmates immediately after incarceration would lead to faster treatment, he said, resulting in a safer working environment for corrections employees.

Scott Frakes, the new director of the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, testified in opposition to the bill. Although he agreed with some provisions of the bill, Frakes said other changes might conflict with future prison reform plans.

“Allow me to complete my assessment of the department,” he said, noting that he started the job only

three weeks ago.

Sheri Dawson of the state Department of Health and Human Services also spoke in opposition to the bill. She said that expanding the definition of mental illness would create a much larger population of potential patients that community services might not be equipped to handle.

“When you broaden the definition, it broadens who you are serving,” she said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.



Biennial budget option for NRDs advanced

Senators gave first-round approval Feb. 17 to a bill that would change the budgeting process for natural resources districts (NRDs).

Currently, NRDs may operate only on an annual budget. LB164, introduced by Henderson Sen. Curt Friesen, would allow NRDs to adopt a biennial budget.



Sen. Curt Friesen

Friesen said allowing for a biennial budget would allow NRDs to plan more effectively.

“[LB164] would improve long-term planning for NRDs and provide more certainty to taxpayers,” he said. “Many NRD projects are often multi-year projects and this would assist in project and fiscal planning.”

Omaha Sen. Rick Kolowski supported the bill, saying that it provides NRDs another useful tool.

“[NRDs] don’t have to take advantage of it, but if it fits for a certain

district, they have the opportunity to do that," he said.

Senators advanced the bill to select file on a 40-0 vote.

NEBRASKA RETIREMENT SYSTEMS

Change to county retirement plan approved

Lawmakers approved a bill Feb. 20 that changes contributions to the Lancaster County retirement system.

LB126, introduced by Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, increases the combined employee and employer contribution rates from a maximum of 13 percent to a maximum of 16 percent of the employees' salaries.



Sen. Jeremy Nordquist

The bill also changes the population size for counties authorized to create their own county retirement plan. The changes will increase the minimum population size from 200,000 to 250,000 and the maximum population size from 300,000 to 500,000.

Employees receiving a 150 percent employer contribution match can elect to switch to a 100 percent employer match for all future contributions. The election will be irrevocable.

The bill passed on a 49-0 vote.

REVENUE \$

Lower agricultural land valuation proposed

Owners of agricultural land would see lower property taxes under two bills heard by the Revenue Committee Feb. 19.

Currently, agricultural and horticultural land is valued at 75 percent of its actual value. LB293, introduced by Scribner Sen. David Schnoor, would decrease valuation to 65 percent of actual value for agricultural and horticultural land.



Sen. David Schnoor

Schnoor said that his bill would address the challenge of skyrocketing agricultural and horticultural land valuations.

"Economies are fluid; the only constant is change," he said. "The agricultural industry is subject to change in perhaps a more dramatic manner than most industries. [LB293] would create a more stable source of funding going forward."

An identical proposal was introduced by Bancroft Sen. Lydia Brasch as LB350, which she said would realign the property tax burden.



Sen. Lydia Brasch

"We are out of alignment and our collective responsibility to share the tax burden has shifted to farmers," she said. "This represents meaningful, responsible, significant and fair tax relief."

The current acceptable range of taxation of 69 to 75 percent would

decrease under both bills to 59 to 65 percent.

The bills also would decrease the current adjusted valuation for school state aid from 72 percent to 62 percent, decreasing total aid by \$13.5 million in fiscal year 2017-2018 and \$14 million in FY2018-19.

Nebraska Farm Bureau President Steve Nelson testified in support of the bills, saying they would provide targeted tax relief by treating farmers and ranchers equally statewide.

"Farmers and ranchers located in counties with a low percentage of agricultural land—counties that are often at their levy limit—end up paying higher taxes than their more rural counterparts," he said. "Reducing taxable values to 65 percent would target tax relief where it is most needed."

Robert Johnston, representing the Nebraska Soybean Association, also spoke in favor of the bills.

"The last two or three years [farming and ranching] have been very profitable, but high land values and valuations do not guarantee profitability," he said.

Platte County Assessor Tom Placzek opposed the bills, saying they would not lead to measurable tax relief.

"I and many of my [county assessor] colleagues feel [the bills] will not really achieve anything," he said. "Urban tax districts won't be affected because they don't have any farm land and rural districts won't really be affected because there is very little to no residential property to shift the tax burden to."

Renee Fry, executive director of the Open Sky Policy Institute, also testified in opposition. She said the bills would result in significant revenue losses for municipalities.

"[LB293 and LB350] would result in a \$138.5 million shortfall for Nebraska's localities," she said. "Revenue

losses will likely lead to cuts to services or higher property taxes for many Nebraskans.”

The committee took no immediate action on the bills.

TRANSPORTATION & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

E-bikes now considered bicycles

Nebraska’s definition of a bicycle now includes those with electric motors under a bill passed by senators Feb. 20.

Introduced by Papillion Sen. Jim Smith, LB95 adds electric-assist bicycles, or e-bikes, to Nebraska’s definition of bicycles. The new definition includes two- or three-wheeled vehicles that can be propelled by pedaling or by an electric motor no larger than 750 watts, producing up to one brake horsepower, with a maximum speed of 20 miles per hour.

Senators passed the bill on a 48-0 vote.

New accident report threshold proposed

The Transportation and Telecommunications Committee heard a bill Feb. 17 that would change the damage threshold for reporting motor vehicle accidents by law enforcement.

LB579, introduced by Gretna Sen. John Murante, would increase from \$1,000 to \$5,000 the estimated damage amount required for a peace officer to submit an accident report to the state Department of Roads. Accidents

involving injury or death still would be investigated and reported.

Additionally, the bill would permit police departments to charge up to \$15 for a copy of an accident report.

Murante said the rising cost of automotive repairs means that most motor vehicle accidents now result in damage estimates of over \$1,000. He added that Nebraska last raised the damage estimate threshold from \$500 in 2003.

Marty Bilek of the Omaha Mayor’s Office testified in support of the bill, saying Omaha police officers spend an average of 45 minutes per accident working on reports. Raising the damage amount threshold, he said, would mean officers would write about 4,000 fewer accident reports annually.

Giving drivers the responsibility for filing reports on accidents with



Sen. John Murante

low damage estimates frees officers to serve the public elsewhere, he said.

“The officers can spend their time on something more important,” Bilek said.

Lincoln Police Chief Jim Peschong also spoke in favor of the bill. He said the department used to raise more than \$100,000 annually from accident report fees, which are no longer levied. Bringing back the fee would help the city offset the cost of officers’ time spent investigating and filing accident reports, he said.

Greg Coffey, representing the Nebraska Association of Trial Attorneys, testified in opposition to the bill. Facts about an accident, such as witness contact information, are best gathered by police as soon as possible after an incident, he said.

“This is a function of government that the average citizen can’t perform,” he said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill. ■



Sen. Jim Smith

LIVE COVERAGE OF THE LEGISLATURE OFFERED FOR SMARTPHONES

The Nebraska Capitol Live app allows users of both Android and Apple products to stream all coverage of the Unicameral from bill introduction to final reading.

Provided by the State of Nebraska and Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET), the app is free and available from the Apple app store, iTunes and the Google Play store. It also provides live coverage of other state entities, including the Nebraska Supreme Court and the governor’s hearing room.

Additionally, NET Television continues to provide coverage from the Legislature via live broadcasts on NET2 World and its website at netNebraska.org.



COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

Monday, February 23

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB656 (Hadley) Provide for deficit appropriations
LB657 (Hadley) Appropriate funds for state government expenses
LB658 (Hadley) Appropriate funds for salaries of members of the Legislature
LB659 (Hadley) Appropriate funds for salaries of constitutional officers
LB660 (Hadley) Appropriate funds for capital construction and property acquisition
LB661 (Hadley) Provide fund transfers, create a fund, and authorize certain transfers
LB662 (Hadley) Provide for transfers from the Cash Reserve Fund
LB169 (Mello) Change provisions governing the Cash Reserve Fund
LB32 (Mello) Require the Department of Correctional Services to submit strategic plans as part of its budget request and progress reports
LB33 (Mello) Require revenue volatility reports by the Legislative Fiscal Analyst

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB375 (Craighead) Change provisions relating to broker's price opinions and comparative market analysis
LB515 (Craighead) Change an aggregate loan limit for agricultural projects under the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority Act
LB457 (Gloor) Change the Site and Building Development Act and terminate a fund

Business & Labor

Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.

LB556 (Kolowski) Waive workers' compensation as the exclusive remedy if an employer is willfully negligent
LB134 (Johnson) Change provisions relating to first injury reports under the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act
LB133 (Ebke) Change interest rate provisions on certain Nebraska Workers' Compensation Court awards
LB276 (B. Harr) Exempt certified independent contractors from the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Sawyer, Richard - Technical Advisory Committee for Statewide Assessment
Appointment: Poole, Linda - Technical Advisory Committee for Statewide Assessment
Appointment: Wilson, Glenn R. Jr. - Board of Educational Lands and Funds
Appointment: Kircher, Patricia M. - Neb. Educational Telecommunications Commission
Appointment: Zeiss, Jess D. - Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges
Appointment: Suarez, Michelle - Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges

Executive Board

Room 2102 - 12:00 p.m.

LR7CA (Schumacher) Constitutional amendment to limit service of members of the Legislature to two 6-year terms
LR31CA (Bloomfield) Constitutional amendment to change legislative term limits to two consecutive full terms

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB248 (Sullivan) Prohibit use of interactive wireless devices by school bus drivers as prescribed
LB373 (Hilkemann) Change provisions regarding school bus safety
LB517 (Riepe) Prohibit certain uses of interactive wireless communication devices while driving

Tuesday, February 24

Agriculture

Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.

LB544 (B. Harr) Adopt the Community Gardens Act
LB558 (Kolowski) Provide an exception for certain food operations under the Nebraska Pure Food Act and provide a duty for the Department of Agriculture
LB393 (Schilz) Change provisions of the Livestock Animal Welfare Act

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 45: Board of Barber Examiners
Agency 30: State Electrical Board

Agency 74: Neb. Power Review Board
Agency 41: State Real Estate Commission
Agency 53: Real Property Appraiser Board
Agency 63: Neb. Board of Public Accountancy
Agency 59: Board of Geologists
Agency 62: State Board of Examiners for Land Surveyors
Agency 36: Neb. State Racing Commission
Agency 58: Board of Engineers and Architects
Agency 66: Abstracters Board of Examiners
Agency 73: State Board of Landscape Architects
Agency 88: Corn Development, Utilization and Marketing Board

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB234 (Krist) Change provisions relating to filing requirements of insurance companies
LB451 (Hansen) Change and eliminate provisions relating to stacking of insurance coverage
LB51 (Scheer) Require disclosures prior to joining a risk management pool under the Intergovernmental Risk Management Act

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Gong, Brian - Technical Advisory Committee for Statewide Assessment
LB601 (Bloomfield) Prohibit a school board member and an immediate family member from being employed with the school district
LB379 (Bolz) Adopt the Expanded Learning Opportunity Grant Program Act
LB382 (Cook) Change provisions of the Diploma of High School Equivalency Assistance Act and state intent relating to certain transfers
LB435 (Cook) Adopt the Time to Teach and Time to Learn Act
LB617 (Larson) Adopt the Working to Improve Schools Act

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

Nebraska Retirement Systems

Room 1525 - 12:00 p.m.

LB655 (Davis) Adopt the Cities of the First Class Firefighters Cash Balance Retirement Act

LB551 (Nordquist) Adopt the Local Government Employees Retirement Act

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB644 (Nordquist) Adopt the Nebraska Transit and Rail Advisory Council Act
LB317 (Kintner) Repeal the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact
LB192 (Davis) Require a train crew of at least two individuals

Urban Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB596 (Davis) Change the Community Development Law and create the Tax-increment Financing Division of the Auditor of Public Accounts
LB238 (Groene) Change provisions relating to tax-increment financing under the Community Development Law
LB445 (Groene) Authorize audits of redevelopment plans that use tax-increment financing

Wednesday, February 25

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 57: Neb. Oil and Gas Conservation Commission
Agency 60: Neb. Ethanol Board
Agency 18: Dept. of Agriculture
Agency 39: Neb. Brand Committee
Agency 56: Neb. Wheat Board
Agency 61: Neb. Dairy Industry Development Board
Agency 86: Dry Bean Commission
Agency 92: Neb. Grain Sorghum Board

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB541 (Crawford) Change provisions of the Taxpayer Transparency Act relating to expired contracts
LB646 (Kintner) Eliminate provisions for secret ballots for leadership under the Open Meetings Act
LB649 (Kintner) Require all votes taken by public officials to be a public record as prescribed
LB273 (Sullivan) Authorize voters to

decide partisan status of county offices
LR35 (Ebke) Resolution to petition Congress to call a convention of the States to propose amendments to the Constitution of the United States

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB650 (Nordquist) Encourage hospitals to offer vaccinations
LB472 (Campbell) Adopt the Medicaid Redesign Act

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB25 (Krist) Change court jurisdiction relating to 17 year olds and young adults
LB212 (Chambers) Prohibit use of restraints in juvenile courts as prescribed
LB482 (Krist) Change provisions relating to juveniles
LB292 (Coash) Change provisions relating to the central registry of child protection cases

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB130 (Watermeier) Change provisions relating to the Water Sustainability Fund
LB475 (Davis) Change a provision relating to the construction or acquisition of certain electric generation facilities
Appointment: Kosman, Henry H. (Hod) - Neb. Natural Resources Commission

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB538 (Legislative Performance Audit) Require audits of tax incentive programs under the Legislative Performance Audit Act and change tax incentive sunset dates
LB423 (Nordquist) Change a renewable energy tax credit
LB396 (Riepe) Allow an income tax credit for certain long-term care insurance policy premiums
LB408 (Kolterman) Change a penalty for failure to pay taxes
LB510 (Cook) Provide an income tax credit to employers of public assistance recipients

Thursday, February 26

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 28: Dept. of Veterans' Affairs
Agency 37: Workers' Compensation Court
Agency 77: Commission of Industrial Relations
Agency 85: Neb. Public Employees Retirement Board

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB462 (Seiler) Change restrictions on campaigning by public officials and public employees
LB571 (Brasch) Provide requirements for the Nebraska Tourism Commission to mark tourism attractions
LB140 (Davis) Provide for primary elections for partisan county offices without party affiliation in counties with less than 10,000 population
LB202 (Davis) Provide for partisan ballots for unaffiliated voters at primary elections

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 12:45 p.m.

(Open to the Public, Invited Testimony Only) Child Welfare Privatization in Nebraska Final Report Briefing

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB81 (Cook) Change provisions relating to eligibility for child care assistance
LB370 (Riepe) Provide for an amendment to the medicaid state plan relating to dyslexia treatment
LB547 (Campbell) Change provisions of the Quality Child Care Act

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB566 (Coash) Change provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act
LB13 (Krist) Change Community-based Juvenile Services Aid Program provisions
LB15 (Krist) Provide additional powers and duties for guardians ad litem
LB347 (Krist) Expand the jurisdiction of the Inspector General to the juvenile justice system
LB502 (Krist) State intent to establish a family court pilot project

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB127 (Chambers) Eliminate provisions relating to hunting mountain lions

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB325 (Davis) Change levy provisions for rural and suburban fire protection districts

LB356 (B. Harr) Change provisions relating to the assessment of certain rent-restricted housing projects

LB361 (B. Harr) Clarify that certain assessments levied as prescribed are levied and collected as special assessments

LB521 (Sullivan) Provide, eliminate, and change provisions relating to property tax levies and credits and state aid to schools and provide for a transfer from the Cash Reserve Fund

LB523 (Sullivan) Change income tax rates and state intent relating to funding public education

Friday, February 27

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 75: Neb. Investment Council
Agency 71: Neb. Energy Office

Agency 16: Dept. of Revenue

LB309 (Davis) Appropriate additional funds to the Property Tax Credit Cash Fund

LB364 (Watermeier) Provide for transfers to the Property Tax Credit Cash Fund and appropriations

LB387 (Schnoor) Transfer funds from the Cash Reserve Fund to the Property Tax Credit Cash Fund

LB442 (Bolz) Appropriate additional funds to the Property Tax Credit Cash Fund

Executive Board

Room 2102 - 12:00 p.m.

LB580 (Murante) Adopt the Redistricting Act

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB308 (Kolowski) Provide for preregistration to vote

LB588 (Pansing Brooks) Provide for electronic application for ballots to vote

early by mail

LB383 (Hansen) Permit registered voters moving within Nebraska without re-registering to vote provisionally

LB491 (Morfeld) Provide for an election day voter registration pilot project

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB28 (Krist) Adopt the Radon Resistant New Construction Act

LB346 (Krist) Require a medicaid state plan amendment to cover children's day health services

LB557 (Kolowski) Redefine a term under the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB307 (Kolowski) Change provisions relating to stalking and domestic abuse

LB433 (Baker) Create the offense of false presentation of proof of liability insurance and provide penalties

LB612 (Kintner) Change provisions relating to force in self-protection

LB302 (Campbell) Create the offense of rehoming a child

LB265 (Campbell) Change provisions relating to juveniles and child welfare

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB404 (Davis) Provide for evidentiary hearings relating to certain water-use applications

Appointment: Reida, Frank J. - Neb. Power Review Board

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB386 (Watermeier) Change a sales tax exemption for agricultural machinery and equipment

LB391 (Crawford) Change sales tax collection fees for motor vehicles

LB428 (Garrett) Provide an exemption from motor vehicle taxation for certain veterans

LB453 (Hilkemann) Change provisions relating to motor vehicle taxes

Monday, March 2

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB565 (Kuehn) State intent relating to appropriations for education and training in high-need fields

LB584 (Schilz) Transfer funds of the Cash Reserve Fund for a dental clinic and oral health training facility

Agency 47: Neb. Educational Telecommunications Commission

Agency 48: Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

Agency 50: Neb. State College System
Agency 83: Community College Aid

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB11 (Krist) Change participation and reimbursement provisions under the Managed Care Plan Network Adequacy Act

LB79 (Gloor) Require insurance coverage for renewals of prescription eye drops

LB124 (Nordquist) Provide requirements relating to copayments, coinsurance, and deductibles

Business & Labor

Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.

LB363 (Nordquist) Provide time limits and penalties for late medical payments under the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act

LB388 (Hansen) Provide annual adjustments for total disability income benefits under the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act

LB158 (McCollister) Deny compensation under the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act in situations of false representation

LB600 (Ebke) Change provisions relating to the investment of trust funds for self-insurers under the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB227 (Hansen) Change provisions relating to educational bridge programs

LB402 (Baker) Change and eliminate provisions relating to distance education incentives

LB589 (Pansing Brooks) Provide for

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

allocation of the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund as prescribed
 LB355 (Morfeld) Change provisions relating to certain education funding as prescribed
 LB520 (Sullivan) Change provisions relating to transfers to certain education-related funds
 LB519 (Sullivan) Provide for school and student aid, grants, and assistance as prescribed

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

LB629 (Mello) Provide for regulation of transportation network companies
 LB399 (Smith) Provide Public Service Commission powers regarding transportation network service

Tuesday, March 3

Agriculture

Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.

LB618 (Larson) Provide for redesignation of districts and changing at-large membership for certain commodities boards and commissions

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 51: University of Nebraska System
 LB108 (Crawford) Appropriate funds to the University of Nebraska to fund behavioral health internships
 LB110 (Larson) Appropriate funds for pediatric cancer specialists
 LB154 (Hadley) Appropriate funds to the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska
 LB417 (Nordquist) Appropriate funds to the University of Nebraska for pediatric cancer research
 LB436 (Cook) State intent relating to appropriations for pediatric oral health services
 LB496 (Kuehn) Appropriate funds for the Yeutter Institute for International Trade and Finance
 LB532 (Hilkemann) Appropriate funds to the University of Nebraska
 LB533 (Stinner) Appropriate funds to the University of Nebraska
 LB560 (Williams) Appropriate funds to the University of Nebraska and create a fund

LB593 (Nordquist) Appropriate funds to the University of Nebraska to study current health data systems

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

LB67 (Schumacher) Provide for governmental unit bond priority
 LB223 (B. Harr) Change provisions of the Insured Homeowners Protection Act relating to contractor duties and prohibited acts and provide for a required notice
 LB336 (B. Harr) Change provisions relating to the Nebraska Condominium Act

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB102 (Sullivan) Change provisions relating to the Access College Early Scholarship Program
 LB410 (Sullivan) Change eligibility provisions relating to the Access College Early Scholarship Program Act
 LB36 (Bolz) Adopt the Community College Gap Assistance Program Act
 LB232 (Nordquist) Adopt the College Choice Grant Program Act
 LB401 (Kolterman) Adopt the College Tuition Equalization Grant Program Act
 LB380 (Morfeld) Create and provide duties for the Higher Education Affordability Commission

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

LB639 (Garrett) Provide authority for the Department of Roads to issue permits to control roadside vegetation as prescribed
 LB564 (Lindstrom) Change duties and obligations relating to the mowing of weeds along county roads
 LB623 (Nordquist) Provide for issuance of motor vehicle operators' licenses and state ID cards to persons with lawful status

Wednesday, March 4

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 21: State Fire Marshal
 Agency 35: Neb. Liquor Control Commission
 Agency 64: Neb. State Patrol

Agency 78: Neb. Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice
 Agency 24: Dept. Motor Vehicles

**Health & Human Services
 Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB500 (Howard) Require application for medicaid state plan amendment for multisystemic therapy and functional family therapy
 LB21 (Krist) Provide requirements for rate increases for providers of behavioral health services as prescribed
 LB499 (Krist) Provide duties for the Department of Health & Human Services relating to behavioral and mental health services
 LB240 (Hansen) Change provisions relating to a behavioral health pilot program

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB354 (McCullister) Change provisions relating to crime victims and witnesses
 LB459 (Crawford) Change provisions relating to a deposition of a child victim or child witness
 LB294 (Scheer) Adopt the Human Trafficking Victims Civil Remedy Act and change and adopt provisions relating to service of process, sexual assault, crimes relating to morals, human trafficking, search warrants, juveniles, intercepted communications, and forfeiture of assets
 LB268 (Chambers) Change a penalty from death to life imprisonment without parole, eliminate a homicide report, and change provisions relating to murder in the first degree and restitution

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB117 (K. Haar) Change provisions relating to energy financing contracts
 LB407 (K. Haar) Change and eliminate provisions relating to certified renewable export facilities as prescribed

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB470 (Hansen) Provide an income tax credit for caregivers
 LB495 (Pansing Brooks) Increase the earned income tax credit

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

LB559 (Schumacher) Change provisions relating to the treatment of tax credits under the New Markets Job Growth Investment Act
LB608 (Mello) Change revenue and taxation provisions
LB26 (Krist) Adopt the Choice for the Advancement of Nebraska Children in Education Act and provide for tax credits

Thursday, March 5

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

Agency 82: Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Agency 81: Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Agency 67: Equal Opportunity Commission
Agency 68: Latino-American Commission
Agency 70: State Foster Care Review Board
Agency 76: Neb. Indian Commission

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LR41 (Campbell) Urge the Nebraska congressional delegation to support efforts in Congress to establish a national training center in highly infectious diseases at the University of Nebraska Medical Center
LB258 (Nordquist) Adopt the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact
LB264 (Morfeld) Provide for issuance of credentials under the Uniform Credentialing Act based on military education, training, or experience
LB369 (Riepe) Change provisions relating to impaired credential holders under the Uniform Credentialing Act

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB195 (Seiler) Change provisions relating to summons and orders of garnishment on financial institutions
LB254 (Morfeld) Adopt the Uniform Unsworn Foreign Declarations Act
LB327 (Williams) Change provisions relating to garnishment
LB620 (Larson) Change provisions relating to lawsuits against public participation

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB329 (Schilz) Adopt the Nebraska Agritourism Promotion Act
Appointment: Marshall, Norris - Neb. Game and Parks Commission

Nebraska Retirement Systems

Room 1525 - 12:00 p.m.

Presentation of Omaha School Employees Retirement System Actuarial Valuation Report as required by §79-987
LB448 (Nordquist) Make current and new Class V school employees members of the School Employees Retirement System of the State of Nebraska
LB447 (Nordquist) Change provisions relating to the Class V School Employees Retirement Act

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB398 (B. Harr) Exempt all tangible personal property from property tax
LB414 (B. Harr) Provide a property tax exemption for fraternal benefit societies
LB424 (Davis) Change provisions relating to the nameplate capacity tax
LB476 (Davis) Provide duties for county assessors and the Property Tax Administrator relating to tax-exempt real property

Friday, March 6

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

LB57 (Scheer) Appropriate funds to the Department of Administrative Services to demolish certain buildings
Agency 19: Dept. of Banking
Agency 22: Dept. of Insurance
Agency 87: Accountability and Disclosure Commission
Agency 93: Tax Equalization and Review Commission
Agency 65: Dept. of Administrative Services

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB287 (K. Haar) Change provisions relating to licensure of interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing
LB211 (Kolowski) Authorize chiropractors to provide school

entrance physical examinations and visual evaluations
LB235 (Howard) Adopt the Consumer Protection in Eye Care Act

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB643 (Garrett) Adopt the Cannabis Compassion and Care Act
LB390 (Crawford) Provide for the use of medical marijuana as prescribed
LB546 (Morfeld) Authorize administration of naloxone as prescribed
LB326 (Williams) Change provisions relating to marijuana, amphetamine, and methamphetamine

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB344 (Kolowski) Provide natural resources districts with the power to issue general obligation bonds

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB438 (Morfeld) Change distribution of sales and use tax revenue and create and provide for a fund
LB542 (B. Harr) Provide a sales tax exemption for purchases by county agricultural societies
LB610 (Smith) Change motor fuel excise taxes
LB653 (Johnson) Exempt certain purchases of energy star qualified products from sales and use taxes ■



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