

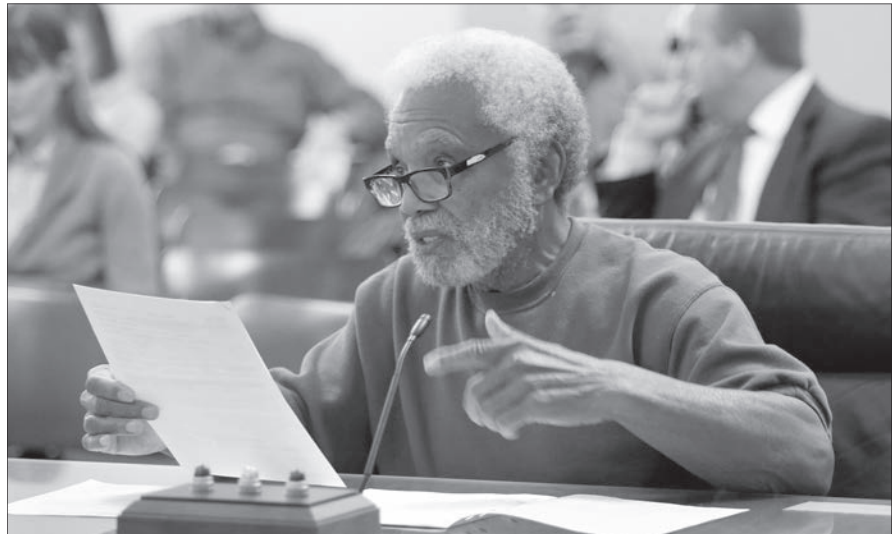
New sentencing procedures proposed

The Judiciary Committee considered three bills Feb. 11 that would alter sentencing procedures for Nebraska courts.

LB172, introduced by Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers, would repeal the mandatory minimum sentencing option from Class IC and ID felonies. Currently, the mandatory minimum imprisonment for a Class IC felony is five years. The minimum sentencing option for a Class ID felony is three years. Both classes are punishable by up to 50 years' imprisonment.

Chambers said eliminating mandatory minimum penalties would allow inmates to begin immediately accruing credit for good behavior, or "good time," which reduces sentences by 50 percent. Currently, inmates cannot earn good time until minimum sentences are served.

Chambers said that according to the legislative fiscal analyst and the state Department of Correctional Services, the bill could result in inmates being released 2.3 years sooner, which would save the department money and



Sen. Ernie Chambers calls for the repeal of some mandatory minimum sentences.

reduce the prison population.

According to the bill's fiscal note, LB172 would result in average daily population decreases of 11 to 25 inmates in fiscal year 2016-17 for a savings of \$6,000 to \$19,000, and 29 to 51 inmates in FY2017-18 for a savings of \$79,000 to \$180,000.

Dick Clark of the Platte Institute testified in support

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Tax on mechanical amusement devices advanced

Cities and villages could levy an occupation tax on businesses operating mechanical amusement devices under a bill advanced from general file Feb. 10.

LB70, introduced by Columbus Sen. Paul Schumacher, would authorize cities and villages to levy the tax on any business operating such a device within



Sen. Paul Schumacher

city or village boundaries. Schumacher said the state has seen a rapid proliferation of machines that could be considered illegal gaming machines under the Nebraska constitution.

"Within the last year, out-of-state manufacturers have pushed the limit knowing that it is very expensive and difficult [for the state] to prove that a machine is more chance than skill," he said. "[LB70] is an effort to basically enforce the law through tax mechanisms and through the extent that it cannot be enforced, to receive some

tax proceeds."

A county also could levy the tax if a business operates a device outside of the boundaries of any city or village.

A mechanical amusement device, as defined in state statute, includes any machine that a person inserts a form of currency into to play, pays out a prize and is determined by chance. It also includes game and draw lotteries and coin-operated automatic musical devices. It does not include vending machines or pickle card dispensing machines.

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New sentencing procedures proposed

(continued from front page)

of the bill, saying it would address needed prison reform in Nebraska by reducing overcrowding through letting judges have more say as to who must be imprisoned.

“Eliminating mandatory minimum sentences means trusting our judges to use their discretion,” he said.

Lancaster County Public Defender Joe Nigro agreed, saying current statute limits sentencing options for judges. Some nonviolent offenders would be better served by probation than

by mandatory incarceration, Nigro said, in support of the bill.

Marty Bilek of the Omaha Mayor’s Office testified in opposition to the bill, saying the mandatory minimum penalties were created to send a message

that gun and drug crimes

require

more se-

vere punishment. He added that mandatory sentences keep criminals out of communities longer.

“The longer the gunman stays in prison, the safer Omaha is,” he said.

LB173, also introduced by Chambers, would require that only those convicted of three violent crimes be considered a habitual criminal. All three of an offender’s



Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks explains LB483, a bill designed to expand the court’s sentencing options except in the case of a life sentence.

convictions would have to be violent crimes, which include:

- first degree murder;
- second degree murder;
- manslaughter;
- first degree assault;
- kidnapping;
- first degree sexual assault;
- sexual assault of a child;
- robbery; and
- motor vehicle homicide.

The bill also would remove the mandatory minimum sentence option for habitual criminals. Offenders still



Sen. Les Seiler serves as the chairperson of the Judiciary Committee.

UNICAMERAL UPDATE

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could be subject to a possible sentence of 10 to 60 years' imprisonment.

Thomas Strigenz of the Nebraska Criminal Defense Attorneys Association testified in support of the bill. He said attorneys routinely use the habitual criminal penalty to coerce nonviolent offenders into confessing to a lesser crime.

"It's a bully tactic," he said.

Jerry Soucie, also of the association, also spoke in favor of the bill. Under current statute, he said, people with three forgery convictions could face 10- to 60-year sentences.

"We need to look at the fairness of the process," he said.

Lancaster County Attorney Joe Kelly testified in opposition to the bill. Repeat felony offenders typically vary the types of crimes they commit, Kelly said, and the habitual criminal statute should include crimes against property and people.

LB483, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks, would expand the court's indeterminate sentencing options to include all felony classes, except in cases where life sentences are imposed. Currently, Class IV felonies are excluded from indeterminate sentencing.

Under the bill, the minimum sentence limit imposed by the court for felonies could be no more than one-third of the maximum sentence limit.

Pansing Brooks said the bill would reinstate a rule that kept courts from setting minimum and maximum sentences too close together. By limiting minimum sentences to one-third of the maximum sentence, she said, inmates would be given enough time to participate in rehabilitation programs that make them better candidates for parole.

"This bill encourages attendance in programs that we know work," she said.

Sarah Newell, representing the

Nebraska Commission on Public Advocacy, testified in support of the bill. With parole at stake, she said, inmates would be incentivized to maintain good behavior.

Alan Peterson, representing American Civil Liberties Union Nebraska, also spoke in favor of the bill, saying it would help prison reform by resuming a proven rehabilitation-based policy.

"To return to something that worked makes so much sense," he

said.

Don Kleine, representing the Nebraska County Attorneys Association, testified in opposition to LB483. Limiting the minimum sentence restricts a judge's ability to fit a punishment to a crime, he said. The bill is not needed, Kleine said, because current statute already allows judges to tailor sentences to include rehabilitation and parole.

The committee took no immediate action on the bills. ■

Local option sales tax on mechanical amusement devices advanced

(continued from front page)

Under LB70, the amount of the occupation tax would equal 10 percent of the gross revenue derived from operation of the device. The state tax commissioner would be responsible for collecting the tax, remitting 20 percent of the proceeds to the state General Fund and the remaining amount to the appropriate political subdivision.

A Revenue Committee amendment, adopted 29-6, changed the proposed tax from a city or county tax to a state tax.

"This shifts the burden from the state to the operator of the device to establish that the machine is not subject to the additional occupation tax," said committee chairperson Sen. Mike Gloor of Grand Island.

Omaha Sen. Beau McCoy opposed the bill, saying that a new tax is not the appropriate method to address the potential for expanded gambling in the state.

"We need to make sure that the things we do on this floor don't have unintended consequences," McCoy said. "While I understand that this is a problem, it is never my opinion or

position that the way to fix a problem is to raise taxes."

Saying that there is precedent for such tax policy, Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers supported the measure.

"It is not unusual for a tax to be levied. A system is made available for the taxpayer to challenge the validity of the tax on his or her property," he said. "The tax system throughout history has been used to express a moral judgment of society—cigarettes and alcohol would probably fall within that category."

Senators also adopted an amendment introduced by Omaha Sen. Bob Krist, adopted 31-0, which would dedicate 3 percent of all tax proceeds raised under the bill to the state's Gamblers Assistance Program. As gambling addiction grows, Krist said, the program must be adequately funded.

"We are growing the [gambling] addiction and we need to keep up with the funding. It's a serious matter that affects not only the individuals, but families and employers as well," he said.

Senators advanced the bill to select file on a 29-11 vote. ■

MEET THE SENATOR

Baker serves new community at Capitol

The importance of community is a lesson repeated over and over for Sen. Roy Baker. His great-grandparents, who traveled here from Pennsylvania in 1874, settled on land purchased from the Union Pacific Railroad for just \$5 an acre. Over the years, they and other newcomers pulled together to build new homesteads and communities from scratch.

The senator's grandfather D.W. Baker served his community as a member of the Nebraska House of Representatives from 1907-1913, and his father, William Baker, served on the school board of District 43, a grain elevator board and as a York County commissioner.

Upon graduating high school, Roy Baker understood that a strong

school makes a strong community. He attended the University of Nebraska—Lincoln, where he earned a bachelor's degree in education and later returned for his master's and doctorate degrees—also in education.

Baker spent the next few years teaching and coaching basketball in Central City and serving as school principal in Marquette. At only 28 years old, he returned to his hometown of Benedict as superintendent of schools. It was daunting to take on so much responsibility so young, but he was eager.

"I really wanted to be the person responsible for making things better in my community," Baker said.

He has fond memories of every school he worked in, but his 13 years

working just south of Lincoln as Norris Public Schools superintendent left perhaps the strongest impression.

Baker was at the helm when an F4 tornado ripped through the community on May 22, 2004 – a day he will never forget.

The community response was extraordinary as people chipped in to help clean up and rebuild. Despite sustaining \$35 million in damage to the school, students were able to return in the fall just a few weeks later than scheduled.

Baker said the experience was a tremendous exercise in perseverance and the importance of community.

"I learned how important it is to have the ability to handle a crisis while keeping my mental faculties about me

and staying calm," Baker said. "It was a phenomenal thing to have happen, but it really pulled the community together."

Baker plans to apply those lessons to his service in the Legislature, saying he understands the importance of asking for help and working together with his colleagues on shared goals. Nebraska's schools and students will be his top priority, but ultimately he hopes that citizens respect his service to his district and the entire state.

"It's important to me that people see me as a statesman, not a politician," he said. ■



Sen. Baker enjoys spending time with his grandchildren, including "best buddy" Clive.

AGRICULTURE

Livestock development grants proposed

Counties could receive grants for livestock development projects under a bill heard by the Agriculture Committee Feb. 10.

LB175, introduced by Ogallala Sen. Ken Schilz, would authorize the state Department of Agriculture to award grants



Sen. Ken Schilz

to counties designated as livestock friendly. Grants could be awarded for strategic planning and improvements to public infrastructure.

Grants for strategic planning projects would be limited to \$15,000 each. Grants for infrastructure projects would be limited to one half of the unobligated balance of the fund or \$200,000, whichever is less.

Schilz said the bill would give qualified counties another a tool to stimulate economic development.

“It allows the Legislature to seek reasonable means to nurture and support the livestock sector of this state,” he said.

Jay Remppe, representing the Nebraska Farm Bureau, testified in support of the bill. Costs for new dairy operations have increased tremendously, he said, with a 1,000 animal enterprise now costing from \$4 to \$6 million to start. The bill’s restructuring of loan limits provides more opportunities for livestock producers to expand their businesses, he said.

Ben Gotschall, a dairy farmer from Raymond, testified in opposition to the bill, saying it would stimulate the development of corporate agriculture

operations, which would compete with small farms such as his. Additionally, he said, larger producers have histories of animal and environmental abuse.

“The initiative does nothing to promote animal welfare or well-being and, in fact, promotes the growth of corporate agriculture, often at a large scale,” he said.

Robert Bernt, a farmer from Spalding, also spoke in opposition to the bill. He attributed the extermination of fish in the Pibel Lake State Recreational Area to contaminants leaked into waterways by large agricultural producers.

“If there is any chance ... this would make counties such as mine more attractive to large scale producers, we don’t want it,” he said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

BUSINESS & LABOR

Increased worker benefits proposed

Certain workers in Nebraska would see increased benefits under two bills heard by the Business and Labor Committee Feb. 9.

LB493, introduced by Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, would require businesses that employ four or more individuals to provide employees a minimum of one hour of paid sick and safe time for every 30 hours worked, up to 40 hours per year.



Sen. Jeremy Nordquist

Nordquist said approximately 26 percent of Nebraska workers lack paid sick leave because their employer does

not offer it. As a result, he said, many workers cannot take time off to care for themselves or a sick child.

“Too many families face serious conflict between work and family because they don’t have access to paid sick leave,” he said.

The bill also would provide for paid “safe time,” which is defined as an absence due to domestic or sexual assault or stalking, if an employee uses the time to obtain medical attention, victim services, counseling, legal services or to relocate or participate in criminal proceedings.

An employer could not require an employee to find a replacement worker to cover the hours that the employee is on paid sick or safe time. If an employee’s use of paid sick or safe time exceeded three consecutive workdays, an employer could require reasonable documentation and an employer would be prohibited from retaliating or discriminating against employees for taking time off under the bill’s provisions.

Teresa Larson of Omaha testified in support of LB493, saying the process of obtaining domestic violence services can be time consuming. For example, she said, filing out a protection order can take several hours and many women in domestic abuse situations have difficulty obtaining the time off required.

“I was lucky that my place of employment was willing to be flexible,” Larson said.

James Goddard of Nebraska Appleseed also testified in support. Approximately 27,000 families in Nebraska are headed by low-income women, he said, and nearly half of all victims of domestic violence report having lost a job due to their situation.

“Workers should not have to choose between financial stability and their health or safety,” Goddard said.

Ron Sedlacek, representing the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce, testified in opposition to the bill, calling it a “one size fits all approach” that denies employers the flexibility to design a benefit package that works best for their business and its employees.

Sedlacek said employers in other states have scaled back other benefits to adapt to the costs of similar mandates and that it is too soon to determine the impact LB493 might have in Nebraska.

“More research needs to be done,” he said. “A full accounting of this legislation’s impact in other jurisdictions is going to take additional time.”

LB627, introduced by Omaha Sen. Heath Mello, would update the Nebraska Fair Employment Practices Act to clarify workplace protections for pregnant workers.



Sen. Heath Mello

Mello said that while protections for pregnant workers currently exist, those protections lack specificity and definition. The existing language has proven inadequate, he said, and courts have handed down increasingly narrow interpretations of what constitutes a reasonable accommodation for a pregnant employee.

“More women than ever are working into the ninth month of pregnancy in order to make ends meet,” Mello said. “We can keep women in the workplace—providing for their families—while also protecting their health.”

Reasonable accommodations for pregnant workers outlined in the bill include:

- periodic rest;
- equipment for sitting;
- more frequent or longer breaks;
- assistance with manual labor;
- job restructuring;

- light duty assignments;
- modified work schedules;
- temporary transfers to less strenuous or hazardous work;
- time off to recover from childbirth; and
- appropriate facilities for breast-feeding.

The bill also would prohibit discrimination against an individual who is pregnant in regard to job application procedures or the hiring, compensation, job training, advancement or discharge of employees.

Libby Crockett, an OB-GYN testifying on behalf of the Nebraska Medical Association, spoke in favor of the bill. Many women are afraid to ask for accommodations because of fear of losing their jobs, she said, adding that one of the most common reasons women discontinue breast-feeding is lack of employer support.

“It is a terrible position to be forced to choose between your job and your doctor’s recommendations,” Crockett said.

Aubrey Mancuso of Voices for Children in Nebraska also supported the bill, saying 71 percent of women who give birth in a given year in Nebraska are employed and need reasonable accommodations and protections.

“LB627 ensures that our laws are consistent with the Nebraska values of family and hard work,” Mancuso said.

No one testified in opposition to LB627 and the committee took no immediate action on either bill.

EDUCATION

Meningitis vaccine bill stalls on select file

A bill that would have required students to receive two meningitis

vaccinations was bracketed Feb. 12, making it unlikely to be debated again this session.

Introduced by Omaha Sen. Bob Krist, LB18 would have required that every student be vaccinated for meningitis upon entering the seventh grade and again at age 16.



Sen. Bob Krist

Krist said that vaccinating adolescents and young adults would have health benefits for the population at large.

“Teen meningitis vaccination can also protect high risk individuals through reduced carriage of bacteria and herd immunity,” he said. “Keeping our teens up-to-date with vaccines is the best defense.”

North Platte Sen. Mike Groene said that the low number of meningitis cases does not warrant a mandatory vaccine program. The state Department of Health and Human Services had no reported cases of meningitis in 2014, he said.

“We have no problem. There is no panic situation in Nebraska that rises to the level of a health crisis,” he said. “Our present system [of education] is working well without the heavy hand of government mandates.”

Groene introduced an amendment to strike any requirement for students to receive the vaccine. Instead, it would have required public and private schools to provide information to students’ parents or guardians on the causes and symptoms of meningitis, how the disease spreads and where people can obtain more information about vaccination.

Henderson Sen. Curt Friesen supported the amendment.

“I think as more information comes forward in the future, we should look

at it again,” he said. “As the research goes on, vaccines will become more effective and won’t have some of the side effects that they can have.”

Papillion Sen. Jim Smith opposed the Groene amendment, saying that the Legislature should err on the side of public health.

“I personally believe that there’s a risk to public health,” Smith said. “Some may oppose [LB18] because of the fiscal note and that there is a cost to government, but I do not believe we can escape the cost to government.”

The amendment failed on a 19-28 vote.

Groene introduced another amendment that would have allowed a parent or adult student to refuse any vaccine for philosophical reasons. Current statute allows the opt-out only for religious reasons.

Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers opposed the amendment, saying that it would significantly undermine current public health protections in state statute.

“Sometimes we can become so eager to do something on a bill that we mess up an entire system put in place,” he said. “The state has the right and responsibility to protect a child.”

Krist then filed a motion to bracket the bill by unanimous consent until June 5, 2015. The body obliged.

The motion effectively ends debate on LB18 for the 2015 session.

Learning community opt-out proposed

Learning community school districts could terminate their membership under a bill heard by the Education Committee Feb. 10.

LB481, introduced by Papillion Sen. Bill Kintner, would enable any school district that is a member of a learning community to opt out of member-

ship with a majority vote of the district’s board of education. Kintner said a district should be able to leave the community if it no longer serves the needs of its students.

“If you’re serving the people you’re supposed to be serving, all schools will want to be part of it,” he said. “And if you’re not, [the school districts] should be able to opt out.”

Any school district wishing to opt out of the learning community would be required to notify the learning community coordinating council and state commissioner of education at least six months in advance of the planned withdrawal.

Papillion-La Vista Superintendent Andrew Rikli spoke in favor of the bill, saying that even though his district has consistently opposed the learning community, it would like to be part of the solution going forward.

“We do believe there are some serious flaws. We don’t believe the funding formula is working for our school district,” he said. “If [the learning community] doesn’t meet the needs of a local school district, that district should have the ability to opt out.”

Ted Stilwill, chief executive officer of the Omaha Learning Community, opposed the bill. He said that any school district leaving the community would harm the community’s progress.

“You need participation by all affected to make the collaborative effort work,” he said. “The excellent work we’re seeing with regard to elementary education would begin to fall apart if too many districts were to fall away from that effort.”

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.



Sen. Bill Kintner

Bills would address poverty factors in school aid formula

Members of the Education Committee heard testimony Feb. 9 on two bills that seek to address the needs of students in poverty.

Currently, school districts that spend less than 50 percent of their poverty allowance in a given year are disqualified from receiving the allowance in the ensuing year under the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA). LB509, introduced by Omaha Sen. Tanya Cook, would eliminate this penalty.

As the number of students in poverty continues to increase, Cook said, senators need to conduct a thoughtful reanalysis of existing policy to avoid penalizing school districts for implementing innovative and more cost-effective poverty measures.



Sen. Tanya Cook

“This idea is to open a discussion about how we can amend the operation of the poverty allowance in our state’s education funding system,” she said. “Because of current penalty provisions, some schools—large or small—are penalized for innovation and investment in their learners.”

The bill also would decrease the amount that a district must spend on poverty expenditures in order to avoid having a poverty allowance correction. Currently poverty expenditures must equal 117.65 percent of the poverty allowance. LB509 would decrease this requirement to 105.26 percent of the poverty allowance.

Representing the Greater Nebraska Schools Association, Virgil Harden spoke in favor of the bill. He said that available resources for vulnerable students often go unused because of

current penalty provisions.

“Poverty has a profound impact on a student’s ability to learn,” he said. “This bill would ensure that resources are available to address the unique needs of students in poverty.”

LB509 also would decrease the penalty assessed to a district for not meeting the required elements of a poverty plan. Under the bill, the penalty would decrease from a 50 percent poverty allowance correction to a 5 percent correction.

Based upon preliminary certification, it is estimated that LB509 would result in a \$148,000 decrease in state aid for fiscal year 2015-16.

Committee members also heard testimony on LB524, introduced by Cedar Rapids Sen. Kate Sullivan. The bill would redefine low-income and poverty students under TEEOSA to include students who are provided free meals under the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).



Sen. Kate Sullivan

The CEP is an option for school districts to offer free meals to all students in high poverty schools without collecting applications from households. To qualify, a school must have at least 40 percent of its students identified as poverty students.

Sullivan said that the TEEOSA formula currently uses the number of students receiving free or reduced meals in calculating funding. The changes proposed in LB524 would help encourage school participation in the CEP while also addressing challenges to the calculation of state aid under TEEOSA.

“There is low usage of the CEP program among school districts currently,” she said. “In the meantime we can’t just sit and do nothing. We

need to make [CEP] work for us and make sure that it doesn’t present difficulties in administering our current state programs.”

Representing Nebraska Appleseed, Mary Ann Harvey testified in support of the bill, saying that Nebraska currently is ranked 49th in adoption of the CEP.

“We believe [CEP] is an exciting opportunity for some school districts,” Harvey said. “It would help ensure that schools are feeding students who might otherwise go hungry, without the stigma that can come with free or reduced priced meals.”

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

New learning community funding method proposed

Members of the Education Committee heard testimony Feb. 10 on a bill that would change how state aid is distributed to members of a learning community.

Currently, state aid for the 11 members of the Omaha Learning Community is calculated collectively. The combined formula needs of all the districts in the learning community are compared to their combined formula resources to determine the amount of equalization aid for the school districts in the learning community. Each school district receives a proportional share of equalization aid based upon its share of total formula needs.

Under LB528, introduced by Cedar Rapids Sen. Kate Sullivan, state aid would be calculated for each member school district individually. Sullivan said the bill addresses several suggestions by member school districts to improve the learning community.

“I was not in the Legislature when the learning community was created.

I’ve spent the better part of the last year talking with member superintendents, trying to learn as much as possible about the issues they face,” she said. “[LB528] is my attempt to carry forward through legislation some of the recommendations of the member districts.”

The repeal of the collective state aid calculation would increase state aid to schools by an estimated \$3.8 million in fiscal year 2016-17.

Additional changes to the state aid funding formula for learning community members proposed by LB528 include:

- eliminating educational service unit funding for the learning community and restoring funding to ESUs #19 and #3;
- allocating up to \$600,000 annually of state lottery funds to the learning community for evaluation and research purposes;
- appropriating up to \$500,000 of lottery funds to the state Department of Education for learning community focus school start-up grants;
- eliminating the requirement for a learning community advisory council of school superintendents; and
- allowing the state Committee for the Reorganization of School Districts to approve petition requests to transfer parcels of land up to 640 acres between learning community member districts.

Elkhorn Superintendent Steve Baker, representing the 11 superintendents of the Omaha Learning Community, spoke in favor of the bill, saying that the community needs continual review and refinement in order to work effectively.

“We have accomplished some great things. Great things can happen when

people work together for a common cause," he said. "If we're going to continue to have the learning community, let's make it the best it can be."

Mark Adler, Ralston Public Schools superintendent, also supported the bill. He said the learning community's success with early childhood education is evidence of the good the community can achieve.

"[LB528] continues the discussion encouraging a more effective learning community focused on student development and growth," Adler said. "I am confident that the initiatives outlined in the bill are just the beginning of what can be accomplished for students."

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

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Cigar shop bill amended, advanced

Cigar and tobacco shops would be exempt from the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act under a bill advanced from select file Feb. 12

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 would grant businesses that exclusively sell smoking products an exemption and would permit a cigar shop



Sen. Tyson Larson

to apply for a liquor license if the establishment:

- 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 humidior; and
- does not allow cigarette smoking.

Columbus Sen. Paul Schumacher introduced an amendment, adopted 31-1, that specifically defined the differences between cigars and cigarettes, would prohibit anyone under 21 years old from purchasing products or smoking in cigar shops and require cigar shops to post signs prohibiting cigarette smoking.

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

The amendment better articulates to the Nebraska Supreme Court that "it is rational and proper of us to treat cigar bars different from other businesses," Schumacher said.

Senators advanced the bill to final reading on a voice vote.

GOVERNMENT, MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS

State funds sought for jail death costs

The state would be responsible for certain costs incurred for inmate deaths under a bill heard Feb. 12 by the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Currently, counties are financially responsible for the costs of an autopsy, grand jury payments and witness com-

ensation when an incarcerated person dies. LB105, introduced by Syracuse Sen. Dan Watermeier, would transfer these costs from the county to the state if the inmate dies while serving a sentence in a state correctional institution.



Sen. Dan Watermeier

Counties should be responsible for paying investigative costs when an inmate dies in the sheriff's custody, Watermeier said, but not if an inmate was in state custody. That financial burden should be shared by all Nebraska taxpayers, he said.

"LB105 would solve the problem of one more unfunded mandate," Watermeier said.

Johnson County Attorney Julie Smith testified in favor of the bill, saying a grand jury must be convened whenever an inmate dies in custody.

She said that none of the 20 inmates who have died at the Tecumseh State Correctional Institution since it opened in 2001 was from Johnson County or committed their crimes there. In spite of that, she said, the county's residents have had to pay the costs for each investigation.

"The total cost to Johnson County—just for inmate deaths—since the prison opened in Tecumseh is almost \$70,000," Smith said.

Dick Clark, representing the Platte Institute for Economic Research, also testified in support of the bill, saying the state Department of Correctional Services should pay to investigate an inmate death in a state facility.

"This is something that's more related to state policy than local policy," Clark said.

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

Bills would allow school emergency expenditures, electronic records

Schools would be allowed to make emergency expenditures and keep electronic public records under bills heard Feb. 11 by the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Currently when there is a disaster, emergency or civil defense emergency, local governments may make expenditures for emergency management purposes. LB283, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Roy Baker, would extend that authority to school districts and educational service units (ESUs).



Sen. Roy Baker

Prior to making expenditures, a school district or ESU would be required to secure a certificate from the emergency management director serving the local jurisdiction in which the school or ESU is located.

As the former superintendent of the Norris School District, Baker said he had firsthand experience of the need for the bill. The district campus was struck by a tornado in May 2004.

“Everything on the campus was either damaged [or] out-and-out destroyed,” he said, adding that the ability to obtain an emergency proclamation through the local governing authority allowed the school to recover quickly.

Stephen Joel, superintendent of Lincoln Public Schools, testified in support of the bill, saying schools facing an emergency situation may need bidding and contracting authority that is outside of their normal budgeting authority.

“Schools cannot authorize the emergency spending described in the bill on their own,” Joel said, “but they

should be able to do it if an emergency arises.”

LB365, also introduced by Baker, would allow a school district or ESU to retain all books, papers, documents, reports, records and minutes of board meetings as electronic records.

Baker said the bill would clarify the ability of school districts and ESUs to comply with public records laws through electronic means.

“More and more boards are going to paperless board meetings where there is never any paper generated,” he said.

Jennifer Jorgensen, legal counsel for the Nebraska Association of School Boards, testified in support of the bill. Some school boards are concerned that they may be violating the existing law due to its antiquated language, she said, and LB365 simply would clarify that school boards are allowed to type and store their minutes in electronic form.

“It does not change any aspect of the availability to the public of these records,” Jorgensen said.

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

JUDICIARY



Bill would remove sex offender Internet restrictions

A bill to remove Internet restrictions for registered sex offenders in Nebraska was heard by the Judiciary Committee Feb. 12.

Under LB290, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Colby Coash, registered sex offenders no longer would be required to provide information and report changes regarding their email address list, Internet communication identi-

ers, domain names, and blogs and websites that they write or maintain.

Coash said the bill would remove language deemed unconstitutional by a U.S. District Court ruling that found, in part, that the statute wrongly criminalized certain kinds of speech and infringed upon the right of association.

Corey Steel, state court administrator, testified in support of the bill. He said it would eliminate inconsistencies between federal and state laws that create problems for judges during sentencing.

Danielle Bailey, a doctoral candidate at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, also spoke in favor of the bill, saying Internet use by registered sex offenders poses no danger to public safety. Offenders are less likely to reoffend, she said, when they have access to online counseling resources and social networks that reinforce family bonds.

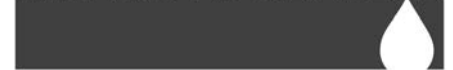
“This bill will significantly increase public safety,” she said.

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



Sen. Colby Coash

NATURAL RESOURCES



State energy plan recommended

LB583, introduced by Ogallala Sen. Ken Schilz, would require the state Energy Office to adopt an integrated state energy plan. Schilz said the increase in available forms of renewable energy necessitates a comprehensive plan for the state.

“We need careful planning to

make sure we, as a state, are able to take advantage of economic development opportunities,” he said. “A state energy plan will help us set a vision to guide policy for state and local governments.”



Sen. Ken Schilz

The state Energy Office would be required to develop and adopt an integrated state energy plan, including a review of and recommendation for the appropriate roles of state government, policymakers, political subdivisions and private industry in energy planning.

Goals of the state energy plan include:

- ensuring a secure, reliable and stable energy system for residents and businesses in the state;
- maintaining and improving the state’s cost-competitive energy supply and ensuring access to affordable energy;
- promoting sustainable economic growth, job creation and economic development; and
- providing the means for the state’s energy policy to adapt to changing circumstances.

The office could organize an advisory committee of individuals with diverse energy-related interests, including the chairpersons of the Legislature’s Appropriations and Natural Resources committees, as well as three senators selected by the Executive Board to serve as ex officio members.

The state Energy Office would be tasked with analyzing the state’s current utility structure, supply and demand projections, potential partnerships with neighboring states and the impact of federal regulations on fossil fuel emissions.

John Hansen, representing the Nebraska Farmers Union, spoke in favor of the bill, saying that analyzing the state’s energy opportunities is important to the future of the state.

“Nebraska has the third highest wind energy potential in the country,” he said. “If we can get new energy sources harnessed, organized and headed in the right direction, we can turn a lot of the challenges ahead into economic development opportunities.”

Center for Rural Affairs Senior Policy Advocate Johnathan Hladik supported the bill, but said the process it proposes should include more constituent involvement.

“Clean energy investment is already driving economic growth in small towns across the state, creating jobs with salaries that greatly exceed the median income,” Hladik said. “However, as citizens of the nation’s only public power state, the creation of the state energy plan must allow interested parties to receive full information and participate in the process.”

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

REVENUE

Tax deduction for first-time home buyers considered

Members of the Revenue Committee heard testimony Feb. 11 on a bill that would offer a tax deduction to qualified savings accounts.

LB372, introduced by Omaha Sen. Joni Craighead, would allow an individual or two individuals jointly to establish a first-time home buyer savings account. All interest or other income attributable to the account

would be exempt from state income tax.

Craighead said the bill would provide an opportunity and incentive for people to become homeowners.



Sen. Joni Craighead

“Not only would it create a tax incentive for becoming a first-time home buyer, it also would have existing benefits to the real estate, banking and financial industries in Nebraska,” she said.

Funds in the qualified account could be used to pay eligible costs for the purchase of a single-family residence, including down payment and allowable closing costs. The deduction would apply only to the first \$50,000 in the account.

A nonqualified withdrawal from the account would be subject to a 5 percent penalty and recapture of income in the same amount as the withdrawal. Any person who files a false claim to avoid such penalty or to evade taxes would be guilty of a Class I misdemeanor.

Walt Radcliffe, representing the Nebraska Realtors Association, spoke in favor of the bill, saying it would provide a lot of benefit to the state with very minimal costs.

“If you have several hundred or even thousands of homes sold because of [LB372], this would be a great deal,” he said. “It also could do a lot outside of the metropolitan area and cities. It could help people get started in a lot of rural communities where real estate is cheaper.”

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

TRANSPORTATION & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Bill would repeal motorcycle helmet law

Motorcyclists in Nebraska no longer be would required to wear helmets under a bill heard by the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee Feb. 9.

LB31, introduced by Hoskins Sen. Dave Bloomfield, would repeal the law that requires a motorcycle or moped operator or passenger to wear a helmet. Violation of the law is an infraction punishable by a \$50 fine.



Sen. Dave Bloomfield

Nebraska's helmet law has both an economic and moral impact on the state, Bloomfield said. The state loses millions of dollars annually because motorcyclists avoid traveling through Nebraska, he said, and the right of citizens to make decisions for themselves is infringed upon.

"We as a state ... have a duty and an obligation to protect, and not infringe, on the principles of liberty and pursuit of happiness," he said.

Todd Miller, a Nebraska motorcyclist, testified in favor of the bill, saying 31 states let riders decide how to protect themselves. Miller said helmets, especially full-face models, give riders a false sense of security, impair peripheral vision and insulate them from traffic noise that can benefit their safety.

Robert Ailor, a motorcyclist from York, said he doesn't oppose helmets, just the law that mandates their use. Speaking in favor of the bill, he said

accidents involving motorcyclists contribute to health care costs far less than automobile accidents and disease. Since 2005, he said, motorcycle accident fatality rates have fallen 20 percent nationally.

Scott Hoffman, a motorcyclist from Nebraska, also spoke in favor of the bill. Nebraska is a direct conduit to the world's largest motorcycle rally in Sturgis, S.D., he said, but thousands of riders avoid the Nebraska route because of the helmet law. With an estimated 700,000 riders expected to attend the event this year, Hoffman said, Nebraska businesses could generate \$15 to \$25 million in revenue from gas and lodging purchased by motorcyclists.

Hoffman added that riding without a helmet enhances the motorcycling experience and that everyone who rides knows the risks.

"Motorcycles are dangerous," he said. "Always have been, always will be."

Motorcyclist Patrick Lange testified in opposition to the bill, saying he was involved in a motorcycle accident that killed his wife, left him permanently disabled and cost \$1.7 million in medical expenses. He said the current helmet law is needed to help prevent others from experiencing similar trauma.

"Every day, for the rest of my life, I have to live with the disabilities sustained from choosing to not wear a helmet," he said.

Nicholas Worrell of the National Transportation Safety Board also spoke in opposition to the bill. Because helmets are proven effective in low- and high-speed crashes, he said, they are the best way to avoid injury.

In 2012, states without helmet laws had 10 times the number of riders die in accidents than states with laws similar to Nebraska, he said. Additionally,

he said, deaths, injuries and medical costs increase whenever a state abolishes a helmet law.

"When helmet laws are repealed, we all pay the price," Worrell said.

Lori Terryberry-Spohr, brain injury program manager at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, testified in opposition to the bill. She said the estimated cost for treatment of a life-long brain injury is \$4.4 million. Brain injuries often require two years of recovery, she said, but the traumatic effects on the families of victims, such as loss of income and becoming caregivers, never end.

"Helmet laws help reduce the number of people that suffer these injuries," she said.

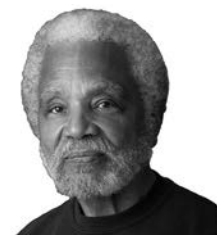
The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Mountain lion license plate proposed

Nebraska drivers could show their support for mountain lions with special license plates under a bill heard by the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee Feb. 9.

Under LB474, introduced by Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers, the mountain lion protection plate would be available in alphanumeric or personalized versions with designs supportive of Nebraska's mountain lion population. The alphanumeric plate would display up to five characters and not use a county designation.

The fee for the alphanumeric plates would be \$5, credited to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Educational Fund. Personalized plates would cost \$40, with \$10 credited to



Sen. Ernie Chambers

the Department of Motor Vehicles Cash Fund and \$30 credited to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Educational Fund.

The commission would be required to use the educational fund to teach youth about wildlife conservation practices.

Besides creating a fund and educational program, Chambers said, the bill is designed to direct attention to Nebraska's dwindling mountain lion population. Because of the excessive number of female mountain lions killed this hunting season, he said, survival of the species is in jeopardy.

"These animals are on the verge of being extinct once again in this state," he said.

Angelika Byorth of Lincoln testified in support of the bill. She said the educational program paid for by the proposed fund would help mitigate the misinformation about mountain lions.

"It will help the mountain lions, who used to be indigenous to Nebraska, come back from the brink of extinction," she said.

Timothy McCoy, deputy director of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, testified in opposition to the bill. He said a specialty license plate that focused on only one species would not appeal to a wide range of Nebraskans. Adding other popular animals such as the sandhill crane and pheasant, he said, would make more money for conservation programs.

"It wouldn't result in funding we like to see for the educational activities," he said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

URBAN AFFAIRS

Additional powers for certain SIDs proposed

The Urban Affairs Committee heard testimony Feb. 10 on a bill that would provide additional powers for certain sanitary and improvement districts (SIDs) in Nebraska.

Norfolk Sen. Jim Scheer, sponsor of LB197, said the bill would apply when an SID is too close to a municipality to incorporate, yet too far away from a municipality to be annexed. He said the bill would allow a qualifying SID to provide the sort of services that those who live within a municipality take for granted.



Sen. Jim Scheer

"We're not looking for police powers," he said, "but just some [powers] that we would call regular maintenance powers."

A qualifying SID would have the power to regulate:

- licensure of dogs and other animals;
- parking of abandoned vehicles;
- streets and sidewalks, including removal of obstructions and encroachments; and
- parking on public roads and rights of way relating to snow removal and access by emergency vehicles.

Scheer said it was important to note that LB197 would not allow SIDs to expand their powers unilaterally. Any additional powers allowed by the bill would have to be approved by a city council or village board within whose zoning jurisdiction the SID is located.

In order to qualify for the addition-

al powers, an SID would have to be:

- located in a county with a population between 5,000 and 8,000;
- located in a different county than the county of the municipality within whose zoning jurisdiction the SID is located;
- unable to incorporate due to its close proximity to a municipality; and
- unable to be annexed by a municipality with zoning jurisdiction because the SID is not adjacent or contiguous to such municipality.

Lynn Rex of the League of Nebraska Municipalities testified in support of the bill, saying at least two SIDs near Norfolk could be helped by LB197. The SIDs, the city of Norfolk and the county involved have negotiated a solution, she said, but lack a legal remedy.

"They've worked hard to try and come up with a consensus on how to solve this," Rex said. "This is a compromise that has been in the making for a long time."

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



COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

Tuesday, February 17

Agriculture

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB377 (Kolterman) Change provisions and procedures relating to the disposition, care, custody, and costs associated with the impoundment of dogs or cats

LB360 (Johnson) Change provisions of the Commercial Dog and Cat Operator Inspection Act

LB389 (Kuehn) Change license and inspection fees under the Commercial Dog and Cat Operator Inspection Act

LB359 (Johnson) Change a fee collected from dog licensees

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

AM242 to LB430

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB48 (Scheer) Change unfair insurance trade practices relating to casualty losses

LB213 (Schumacher) Provide for withholding of insurance proceeds for demolition purposes

LB628 (Schilz) Provide for electronic posting of property and casualty insurance policies and notices related to such policies

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB478 (Baker) Provide bonding authority for educational service units

LB513 (Craighead) Change provisions relating to use and leasing of school property

LB431 (Baker) Change provisions relating to public school district construction

LB595 (Davis) Create the Task Force on School Construction Assistance

LB477 (Davis) Change provisions relating to school districts maintaining the only public high school in a county

LB616 (Larson) Adopt the Independent Public Schools Act

Executive Board

Room 2102 - 12:00 p.m.

LB56 (Scheer) Provide procedures

for donation of real property to the Northeast Community College Area

LB376 (Hansen) Provide that public charitable corporations are subject to the Deferred Building Renewal Act

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB311 (Transportation & Telecommunications) Change provisions relating to CLP-learner's permit issuance and applications for commercial drivers' licenses

LB568 (Brasch) Change certain administrative license revocation provisions relating to commercial drivers' licenses

LB579 (Murante) Change traffic accident reporting requirements as prescribed and authorize a fee for a copy of a peace officer report

Urban Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB455 (Gloor) Change provisions relating to employment of a full-time fire chief by cities of the first class

LB378 (Groene) Change requirements for voter approval of borrowing money for public improvements by a first-class city

LB540 (Crawford) Adopt updated international building code standards

Wednesday, February 18

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB214 (Schumacher) Provide for electronic signatures on initiative and referendum petitions

LB367 (Groene) Eliminate a restriction on paying petition circulators based on number of signatures

LB368 (Groene) Prohibit certain activities interfering with petition circulators

LB577 (Murante) Permit counties to regulate peddlers, hawkers, and solicitors

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB490 (Watermeier) Adopt the Provider Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment Act

LB335 (Mello) Create and provide duties for the Intergenerational Poverty Task Force

LB607 (Mello) Adopt the Home Care Consumer Bill of Rights Act

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB113 (Larson) Provide a co-payment for correctional inmates' health care services

LB425 (Riepe) Provide for earned time and discontinue the use of good time

LB426 (Riepe) Provide for violent offenders and provide powers and duties for the Director of Correctional Services, the Parole Administrator, the Board of Parole, and parole officers

LB545 (B. Harr) Provide for additional mandatory minimum sentencing as prescribed

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Palm, Owen A. - Neb.

Natural Resources Commission

Appointment: Bracht, David - State Energy Office

LB208 (Schilz) Provide an exemption to water storage reservoir permit requirements as prescribed

LB394 (Schilz) Prohibit interference with hunting, trapping, or fishing by intimidation using a telephone or other communication device

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB419 (Mello) Exempt sales and purchases by zoos and aquariums from sales and use tax

LB280 (Davis) Authorize a school-funding surtax and reduce the levy authority of school districts and learning communities

LB357 (Smith) Change income tax rates and transfer funds from the Cash Reserve Fund

Thursday, February 19

Executive Board

Room 2102 - 12:00 p.m.

LB349 (Krist) Change provisions relating to acquisitions of real property

LB501 (Krist) Provide for use of

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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audio or visual materials of legislative proceedings to be used for commercial or political advertising as prescribed

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

LB291 (Coash) Remove professional wrestling from the jurisdiction of the State Athletic Commissioner
LB166 (Crawford) Change filing and enforcement provisions of the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act
LB400 (Smith) Change filing requirements for statements of financial interest
LB640 (Garrett) Provide for retrocession of jurisdiction for land on which the Omaha National Cemetery is located

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

LB243 (Bolz) Create a pilot project relating to family finding services
LB441 (Bolz) Change provisions relating to the bridge to independence program
LB199 (Howard) Provide for stipends for social work students
LB296 (Kolterman) Require the Department of Health & Human Services to provide notification after removal of a child

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB406 (Morfeld) Change provisions relating to actions for the recovery of vacant, platted, and subdivided real property as prescribed
LB415 (Pansing Brooks) Change provisions relating to the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act
LB316 (Kintner) Prohibit joining certain interstate compacts and the sharing of red light camera and speed camera information with other compact members as prescribed

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB230 (Mello) Change provisions relating to partition actions
LB293 (Schnoor) Change valuation of agricultural land and horticultural land
LB350 (Brasch) Change valuation of

agricultural land and horticultural land
LB384 (Lindstrom) Provide for reclassification of agricultural land and horticultural land

Friday, February 20

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

Appointment: Mitchell, Ronnie - Dept. of Aeronautics
LB465 (B. Harr) Adopt the Electronic Notary Public Act
LB479 (Bloomfield) Change provisions relating to memorials to veterans
LB562 (Morfeld) Adopt the Nebraska Treasures Act
LR26CA (Larson) Constitutional amendment to change the age for eligibility to public office

Health & Human Services Room 1510 - 1:00 p.m.

Appointment: Craig, John A. E. - Neb. Rural Health Advisory Commission
Appointment: Konda, Teresa - State Board of Health
Appointment: Scholl, Laura A. - Board of Emergency Medical Services

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

LB196 (Campbell) Change provisions of the Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act
LB549 (Campbell) Adopt the Health Care Transformation Act

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB598 (Schumacher) Change and provide requirements regarding treatment and segregation of mentally ill inmates
LB592 (Bolz) Change provisions relating to corrections and parole and mentally ill offenders
LB605 (Mello) Change classification of penalties, punishments, probation and parole provisions, and provisions relating to criminal records and restitution and provide for a special legislative committee
LB606 (Mello) Adopt the Office of Inspector General of the Nebraska Correctional System Act, change provisions relating to the Public

Counsel, and mandate a declaration by the Governor of a correctional system overcrowding emergency as prescribed

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB412 (Mello) Change provisions relating to the Rural Community-Based Energy Development Act
LB413 (Mello) Provide for the evaluation of permits issued to political subdivisions by the Department of Environmental Quality regarding water quality

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB200 (Davis) Change the distribution of sales and use tax revenue and provide duties for the Department of Revenue
LB256 (Bloomfield) Change the sales tax rate and the distribution of sales tax revenue
LB284 (Riepe) Redefine terms under the Sports Arena Facility Financing Assistance Act
LB285 (Riepe) Redefine a term under the Sports Arena Facility Financing Assistance Act

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

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

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 Neb. State Colleges
Appointment: Suarez, Michelle - Board of Trustees of the Neb. 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

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

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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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

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB538 (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 - 12:30 p.m.

(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

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

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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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 reregistering 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.

Appointment: Reida, Frank J. - Neb. Power Review Board
LB404 (Davis) Provide for evidentiary hearings relating to certain water-use applications

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 ■

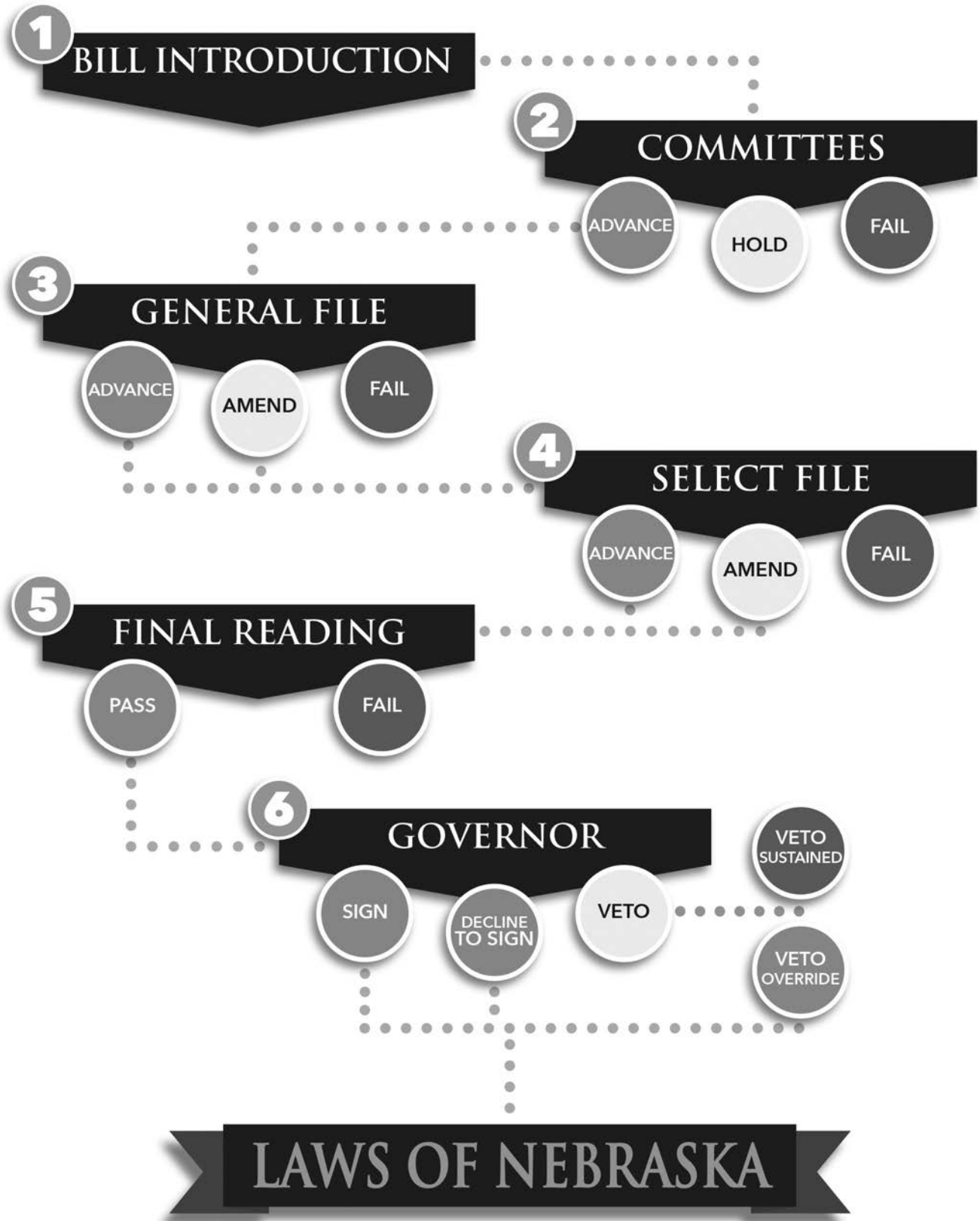
UNICAMERAL UPDATE ONLINE

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.

The site provides links to get the Update's RSS and Twitter feeds. Readers may search Update stories by bill number, senator's name or keyword using the search box provided in the top-right corner.

The screenshot shows the website interface for the Unicameral Update. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, About, Photos, and Teacher's Guide, along with a search box. Below that is a main menu with categories like Committees, Sections, Senator Features, Session Review 2014, Slideshows/Videos, and Announcement. The main content area displays recent headlines, with two prominent articles: 'State funding of probation administration proposed' and 'Carbon monoxide safety considered'. Each article has a short summary and a small image.

HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW



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Each year on President Abraham Lincoln's birthday, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War provides a historical display in the Capitol and posts a ceremonial guard at the west side of the building.