

Funding sought for “once-in-a-generation” project

The state would provide matching funds to help secure a potential public-private hospital and training center at the University of Nebraska Medical Center under a proposal heard Feb. 6 by the Revenue Committee.

Under LB1084, introduced by Seward Sen. Mark Kolterman, certain political subdivisions, including the University of Nebraska, could apply to the state Department of Economic Development for \$300 million in matching funds.



Sen. Mark Kolterman said state matching funds are needed for a potential medical facility expansion that could create thousands of jobs in Omaha.

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HHS Committee offers array of bills aimed at YRTC's

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony Feb. 5 on five bills, all introduced by the committee, to address youth rehabilitation and treatment centers in Nebraska.

LB1140 would outline a series of requirements for the state's YRTC's, including providing:

- health care and medical services;
- a safe and sanitary space for sleeping, hygiene, education, programming, treatment, recreation and visitation for each juvenile;
- appropriate physical separation and segregation of juveniles based on gender;
- training that is specific to the population being served;
- sufficient staffing to comply with state and federal law and protect the safety and security of each juvenile;
- an age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate education program for each juvenile;
- a case management and coordination process, designed to assure appropriate reintegration of the juvenile to his or her family, school and community; and
- research-based or evidence-based programming and treatment services.

Committee chairperson Sen. Sara Howard of Omaha said the plan is needed because there is nothing in state statute regarding YRTC's beyond designating the location

of facilities.

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services CEO Dannette Smith testified in opposition to LB1140. Many of the provisions in the bill are addressed in current department policy, she said, including evidence-based programming and separate placement for boys and girls.

“Among the many improvements we are implementing in the YRTC system is the implementation of applied behavioral analytics with targeted trauma-informed treatment. Both are evidence-based treatments utilized as best practices in the juvenile justice system,” Smith said.

LB1141 would require DHHS to develop a five-year operations plan for YRTC's by Nov. 15, 2020, and to submit an annual report to the Legislature beginning in 2021 that details operations plans and performance indicators.

Payne Ackerman, a former YRTC resident and family advocate, testified in support of the bill. During his stay at the Kearney facility in 2012-13, Ackerman said there was inadequate staffing, little privacy or security and no grievance process. While there, Ackerman said he was nearly stabbed by another resident.

Juliet Summers of Voices for Children in Nebraska testified in support of LB1140 and LB1141, saying the bills would work well together to improve conditions at the YRTC's. She

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Funding sought for “once-in-a-generation” project

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If an application is approved and the Legislature appropriates those funds, they could be used only for a project in which the applicant would invest at least \$1 billion to carry out the requirements of a certain program done in partnership with the federal government.

Kolterman said the proposed matching funds would help Nebraska secure a potential project that would significantly expand UNMC, grow the state’s economy and strengthen existing partnerships with the federal government.

UNMC has demonstrated a successful public-private partnership with the Fred and Pamela Buffett Cancer Center, he said, and the potential project would have even larger economic effects.

Kolterman said the project, called NExT, would have an estimated economic impact of \$7.6 billion over the next decade, creating nearly 33,000 temporary construction jobs and 8,700 permanent jobs. It would add \$1.3 billion to the state’s economy

annually after it becomes fully operational, he said.

“I personally believe this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for us to catapult Nebraska into the national and international scene, boost our economy and further position us to be a world leader in infectious disease and all-hazards training and response,” Kolterman said.

Jeffrey Gold, chancellor of UNMC, testified in support of LB1084 on behalf of the University of Nebraska.

Gold said the project would include a hospital with approximately 1,200 beds, some of which could be used during times of national emergency such as biological, chemical, radiological or nuclear attacks, as well as infectious disease outbreaks. A proposed training center would increase the facility’s capacity to train health care professionals and students from around the world, he said.

Gold said UNMC meets many of the federal government’s site selection criteria: The center has become known for its expertise in biocontainment

and the treatment of highly infectious diseases after the Ebola virus outbreak of 2014, it trains National Disaster Medical System personnel and it is near a suitable U.S. Air Force facility at Offutt Air Force Base.

He said it is critical to convince the federal government and the nonprofit sector that the state is a “capable partner” in the project.

“It is truly a historic opportunity before us,” Gold said. “Let us seize it.”

Leslie Andersen testified in support of the bill on behalf of the Greater Omaha Chamber and the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. She said the project would have “profound” economic effects for Omaha and the state.

“Perhaps no other project over the past decade has presented an opportunity for economic growth and high-wage, high-demand, highly skilled jobs than the NExT project,” she said.

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



UNICAMERAL UPDATE

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HHS Committee offers array of bills aimed at YRTC's

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said the current YRTC system was established more than 100 years ago and is overdue for an update.

"We know so much more now about adolescent development and what works for young people," Summers said.

Smith testified against LB1141, saying it was unnecessary. She said she agreed with the bill's objectives but that the department already is developing a business plan that will be updated annually.

"We want to have the flexibility to develop the plan," Smith said. "We've already begun the process. We don't feel it needs to be in legislation."

LB1143 would require DHHS to hire an outside consultant to complete a needs assessment and cost analysis of establishing an inpatient adolescent psychiatric unit at the Lincoln Regional Center. The department would have to submit the consultant's findings to the Health and Human Services Committee by Oct. 15, 2020.

Sen. Lynne Walz of Fremont said numerous stakeholders have said that the YRTCs lack adequate psychiatric care for their residents.

"It is difficult to create programming at the YRTCs that can address both the behavioral problems of some youth and the serious mental health issues of others," she said.

William Reay, president of Omni Inventive Care in Omaha, testified in support of the bill. Mental health care at YRTCs is inadequate, he said,



Sen. Sara Howard said LB1140 would clarify the Legislature's expectations of what YRTCs must provide to the youth in their care.

leading in some cases to assault and injury, including two youth, who received frequent physical injuries from other residents while being served by a YRTC.

"In both cases they were not receiving any recognizable treatment for their mental health conditions and were traumatized by the very facility that was designed to treat them," Reay said.

Katherine Bass of the state Foster Care Review Office also supported the bill. She said that while only a small fraction of YRTC residents require the level of care offered at the Lincoln facility, care must be available to youth who need it.

"There are certain needs that these children have that LRC was able to meet that other facilities have not been able to meet," Bass said.

No one spoke in opposition to LB1143.

LB1145 would require DHHS to develop a policy on the use of mechanical restraints and how youths are

transported to, from and between YRTCs. Under the bill, the department would have until Oct. 1, 2020, to develop the policies.

No one testified in support of the bill.

Mark LaBouchardiere, DHHS facilities director, testified in opposition to LB1145, saying it requires policies that already are in place. Only a facility supervisor can order a physical restraint, he said, and restraints are used only when necessary.

"Our existing policy is that restraining devices are never used for purposes of punishing [youth]," LaBouchardiere said.

Finally, LB1142 would require DHHS to develop a YRTC emergency plan by Oct. 15, 2020. The bill also would amend current law to allow placement of a juvenile at a detention facility for seven days if there is an emergency—defined in the bill as any damage to the facility that would cause it to be uninhabitable. Inadequate staffing would not qualify as an emergency under the bill.

Sen. Dave Murman of Glenvil said there was no emergency plan in place last August when a crisis at the YRTC site in Geneva forced several girls living there to move to a facility in Lincoln initially and then to the boys' YRTC campus in Kearney.

No testimony was offered on LB1142.

The committee took no immediate action on any of the bills. ■

AGRICULTURE

Hemp program updates proposed

The Agriculture Committee heard testimony Feb. 4 on a bill that would update the Nebraska Hemp Farming Act to harmonize it with new federal regulations.

Congress legalized the cultivation and sale of hemp with the 2018 Farm Bill. States that wish to regulate hemp production first must submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for approval.

The Nebraska Hemp Farming Act, which the Legislature passed last year, requires the state Department of Agriculture to submit such a state plan to the USDA and to establish, operate and administer a program to license and regulate those who cultivate, process, handle or broker hemp.

Sen. Steve Halloran, sponsor of LB1152, said the bill would make the act consistent with state plan specifications in a USDA interim rule published last October and also make it easier for the state Department of Agriculture to administer the program.

He said the bill would reference the federal rule's definition of "acceptable hemp THC level." It also would require testing laboratories to measure the total THC in a hemp sample and to report a measurement of uncertainty along with the test results. Samples would have to be tested within 15 days of harvest.

Halloran said the bill also would define negligent and nonnegligent

violations of the act and clarify that the presence of uncultivated feral hemp is not considered cultivation for purposes of the act.

"There's been uncertainty as to the purpose of [that] provision," he said, "and it introduces a number of difficulties for the department and law enforcement in assuring that hemp production is within lawful limits."

Halloran said LB1152 also is meant to ensure that the department will accept all qualified applications and issue licenses to those who meet the requirements.

"We want to assure growers that there will not be an arbitrary limit to the number of licenses issued," he said.

Additionally, the bill would require licensees to notify the department of the estimated date that hemp will be transported from a registered site. The department would notify the Nebraska State Patrol within two business days of receiving the licensee's notification.

Steve Wellman, director of the state Department of Agriculture, testified in support of LB1152. He said the USDA has approved Nebraska's state plan, and the department began accepting applications this week.

Wellman said the bill would ensure that the department's enforcement responsibilities only apply to the activities of hemp cultivators, processors and brokers and that licensing provisions apply only to hemp plants, not hemp products.

He said the proposed requirement that hemp be harvested within 15 days of sampling is intended to prevent multiple requests by growers to test their plants' THC levels during the growing season.

"Repeated requests for sampling by a number of cultivators would be a burden on the department's staff and resources," Wellman said.

Wellman requested that the committee remove language in the bill that would provide for a transfer of general funds to support the program for its first two years. He asked that the Legislature instead give the department spending authority to ensure that the program is self-supporting.

Jacob Bish, of Bish Enterprises and Hemp Harvest Works, provided neutral testimony on LB1152. The bill would make necessary updates to the act, Bish said, but he expressed concern about the proposed 15-day harvest window and the transportation notification requirement, which he called unnecessary.

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Funds sought for Omaha community corrections facility

The state would fund additional beds for inmates who are preparing to reenter their communities under a bill heard Feb. 5 by the Appropriations Committee.

LB916, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Steve Lathrop, would appropriate \$52 million from the General Fund in fiscal year 2020-21 to the state Department of Correctional Services for construction or expansion of a community corrections facility with 300 new beds in the Omaha metropolitan area.

Lathrop said adding community corrections beds would be consistent with the Department of Correctional



Sen. Steve Halloran



Sen. Steve Lathrop

Services 2014 Master Plan. The current systemwide population is at or above 160 percent of design capacity, he said.

“We’re going to be in an overcrowding emergency on July 1,” Lathrop said. “And I expect that we’re going to stay there almost perpetually unless something is done.”

Lathrop said the only options for solving the crisis are sentencing reform—releasing inmates sooner or shortening sentences—or building more capacity.

Doug Koebernick, inspector general of the Nebraska correctional system, testified in support of the bill. He said it always is better for an inmate to transition back into society from a community corrections setting, where they can be employed outside the facility and reintegrate over time. It is much safer for communities and provides better outcomes for inmates, he said.

Scott Frakes, director of the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, testified in opposition. He said the corrections master plan needs to be adjusted and that the department is working on their budget request, which he will present to the Appropriations Committee seven months from now.

He said the Legislature has funded the creation of more than 800 beds for the department since 2015 and that the system does not need additional community custody capacity at this time.

“The challenge recently has been keeping all the community custody beds full that are available,” he said, adding that the difficulty for any prison system is getting the right inmates in the right beds at the right time.

“That does not mean forcing people into situations they are not prepared for, including moving them into community custody,” Frakes said.

The committee took no immediate action on LB916.

BUSINESS & LABOR

Compensation for amateur athletes considered

College and university athletes could earn income under a bill heard by the Business and Labor Committee Feb. 3.

LB962, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Megan Hunt, would allow college athletes at public and private schools to earn money from their name, image and likeness rights. Only 2 percent of college and university athletes will go on to play professionally, Hunt said.



Sen. Megan Hunt

“Student athletes are the only college students who are prohibited from earning an income for their skills and talents,” she said. “LB962 is about the right of every student to work, to participate in the free market and have the same freedoms as their peers on college and university campuses.”

The bill would prohibit any postsecondary institution or athletic association from penalizing or punishing a student athlete who enters into a commercial contract, as long as it does not directly conflict with a team contract.

Jeremiah Sirles, who played football both at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and at the professional level, spoke in support of the bill. Student athletes received monthly stipends of roughly \$750 to cover living costs, he said, but many athletes sent large percentages of that stipend home to support their families.

Allowing athletes to capitalize on their popularity and support themselves through things like social media posts would make a significant

difference, Sirles said, especially for those who may not go on to play professionally.

“Imagine [if those sending money home] could make an Instagram post for \$700,” he said. “Now, imagine a guy like Adrian Martinez or Wandale Robinson or Lexi Sun. Now you’re talking about thousands of dollars that can set these people up for life after college.”

Ramogi Huma, executive director of the National College Players Association, also supported LB962. A vote for the bill is a vote for Nebraska football, he said.

“Nebraska football and other sports can be strong if the state affords college athletes the same economic liberties [given to athletes in other states],” Huma said.

Student athletes would be required to report any personal contracts to their postsecondary institution and would be barred from wearing a sponsor’s apparel or otherwise advertising for the sponsor during official team activities.

It also would allow student athletes to obtain professional representation to negotiate related contractual or legal matters. An athlete could seek civil damages against their postsecondary institution or athletic association if they believe their right to seek compensation has been violated.

The bill would take effect July 1, 2023.

Garrett Klassy, UNL senior deputy athletic director, testified in a neutral capacity. The university already is discussing athlete compensation for name and likeness, he said, but the issue is best handled at the federal level.

“Because we compete and recruit student athletes on a national level, we believe that all universities should abide by the same set of rules,” Klassy said.

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

Hair discrimination would be banned

The Business and Labor Committee heard testimony Feb. 3 on a bill that seeks to extend employment discrimination protections.

LB1060, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh, would expand the definition of race for purposes of employment discrimination to include traits historically associated with race, such as hair texture and protective hairstyles, including braids, locks and twists.



Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh

A 2016 Perception Institute study revealed a strong implicit bias against natural hairstyles traditionally worn by black women and men, Cavanaugh said.

“African American men and women have reported that they—due to their natural hairstyles, such as dreadlocks and afro—have been unable to participate in school, sports and even maintain their employment,” she said.

Terri Crawford of Omaha supported the bill. She said that her son explicitly was told when interviewing for a job that he must cut off his dreadlocks to adhere to a company policy against long hair, despite seeing several white employees whose hair violated that policy.

National incidents of discrimination against natural hairstyles highlight a problem experienced daily by many black women and men, Crawford said.

“These stories disturb me to my core because I think I continue to experience the effects and incidents of slavery, which we know is deeply rooted in racist ideology, particularly [control of] our hair,” she said. “It’s

my culture, my race, my ethnicity and my hair.”

Cynthia Gooch-Grayson of Omaha also spoke in support of LB1060. Judging a person’s ability or professionalism by their hair is “unfair and absurd,” she said.

“For someone to limit access to one’s employment, as well as exert discrimination or harassment based on one’s hair is nonsensical,” Gooch-Grayson said. “I offer that those who bring attention to those like myself who choose to wear their hair in a natural state ... cause more disruption and perpetuate intolerance and bigotry in the workplace.”

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



FAFSA completion requirement considered

Nebraska students would have to complete and submit a federal college financial aid application before they graduate from high school under a proposal heard Feb. 3 by the Education Committee.

Introduced by Omaha Sen. Tony Vargas, LB1089 would, with some exceptions, require each student enrolled in a public high school to complete and submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid before graduating, beginning with the 2021-22 school year.



Sen. Tony Vargas

Vargas said the vast majority of students qualify for at least some financial aid, including federal Pell Grants and loans, state scholarships and college-

sponsored aid. However, he said, many do not complete the FAFSA because they do not realize they would qualify.

Instead, many students take out private education loans that can have higher interest rates and lack certain consumer protections that federal loans provide, Vargas said.

Nationwide, he said, more than 600,000 high school graduates who were eligible for a Pell Grant in 2018 did not complete a FAFSA, missing out on \$2.6 billion in financial aid, or about \$4,000 per student. Vargas said 38.5 percent of Nebraska students did not submit a FAFSA last year.

“By making FAFSA completion a requirement,” he said, “schools would be able to provide more assistance and resources to students who may not otherwise have the assistance to complete the FAFSA application on their own.”

LB1089 would allow the state commissioner of education to waive the requirement if a student’s parent or legal guardian refuses to complete the application for the student or if the administrator of the district in which the student is enrolled determines that the student is not able to complete it due to extenuating circumstances.

Mike Baumgartner, executive director of the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, testified in support of the bill. According to a U.S. Department of Education study, he said, students from low-income families have lower college-going rates than students from families in higher income brackets.

However, Baumgartner said, according to the National College Access Network, FAFSA completion is associated with a 127 percent increase in immediate college enrollment for students in the lowest socioeconomic quintile. Nebraska has several initiatives meant to encourage families to

complete the FAFSA, he said, but needs to do more.

“At a minimum, this would familiarize parents with the FAFSA and with financial aid and help them understand what they need to do to help their children achieve their educational goals,” Baumgartner said.

Lazaro Spindola, executive director of the Latino American Commission, also testified in support of LB1089. He said it would help more Latino first-generation college students, many of whom have disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, learn what resources are available for higher education.

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

Career-readiness, dual-credit education funding sought

The Legislature would provide additional funding for career-readiness and dual-credit education initiatives under a proposal heard Feb. 3 by the Education Committee.

Omaha Sen. Rick Kolowski, sponsor of LB1168, said the bill is related to LB920, introduced by Sen. Mike Groene of North Platte. Groene’s bill would allocate a portion of state lottery funds to certain education-related programs, including two that would be created by LB1168.

Both bills would direct 7 percent of education lottery funds—approximately \$1.4 million the first year according to the state Department of Education—to career-readiness and dual-credit education from fiscal year 2021-22 through FY2025-26.

“With this relatively small amount

of funding,” Kolowski said, “I think we can make a big impact on the availability of career and technical education classes and dual-credit classes.”

The bill would allocate the first \$282,500 to a cash fund used to pay the annual fee for an online education and career planning tool.

LB1168 would allocate 45 percent of the remaining funds to a new grant program that would be administered by the Coordinating Council for Postsecondary Education. Under the program, the commission would distribute money to teachers enrolled in courses leading to qualification to teach dual-credit courses and career and technical education courses.

The commission also would create career education pathways that enable the instruction of those courses. In doing so, it would “correlate and prioritize teacher education pathways with Nebraska workforce demand.”

Additionally, the commission would create a directory of teacher education pathways in Nebraska identified by sequence and location.

The bill would allocate 15 percent of the remaining funds to another new program that would be administered by the state Department of Education. Beginning with school year 2021-22, the department would reimburse school districts for the amount they pay to reduce the fees charged to low-income students by certain college credit testing programs.

Kolowski estimated that the proposed funding would allow districts to waive the testing fee for 1,800 additional high school students.

Finally, the bill would direct 40 percent of the remaining funds to the existing Access College Early Scholarship Cash Fund. The ACE program, also administered by the commission, provides financial aid to low-income high school students who enroll in

college courses through dual enrollment or early enrollment at Nebraska colleges or universities.

Mike Baumgartner, the commission’s executive director, testified in support of LB1168. In the past two years, he said, the commission has had to turn away approximately 500 ACE program applicants per year due to a lack of funding.

By directing lottery funds to the program for the first time, Baumgartner said, LB1168 would provide funding for at least that many additional scholarships per year.

Baumgartner said the bill also would help more teachers meet a new credentialing requirement set by the Higher Learning Commission, which accredits nearly all Nebraska colleges and universities. He said the commission now requires those who teach dual-enrollment courses to have a master’s degree in their content area or another area along with 18 graduate-level credit hours in their content area.

Jack Moles testified in support of the bill on behalf of the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators and the Nebraska Association of School Boards.

Moles said high school students in rural districts often do not have the same access to career-readiness and dual-credit classes as those who attend urban schools. LB1168 would help address that problem by enabling more teachers to earn the credentials they need to teach those classes, he said.

John Skretta, administrator of ESU 6, testified in support of LB1168 on behalf of a coalition of 19 mid-sized school districts.

Skretta said the bill likely would increase the rate at which students who take a dual-enrollment course, such as an Advanced Placement course, take the final exam. Taking the exam



Sen. Rick Kolowski

requires a fee but makes it more likely that the course credits will transfer to any postsecondary institution, he said.

Additionally, Skretta said, LB1168 would help teachers meet the rigorous new dual-enrollment credentialing requirement, which he said has exacerbated Nebraska's teacher shortage in career and technical education as well as language arts, math and science. Some teachers who had taught those courses do not meet the new requirement because their master's degree is not in their subject area, he said.

"The No. 1 barrier to sustaining robust dual-enrollment programming is almost certainly staffing," Skretta said.

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

Injury leave for school employees considered

School employees who are injured by another person while at work would receive injury leave under a bill heard Feb. 3 by the Education Committee.

Lincoln Sen. Mike Hilgers, sponsor of LB1186, said teachers who cannot work after being assaulted while on the job currently must use sick or vacation leave for the first seven days that they are absent because that time period is not covered by workers' compensation benefits. He said his proposal would address that gap.



Sen. Mike Hilgers

Under the bill, a school district employee who is physically injured by another person who "intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causes bodily injury" to that employee would receive up to seven days of injury leave and be paid their usual salary for the time they are absent and unable to work as

a result of the injury. The employee's injury must have occurred within their scope of employment in a way that would be covered by the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act.

Under the bill, injury leave would not count against any other leave the employee accrues. In determining the applicability of injury leave, a school district could require confirmation from a physician regarding the causation and the period of time for which an employee is unable to work.

LB1186 also would require each school district to report annually to the state Department of Education the number of incidents resulting in injury leave and the total number of injury leave days taken.

Jenni Benson, president of the Nebraska State Education Association, testified in support of the bill, saying she knows of only one Nebraska school district that includes injury leave in its contract with teachers.

Benson recounted an incident in which another district docked a teacher all of her sick and personal leave, as well as her pay, after she missed 28 days of work due to a knee injury caused by a student.

"We believe that no Nebraska teacher or employee should be forced to use personal leave for injuries sustained from an assault while on the job," she said.

Megan Boldt testified in opposition to LB1186 on behalf of the Nebraska Association of School Boards, saying it would increase school district costs.

"I'm aware of districts that provide the benefits mandated in this bill," she said, "and we feel school board policy adoption and negotiated agreements are a more appropriate place—rather than in statute—to implement these practices."

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Proposal to increase cap on legislative membership stalls

A proposed constitutional amendment to raise the maximum possible number of Nebraska state senators stalled on general file Feb. 5.

LR279CA, introduced by Sen. Jim Scheer of Norfolk, would raise the maximum number of state senators authorized by the state constitution from 50 to 55. If approved by 30 senators, the measure would be placed on the ballot for voter approval during the 2020 general election.



Sen. Jim Scheer

Scheer said the proposal itself would not increase the number of state senators, which has been at 49 since the 1960s, but merely would give the Legislature the option of possibly adding members in the future.

He said that while increasing the number of senators would not decrease the geographical size of current districts, doing so could keep rural districts that already are difficult for a senator to manage from becoming even larger. In addition, he said, the change would decrease the number of constituents that each member serves.

The first Unicameral had 43 members, Scheer said, each representing approximately 27,000 constituents. Current population estimates put that number at around 40,000 per district for the next round of redistricting in 2021, he said.

"If you do nothing, our representation will have gone up 50 percent since 1937," Scheer said.

Lincoln Sen. Mike Hilgers sup-

ported the proposal, saying it simply would give the Legislature additional authority to possibly use in the future to help members be more responsive to constituent needs.

“I don’t think there’s any doubt from a logistical, constituent-access perspective—the larger our districts get, the more population that we have, it makes it harder for us ... to be able to interact with our constituents,” Hilgers said.

Omaha Sen. Justin Wayne questioned whether—in the age of social media and email—senators need to interact face-to-face with constituents frequently in order to serve them well.

“We are at a place in history where we have more technology and access to our elected officials than [ever],” Wayne said, adding that many office holders, such as Douglas County Commissioners and Omaha City Council members, represent far more people than each state senator does.

Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks of Lincoln expressed concern about the potential cost should the number of senators increase in the future—in terms of staffing, office space and possibly longer sessions to accommodate consideration of a greater number of bills.

“Right now, in my opinion, bill drafters are completely overloaded,” Pansing Brooks said. “I think that they have so much work to do.”

Scheer said the measure “has no cost” because it is permissive language only and any spending considerations relating to its potential implementation would be up to future lawmakers to debate.

Following three hours of discussion over two days, the Legislature moved to the next item on the agenda. Per a practice implemented last year by Scheer, the sponsor of a bill that is facing a potential filibuster must

demonstrate sufficient support for a cloture motion before the measure will be scheduled for additional debate.

Juvenile facility oversight sought

A measure that would establish legislative oversight of the state’s residential juvenile facilities was considered Feb. 4 by the Executive Board.

LR298, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Sara Howard, would create the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center Special Oversight Committee of the Legislature. Howard said the proposal is in response to deteriorating conditions and issues that occurred at the YRTC in Geneva during the summer of 2019, including a lack of treatment and programming.



Sen. Sara Howard

“When children enter the juvenile justice system the goal is to provide them with treatment and rehabilitation to address the issues that have led to their behavior and to help set them on the right course for their future,” she said.

An oversight body that includes members of the standing legislative committees involved in the various aspects of YRTC functioning would consolidate the Legislature’s efforts to ensure that conditions at the facilities improve, Howard said.

The nine-member committee would include:

- three members of the Health and Human Services and Judiciary committees;
- one member of the Appropriations and Education committees; and
- one at-large member of the Legislature.

The oversight committee would

be required to issue a report with any findings and recommendations to the Legislature by Dec. 15, 2020.

Testifying in support of the measure was Julie Rogers, state ombudsman and former inspector general of Nebraska child welfare. She said that all 35 of the girls who resided at the Geneva YRTC had been diagnosed with behavioral or mental health disorders—or both—and that all but two had documented histories of abuse or neglect.

“The YRTC issue is a complex one,” Rogers said. “As decisions are made for these youth ... they cut across every branch of Nebraska state government.”

Dannette Smith, CEO of the state Department of Health and Human Services, testified in opposition to the proposal, calling it “duplicative” and “unnecessary.” She said the goal of improving the YRTCs can be achieved without an oversight committee, which she said could inhibit the department’s ability to act quickly when necessary.

“Changes are needed within the YRTC system,” Smith said. “We are making those changes.”

The committee took no immediate action on the measure.

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Smoking, vaping restrictions sought

The General Affairs Committee considered three bills Feb. 3 designed to reduce smoking and vaping by teenagers and young adults.

LB862, introduced by Sen. Dan Hughes of Venango, would make it a Class V misdemeanor for anyone younger than 19 to possess tobacco,

electronic nicotine delivery systems or alternative nicotine products.

Hughes said he introduced the bill after consulting with school administrators.



Sen. Dan Hughes

“Our schools are having a difficult time dealing with the problem of underage vaping and this bill will give them one more tool to combat that problem,” Hughes said.

Kyle McGowan, speaking on behalf of the Nebraska Association of School Boards, Nebraska Council of School Administrators and Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association, testified in support of the bill. He said involving law enforcement would add weight to the message that smoking and vaping are dangerous.

“To stay after school or have your pack of smokes taken away tends to not be as big a deterrent as turning it over to the police,” McGowan said.

Megan Myers, speaking on behalf of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, also testified in support of LB862. Myers, also the principal at Waverly High School, said vaping has increased in recent years at her school, particularly among freshman and sophomores.

“If they were issued a ticket, or if there was a consequence outside of school, that would help regulate e-cigarette use in our buildings,” Myers said.

Nick Faustman, representing the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, spoke against the bill. He said LB862 would distract from the true problem—retailers selling to underage customers.

“Evidence-based best practices should focus penalties on the tobacco retailers who profit from the illegal sales rather than the youth that is

likely addicted,” Faustman said. “It’s easier to conduct compliance checks on retailers rather than youth.”

The committee also discussed LB1176, introduced by Sen. Tom Briese of Albion, which would ban flavored liquid vapor products that taste like fruit, candy, alcoholic beverages or other non-tobacco flavors. The bill would not ban menthol or tobacco-flavored liquids. Anyone selling a banned flavor would be guilty of a Class III misdemeanor.



Sen. Tom Briese

Briese said the bill mirrors a recent U.S. Food and Drug Administration announcement that it would prioritize enforcement of non-tobacco-flavored vape cartridges because tobacco flavored vapor products can be useful for smoking cessation.

“[LB1176 would] curb youth use and access to such products while still allowing legal adults to choose such products,” he said.

Andy Hale, speaking on behalf of the Nebraska Hospital Association, spoke in favor of the bill, saying it would reduce health care costs.

“We think this is one step in reducing [the use of] cigarettes,” Hale said.

Sarah Linden, president of Nebraska Vape Vendors Association, testified against the bill. She said when vape manufacturer Juul removed a mango-flavored product from the market, it merely caused people to switch to a different flavor.

“Teens vape primarily for the buzz they receive from high-nicotine products,” Linden said. “Teens will continue to vape whatever flavors are available as long as high-nicotine products are available.”

Finally, LB1064, also introduced by Briese, would increase the legal age to

use and purchase tobacco, cigarettes, cigars, electronic nicotine delivery systems or alternative nicotine products from 19 to 21.

The Legislature passed a bill last year to raise the tobacco and vaping age to 19, Briese said, and later Congress increased the federal legal age to 21.

“This created enforcement confusion,” he said. “If we do not raise and enforce the new federal age of 21 we could at some point risk losing certain federal block grants.”

Maggie Ballard of Heartland Family Service testified in support of the bill. She said raising the legal age would promote public health.

“We have so much scientific evidence, that maybe hasn’t caught up to our laws, that demonstrates that the human brain is not fully developed until age 25,” Ballard said.

Kathy Siefken, executive director of the Nebraska Grocery Industry Association, also testified in support, saying that a consistent legal purchasing age throughout Nebraska would level the retail playing field.

No one testified in opposition to the bill.

The committee took no immediate action on any of the bills.

Amended part bus bill advances

Lawmakers advanced a bill from select file Feb. 6 that would license charter buses that allow consumption of alcohol under the state’s Liquor Control Act.

LB734, introduced by Omaha Sen. Megan Hunt, would require companies that operate special party buses to obtain an annual license from



Sen. Megan Hunt

the Liquor Control Commission. The commission would have the right to suspend, revoke or cancel the license. A one-year license would cost \$75.

Hunt introduced an amendment on select file that would limit enforcement inspections of special party buses to times when patrons are entering or exiting the stopped vehicle. She said party bus operators expressed concern that their vehicles would be inspected too often and charter bus and limousine services were concerned that their vehicles would be confused with party buses.

“This addresses their concerns that law enforcement is just going to be pulling over [party] buses and unfairly targeting them” Hunt said.

The amendment also requires the Nebraska Public Service Commission to develop signs and other methods of distinguishing between special party buses and other charter buses.

Lawmakers adopted the amendment 33-0 and advanced the bill to final reading on a voice vote.

Bill would reduce special designated licenses

Certain alcohol vendors would be able to temporarily expand their operations under a bill considered Feb. 3 by the General Affairs Committee.

LB1056, introduced by Kearney Sen. John Lowe, would allow farm wineries, craft breweries, micro-distilleries, bottle clubs or entities with a retail liquor license to temporarily expand their licensed premises to a street, parking lot or alley that is immediately adjacent to their licensed location upon approval by the appropriate local governing body.



Sen. John Lowe

A temporary area would be enclosed by a fence or other means, have easily identifiable entrances and exits and meet all sanitation requirements for a premises with a liquor license.

The bill would limit expansion to 15 days a year and local governing bodies could establish additional criteria.

Under current law, an establishment needs to obtain a special designated license from the state Liquor Control Commission for each event, which, Lowe said, costs time and money.

“This is burdensome for companies,” Lowe said. “LB1056 will allow companies to skip the Liquor Control Commission process.”

HoBERT Rupe of the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission testified in support. He said the use of SDLs has risen in recent years and in some cases the application is for a business to host an event in its parking lot.

“The main issue for the commission was trying to reduce the number of SDLs that weren’t necessary,” Rupe said.

Vanessa Silke, testifying on behalf of the Nebraska Craft Brewers Guild, also spoke in support of the bill, saying it would reduce the regulatory burden on the commission and save businesses money.

No one testified in opposition to LB1056 and the committee took no immediate action on it.



Human trafficking resources framework amended, advanced

A bill that would develop a statewide network of supports and services related to human trafficking was amended and advanced from select file Feb. 6.

LB518, sponsored by Elkhorn Sen. Lou Ann Linehan, would adopt the Support for Trafficking Survivors Act and create the Support for Trafficking Survivors advisory board.



Sen. Lou Ann Linehan

The new board would develop, oversee and coordinate the statewide response to trafficking through creation of a state plan. Membership would include trafficking survivors, service providers and representatives of law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

The bill also would establish the Office of Support for Trafficking Survivors within the state Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate and implement the state plan developed by the advisory board.

Bellevue Sen. Carol Blood offered an amendment during select file debate, adopted 38-0, that added provisions of her LB745.



Sen. Carol Blood

The amendment would require Nebraska law enforcement agencies to certify a form—within 90 days of when it is requested—for two types of immigration visas that are set aside for victims of certain crimes.

A “T” visa is for victims of human trafficking and a “U” visa is for victims of specific crimes who have suffered abuse and are helpful to law enforcement in the investigation and prosecution of criminal activity.

Blood said that the special visas serve as an incentive for victims to cooperate with law enforcement and that the amendment would provide a uniform process for “U” and “T” visa application certification across Nebraska.

“This bill only deals with local certification requests and not approval or denial of the full visa application,” she said, which is decided at the federal level.

Nebraska law enforcement agencies would maintain the discretion to revoke or disavow a certification at any time after completion if an applicant is no longer compliant with certification criteria.

Following adoption of the Blood amendment, lawmakers advanced LB518 to final reading by voice vote.

YRTC education, separate campus bills considered

The Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony Feb. 6 on two bills that would affect the educational structure and facility operational dates at the state’s youth rehabilitation and treatment centers.

LB1188, introduced by Omaha Sen. Sara Howard, would require the Office of Juvenile Services to create a superintendent of schools position to administer education for YRTCs by Aug. 1, 2020, and mandate that education for any juvenile committed to the OJS be provided by a school program meeting the requirements of an interim program school, an approved school or and accredited school.

The bill also would designate YRTCs as interim program schools.

Girls living at the YRTC campus in Kearney have had their education disrupted since they moved from the temporarily closed facility in Geneva, Howard said, and LB1188 would address that issue by establishing system-wide education for YRTCs.

“This legislation will allow an indi-

vidual with educational expertise, and a certificate to administer schools in Nebraska, to help oversee the educational programming at the YRTCs,” Howard said.

Nebraska Education Commissioner Matthew Blomstedt testified in support of the bill. He said all other schools in the state have a superintendent, but under current law, YRTCs operate in a structure that would be like a school district with principals running each building but without a superintendent to report to.

“We have expectations of superintendents that are different than those for principals,” Blomstedt said.

LB1150, introduced by Sen. Tom Brandt of Plymouth, would require that YRTC sites in Kearney and Geneva be fully staffed and ready to supervise, treat and rehabilitate youth by July 1, 2021. The bill also would require OJS and the state Department of Health and Human Services to submit reports by Aug. 1, 2020, and Dec. 1, 2020, on progress toward making the YRTCs operational.

Brandt said the bill’s intent was to establish separate facilities for each gender.

“Kearney is a boys-only facility and Geneva is a girls-only facility,” he said. “There’s a lot of stuff that happens when you get boys and girls in close proximity to each other.”

Frank Heinisch, an attorney and former YRTC at Geneva board member, testified in support of the bill. Girls feel like they are second-class citizens at the Kearney YRTC facility, he said, and are not receiving equal access to education—in possible violation of federal Title IX law.

Heinisch told lawmakers that girls

and boys aren’t allowed to be in the hallway at the same time at the Kearney facility, meaning a simple request to go to the bathroom requires a student to wait until the halls are cleared.

“That’s a prime example of the lifestyle they’re having to lead,” he said. “They’re not getting the normal school experience.”

Kyle Svec, Geneva city administrator, also spoke in support of LB1150. He said closure of the YRTC facility there has “rocked” the town and that residents would like it to reopen.

“Residents of YRTC have grown to be welcome and known across our community,” Svec said. “This unique, small-town environment is one that is providing young girls staying here with the opportunity to build the needed relationships to get their lives [headed] back in the right direction.”

No one testified against either bill and the committee took no immediate action on them.



Sen. Tom Brandt



Sen. Sara Howard



Limitations on juvenile confinement approved

The Legislature passed a bill Feb. 6 that restricts the use of room confinement for juveniles.

LB230, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks, prohibits correctional facilities from placing juveniles in room confinement as a result of disciplinary sanctions, staff shortages or retaliation by staff members.



Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks

The bill specifies that room confinement only can be used after all

other less-restrictive alternatives have been exhausted and the juvenile poses a serious and immediate security threat to themselves or others. The length of confinement will be restricted to the minimum amount of time needed to resolve any such threat while not harming the mental or physical health of the juvenile.

Confined individuals can continue to have regular access to medical and mental health treatment, meals, contact with parents and legal guardians, legal assistance and educational programming. Monitoring of confined individuals may be accomplished through regular in-person visits, supplemented by electronic video monitoring.

Notice to an offender's parents or guardians and attorney of his or her placement in room confinement will be required within one business day.

LB230 passed on a 44-0 vote.

Stolen firearm penalties strengthened

Prosecutors will have increased authority to pursue people for receiving stolen firearms under a bill passed by the Legislature Feb. 6.

LB582, sponsored by Gordon Sen. Tom Brewer, adopts a new standard so that a person who should have known or had reasonable cause to believe that a firearm was stolen can be prosecuted. Previously, a person was required to have actual knowledge or belief that a gun was stolen to be convicted of crimes related to receiving a stolen firearm.

Possessing a firearm that is believed to be stolen is a Class IIA felony, which carries a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment.

The bill passed on a 47-0 vote.



Sen. Tom Brewer

County-level juvenile justice program proposed

The Judiciary Committee heard testimony Feb. 6 on a bill that would allow for local juvenile justice services.

LB1095, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Mike McDonnell, would permit counties containing a city of the metropolitan class to establish a juvenile justice program. The bill's provisions currently would apply to Douglas County only.



Sen. Mike McDonnell

Douglas County has no immediate plans to take on the duties outlined in LB1095, McDonnell said, but it has discussed the option in the past.

"This is not a criticism of state probation, who currently [administers] the programs and services mentioned in the bill," he said. "LB1095 would simply allow Douglas County to provide alternative programming and services for kids in the Omaha area who are in the juvenile justice system."

The bill would allow an eligible county to implement services for juveniles pertaining to intake alternatives, investigation and assessment, case management and supervision, and placement and reentry.

The county would be required to submit an annual report of aggregate data regarding the juveniles served and their disposition.

Douglas County Commissioner Chris Rodgers spoke in support of the bill. Allowing the county to take on juvenile justice services and programs would help alleviate a burden on state resources, he said, and improve services for other counties.

"It is our hope that LB1095 will start a conversation to begin the process and put ourselves in the position to address

the need for services and programming in the future," Rodgers said.

Jeanne Brandner, deputy administrator for the juvenile services division of the Office of the Courts and Probation, opposed the bill. She said the Legislature unified probation services statewide in Nebraska in 1985.

"Essentially this bill would authorize a decentralization of juvenile probation with Douglas County operating independently of the rest of the state," Brandner said. "Making this change ... would not work for the judiciary and there's a strong chance that relationships could be negatively impacted."

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.



Flood mitigation task force proposed

A task force would create a comprehensive, statewide flood mitigation plan under a proposal heard Feb. 5 by the Natural Resources Committee.

Sen. Bruce Bostelman of Brainard, sponsor of LB1201, said Nebraska lacks a coordinated strategy to reduce flood risk. In light of last year's flooding and the prospect of major future floods, he said, it is time to coordinate state and local flood mitigation planning.



Sen. Bruce Bostelman

Bostelman said an integrated plan would help various stakeholders, including the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, natural resources districts, counties, cities and others, to prioritize flood mitigation projects and secure federal funding to pay for those projects.

“With all resources on the table,” he said, “the chances of finding federal or private funding to create a plan are greater, meaning less cost to the state and a stronger plan to mitigate flood risk.”

Among other duties, the Flood Mitigation and Planning Task Force would determine how Nebraska ranks in eligibility for federal funds and examine current federal program requirements to enhance state and local hazard mitigation plans.

It would create an inventory of flood planning and mitigation programs and support the assessment, restoration and revitalization of roads, dams, levees and other infrastructure that is “continually devastated by flood events to ensure resilience from future floods.”

The task force also would develop strategies to minimize disruption to business activities and to support the restoration and revitalization of agricultural systems after a flood.

It also would identify housing supports for flood-affected communities and strategies for moving vulnerable populations out of high-risk areas.

Additionally, it would evaluate the state’s current floodplain management program and determine if additional changes to state law are necessary to improve collaboration and coordination between state and local entities.

The task force would be housed within NEMA and the agency’s adjutant general would serve as chairperson.

Task force members would include a representative from a natural resources district as well as the directors of the state departments of Natural Resources, Transportation, Agriculture and Environment and Energy.

It also would include the chairperson of the Natural Resources

Committee and an at-large member of the Legislature appointed by the Executive Board, both of whom would be non-voting.

The task force could convene advisory groups composed of representatives from stakeholders including cities, counties and natural resources districts.

LB1201 would require the task force to submit its findings to the Legislature’s Executive Board in two annual reports no later than Nov. 1, 2020, and Nov. 1, 2021. The task force would terminate on Dec. 31, 2021.

Jeff Henson, a senior mitigation planner and business development director at JEO Consulting, testified in support of the bill on behalf of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Nebraska. He said trends suggest that major floods are occurring more frequently in Nebraska and that the proposed planning would help reduce flood risks.

Henson said a 2018 National Institute of Building Sciences study found that flood mitigation projects save an average of \$6 in damages for every \$1 spent on construction. Ensuring that local and regional hazard mitigation plans are as detailed as possible would help the state compete for federal funding aimed at reducing flood-related vulnerabilities, he said.

“Mitigation works, but standalone efforts are not sufficient,” Henson said. “We need stronger planning at the state level to set a course for what actions will be needed and identify resources available to get the job done.”

John Winkler, general manager of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, testified in support of LB1201 on behalf of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts. He said the state can better plan and prepare for the next disaster, as well as expedite mitigation efforts to prevent

damages from floods like last year’s.

“Unless we properly plan to take decisive action and mitigate flooding,” Winkler said, “we will be doomed to repeat this scenario over and over again into the foreseeable future.”

Katie Torpy testified in support of the bill on behalf of the Nature Conservancy, saying that preparing for major flood events is increasingly urgent as climate change makes them more frequent.

She said climate models prepared by researchers at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln predict that by 2050 the state could see a 15 to 20 percent increase in winter and spring precipitation and up to a 25 percent increase in extreme rain events.

Beth Bazyn Ferrell provided neutral testimony on behalf of the Nebraska Association of County Officials. Although LB1201 would include counties in a list of stakeholders that could advise the task force, Bazyn Ferrell suggested that the committee consider adding a county board member, highway supervisor or emergency manager to the task force itself.

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



Amended business tax incentive proposal considered

The Revenue Committee held a special hearing Feb. 6 to hear testimony on an amendment to a bill introduced last year that would create a new business tax incentive program.

The application period for the current program, the Nebraska Advantage Act, is set to end this year.

LB720, as introduced last session

by Seward Sen. Mark Kolterman, would create the ImagiNE Nebraska Act. Qualifying businesses would receive a varying combination of incentives—wage credits, income tax credits, sales and use tax refunds and exemptions, personal property tax exemptions or real property tax refunds—based on their level of capital investment and the number of employees they hire at a minimum qualifying wage.



Sen. Mark Kolterman

Kolterman said the amendment, which would replace the bill, is largely the same as the original proposal, with a few important changes. The amendment would decrease certain wage requirements because rural manufacturers could not meet them, he said.

Even with the decrease, Kolterman said, the proposed wage requirements are higher than those in the Nebraska Advantage Act, and the new program would require companies that receive incentives to offer health insurance and a “sufficient benefits package.”

He said the amendment also would add a provision meant to encourage new owners of “key employers” to retain jobs in Nebraska when they are considering moving all or some of those jobs out of the state. Such mergers and acquisitions are growing more frequent, Kolterman said.

“If this had been in place a few years ago, our state would have been more competitively positioned to keep Cabela’s in Sidney,” he said. “We simply cannot afford to continue to be reactive to the reality of today’s economy.”

Metka Kolm testified in support of the amendment on behalf of Nucor Steel and the Nebraska State Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Kolm said the high wage threshold and a lack of capital investment credits under the original proposal’s entry-level tiers prevented manufacturers from qualifying. The amendment would address both of those problems, she said.

Kolm said manufacturers typically offer new employees entry-level wages but offer strong benefits packages and wage increases over time.

“We believe that the state’s incentive package should recognize this unique entry-level position if it wants to grow and keeps jobs in the manufacturing sector,” she said.

David G. Brown testified in support of the amendment on behalf of the Greater Omaha Chamber and the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce.

He said the proposed job retention incentives would help Nebraska act quickly when it faces the loss of a large employer, as it does now with Fiserv’s recent purchase of First Data and Charles Schwab’s potential acquisition of TD Ameritrade.

Renee Fry, executive director of OpenSky Policy Institute, testified in opposition. She said the proposal would reduce state revenue by approximately \$1 billion over the next decade when Nebraska still has hundreds of millions of dollars in outstanding obligations under its current tax incentive programs.

Fry said the proposal’s cost especially is concerning when the Legislature also is considering a major property tax relief proposal and funding for a large expansion project at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

If passed, she said, those three measures alone could consume 6.8 to 9.4 percent of state revenue between 2023 and 2028.

Additionally, Fry said, the proposed wage thresholds are much lower than in the original bill. She said the lowest qualifying wage would make a

family of four eligible for government benefits such as Medicaid, SNAP and free or reduced lunch.

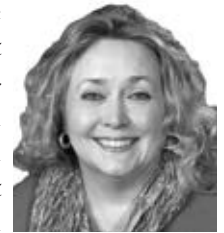
The committee took no immediate action on the amendment.

TRANSPORTATION & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Protection of consumer data discussed

Consumers would have more control over how their data is used and distributed under a bill heard by the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee Feb. 4.

Under LB746, introduced by Bellevue Sen. Carol Blood, consumers would have the right to know what personal information is collected about them and whether or not it is sold or disclosed to third parties.



Sen. Carol Blood

Consumers also could decline or opt out of the sale of their information and access the information collected about them.

It is especially important to ensure that Nebraska has a framework for what is allowed, Blood said, because people may not know that information is being bought and sold or who is buying and selling it.

“As our communication networks grow—as do the many ways we share data and information—it has become more and more important to make sure that we as a state government have a grasp on what exactly is being shared and sent, bought and sold,” she said.

Upon receipt of a consumer request, a business that collects personal information would be required to

disclose the types of personal information collected, from where it was collected and for what purposes and the third parties with whom the information would be shared.

LB746 would prohibit a third party from selling consumer information sold to the third party by a business unless it receives explicit consent from the consumer. A business that sells consumer information would be required to give notice to consumers that their data may be sold and that they could opt out of the sale of information at any time.

Businesses would be prohibited from selling the personal information of any person under 16 unless it has received explicit, affirmative consent from the person's parent or guardian.

The bill also would authorize consumers to request deletion of their personal information from a business unless the information is necessary for business transactions or other narrowly defined purposes. A business could not discriminate against a consumer for exercising their rights under the bill.

Speaking in opposition to LB746 was Jim Otto, representing the Nebraska Retail Federation. Winning customer trust is essential in a hyper-competitive marketplace, he said.

"One element of that trust lies in customer information gathered to better serve them and win their business," Otto said. "The vast majority of customers are willing to trade some personal information for valuable benefits and discounts."

Kathy Siefken, executive director of the Nebraska Grocery Industry Association, also opposed the bill. As written, she said, it does not limit how frequently consumers can request information, which would negatively impact the price of doing business.

"In addition to potentially higher

compliance costs, the need to overhaul data use practices and the possible risk of enforcement by the attorney general's office, the cost for retailers that offer discount programs could be so overwhelming that these loyalty or discount programs could become too expensive to continue," Siefken said.

Violation of the bill's provisions by a business, service provider or other person would be subject to a civil penalty of up to \$7,500 per incident.

No one testified in support of LB746 and the committee took no immediate action on it.

Fee cap for cell tower applications proposed

The Transportation and Telecommunications Committee heard testimony Feb. 3 on a bill that would cap the amount that cities could charge to review certain cell tower projects.

Introduced by Sen. Curt Friesen of Henderson, LB898 would allow the state or any agency, county, city, village or other political subdivision to fix and charge an application fee for the submission, processing and review of an eligible facilities request to collocate a new wireless facility, site a new wireless support structure or substantially change an existing wireless support structure.

Friesen said the bill would ensure that large wireless facilities are subject to uniform regulation by those authorities. He said its provisions are not intended to affect small cell facilities, the subject of a bill the Legislature passed last year.

"Our goal in Nebraska is to get superior telecommunication services to all of our citizens," Friesen said.

"By providing limitations on fees for applications to improve those services, we do a service to Nebraskans."

LB898 defines eligible facilities request as a request to modify an existing tower or wireless support structure that hosts a wireless facility in a way that does not "substantially change" the physical dimensions of the tower or the support structure.

Substantial changes would include, among others, increasing a tower's height beyond a certain percentage or adding an appurtenance to a tower that would protrude beyond a certain distance.

Under the bill's provisions, providers could install or place a wireless facility on or adjacent to buildings, electrical transmission towers, water towers and certain other existing structures.

An authority could charge up to \$500 for the review of an eligible facilities request or collocation application on an existing wireless support structure. It could charge up to \$1,000 for the review of an application to place a new tower and associated wireless facility.

The application fee would be based on the authority's "actual, direct and objectively reasonable costs incurred for all aspects of an application review process."

LB898 would require that any costs incurred for review by an outside consultant be included in the application fee. The fee could not be used for travel time or expenses incurred in a consultant's review of an application or reimbursement for a consultant that is based on a contingency fee or a results-based arrangement.

Mike Harms testified in support of the bill on behalf of Viaero Wireless. He said certain consultants hired by a few Nebraska towns and counties to review cell tower siting and upgrade applications have imposed "undue



Sen. Curt Friesen

fees and stringent processes that add no value to the project.”

Viaero now avoids work anywhere such a consultant is retained, Harms said.

“This bill would still allow the legitimate consulting work that is occurring in the majority of Nebraska communities while barring those that are abusing the process,” he said.

Mary Jacobson testified in support of the bill on behalf of U.S. Cellular. She said wireless providers continually must build and update cell towers, also called macro towers or macro cells, as technology improves and network traffic increases.

“Unfortunately, the deployment and upgrading of these macro towers has been hindered by extraordinarily excessive costs and delays imposed on the industry by some outside siting consultants,” Jacobson said.

Shelley Sahling-Zart testified in opposition to LB898 on behalf of the Lincoln Electric System, the city of Lincoln and the Nebraska Power Association.

She said wireless providers did not raise the problem of high consultant fees impeding wireless deployment during the three years stakeholders spent negotiating a compromise that culminated in the 2019 Small Wireless Facilities Deployment Act.

Sahling-Zart said providing a uniform standard for macro cells presents different safety and siting considerations than it did for small cells and that capping fees at the proposed level would not allow cities to recover review costs.

Additionally, she said, LB898 would allow providers to collocate large wireless facilities on electrical transmission towers, which she said was a “nonstarter” in the small cell negotiation because of safety and reliability concerns.

Tara Vasicek, Columbus city administrator, also testified in opposition. After “mass opposition” to a cell tower that was installed in a city park a few years ago, she said, Columbus adopted an ordinance that requires the city to notify affected property owners and hold a public hearing before such a tower is built.

Vasicek said the ordinance requires the city to use wireless facilities application fees to hire a consultant to review applications and inspect completed projects. The proposed caps would prevent the city from recouping those costs, she said.

“The language in LB898 would not provide the city of Columbus with the appropriate limits to ensure that these facilities are delivered to the public safely,” Vasicek said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Data collection program proposed to improve broadband availability

The Transportation and Telecommunications Committee heard testimony on a bill Feb. 3 that would help Nebraska obtain federal funding for increased broadband availability.

LB996, sponsored by Plymouth Sen. Tom Brandt, would allow Nebraska to create a statewide crowdsourcing program to collect broadband availability data to supplement federal data that already is collected.



Sen. Tom Brandt

The current data collection form employed by the Federal Communications Commission grossly overstates the availability of broadband in Nebraska, Brandt said, but the agency is committed to getting more accurate data and asking

states for help in that effort.

“The FCC is allocating \$20.4 billion to help states build out fiber in rural America,” he said. “If we pass [LB996], we would be one of the first states to receive that funding.”

The bill would prioritize resources and outreach in areas of the state that crowdsourcing, public feedback and other evidence suggests are unserved or underserved by high-speed internet.

John Hladik, policy program director for the Center for Rural Affairs, testified in support of the bill. LB996 is written to ensure that Nebraska is in a position to maximize its share of the federal funding, he said.

“These unserved and underserved households will be discovered through a combination of improved data from internet service providers and the results of crowdsourcing at the state level,” Hladik said. “The states that identify [these] homes through crowdsourcing will be eligible for a greater share of [federal] funds.”

Public Service Commissioner Mary Ridder also supported LB996. She said it would enable the commission to supplement efforts by the FCC to gather more accurate data.

“There’s no question that our annual broadband map overstates broadband coverage and that it’s become a national goal to fix it,” Ridder said. “Better data and better maps are an integral part of making good policy decisions which will effectively target broadband deployment and support.”

Representing AARP Nebraska, Danny DeLong supported the bill’s goal of assisting communities on the wrong side of the “digital divide.”

“These communities find themselves left out of the information economy because broadband providers have not found it profitable to serve them,” DeLong said. “We should continue to focus on policies and

programs that give [Nebraskans], especially older ones, the digital literacy tools and comfort to adopt highspeed internet in their homes.”

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

URBAN AFFAIRS

More affordable housing sought

The Urban Affairs Committee heard testimony Feb. 4 on two bills designed to expand affordable housing options.

LB794, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Matt Hansen, would create the Missing Middle Housing Act. The bill would allow middle housing—defined as duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, cottage clusters and townhouses—to be built in areas zoned for single-family dwellings in cities of the metropolitan, primary and first class.



Sen. Matt Hansen

Cities would be required to amend their zoning ordinances to comply with the bill by Jan. 1, 2022.

Single-family housing prices have risen by 41 percent in Omaha to 34 percent in Lincoln, Hansen said, and expanding the type of housing available would help lower costs.

“These units are the middle of the housing spectrum,” Hansen said. “Single-family homes are expensive to build, expensive to buy and expensive to maintain and this process is only getting worse as the size of the average single-family home has risen from 1,500 square feet in the [1970s] to 2,500 square feet today.”

Patrick Leahy, representing the

Nebraska chapter of the American Association of Architects, testified in support of the bill. Increasing housing density provides more choices for low- and middle-income earners, he said.

“This is really about redefining multi-family housing with more options, providing a bridge between the single-family housing we have and those large, rising towers [of apartments],” Leahy said.

Ward Hoppe, speaking on behalf of the Metro Omaha Builders Association and the Nebraska State Home Builders Association, also spoke in favor of the bill. Multi-family housing reduces per-unit construction costs because infrastructure can be used by more than one home, he said.

“Mass means more affordability,” Hoppe said.

Lynn Rex of the League of Nebraska Municipalities testified against the bill, saying it undermines local control. Cities already are working on the issue of affordable housing, she said, and oppose additional mandates.

“We think this will have a backlash,” Rex said. “I think this will have unintended consequences.”

The committee also discussed LB1155, introduced by Omaha Sen.

Tony Vargas, which would create the Middle Income Workforce Housing Investment Act. The bill would require the director of the Nebraska



Sen. Tony Vargas

Department of Economic Development to establish a grant program to foster and support construction of housing affordable to first-time home buyers, middle-income earners and the emerging workforce in urban communities.

The newly created Middle Income Workforce Housing Investment Fund

would receive a one-time \$10 million transfer from the state’s General Fund.

Under the bill, nonprofit organizations could apply for grants to construct or rehabilitate housing in neighborhoods with a demonstrated need for affordable housing or a substantial number of dilapidated homes.

Grants would be available in counties with a population of more than 100,000 and would require one-to-one matching funds.

Vargas said he introduced the bill because of a shortage of affordable owner-occupied homes in Douglas, Sarpy and Lancaster counties.

“In my district specifically, there has been a lot of new construction of higher-end condos and higher-priced rental units. While the investment in neighborhoods has been positive in many ways, it has also resulted in longtime residents being pushed out,” Vargas said.

Matthew Cavanaugh, executive director of the Nebraska Housing Developers Association, supported the bill. Virtually no city in the state has adequate affordable housing to meet demand, he said.

“By investing more funding into housing development, the Middle Income Workforce Housing Investment program is tailored narrowly enough to impact areas where the housing need is not being addressed by the market but still flexible enough that it will be highly competitive,” Cavanaugh said.

Christy Abraham of the League of Nebraska Municipalities also testified in support of LB1155. Affordable housing is perhaps the most important issue facing cities throughout Nebraska, she said.

No one testified against LB1155 and the committee took no immediate action on either bill. ■

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

Monday, Feb. 10

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB827 (Hilkemann) Appropriate funds to the Department of Health and Human Services

LB874 (Howard) Restate intent regarding funding programs from the Nebraska Health Care Cash Fund
LB877 (Walz) State intent regarding appropriations for aging and disability resource centers

LB1093 (Stinner) State intent regarding appropriations for nursing facility services under the medical assistance program

LB1215 (Walz) Appropriate funds to the Department of Health and Human Services

*Agency 25: Health & Human Services.
Note: Operations, Medicaid and Long Term Care, Developmental Disabilities*

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB808 (La Grone) Provide for ratification of defective corporate actions under the Nebraska Model Business Corporation Act

LB954 (Lindstrom) Change insurance provisions relating to fees for dental services

LB988 (Hilgers) Provide restrictions on business entity ownership with respect to certain professional services

Business & Labor

Warner Chamber - 1:30 p.m.

LB813 (Bolz) State intent regarding appropriations for apprenticeships and provide powers for the Department of Labor

LB1216 (Vargas) Adopt the H3 Rural Renewal Award Act

LB1160 (M. Hansen) Adopt the Nebraska Workforce and Education Reporting System Act

LB1101 (Halloran) Change the schedule of compensation for certain injuries resulting in disability under the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act
LB1103 (M. Hansen) Change requirements for lump-sum settlement approval or release by the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Court

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1111 (McDonnell) Create a grant program for the State Treasurer to award private donations and temporary school funds to common schools as prescribed
LB1153 (Vargas) Change provisions for diploma of high school equivalency testing

LB1151 (Vargas) Redefine eligible student and provide for prioritization of awards under the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Act

LB1217 (Wayne) Require individualized response plans following a report of certain types of incidents involving students

General Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1090 (Blood) Allow local governing bodies to suspend liquor licenses for nonpayment of taxes, fees, and special assessments

LB1163 (Wayne) Provide for transportation and storage of alcohol by retail licensees for customer pickup

LB971 (Wayne) Redefine a lottery to include wagers made on the outcome of an authorized sporting event

LB990 (Wayne) Adopt the Games of Skill Act and use proceeds to reduce school district property tax levies

LR295CA (Wayne) Constitutional amendment to allow the Legislature to authorize, regulate, and tax any game of chance

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1088 (Friesen) Provide for personalized message specialty license plates

LB843 (Cavanaugh) Provide for Donate Life license plates

LB903 (Kolowski) Provide for Down Syndrome Awareness license plates

LB921 (Hilkemann) Provide for The Good Life Is Outside Plates

LB942 (Hunt) Provide for Support the Arts license plates

LB1139 (Wishart) Provide for Pets for Vets license plates

Tuesday, Feb. 11

Agriculture

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointments: Britt D. Anderson; Dave W. Nielsen; Wade E. Thornburg - Beginning Farmer Board

LB1159 (Stinner) Change certain use restrictions and provide for unlimited license examination attempts under the Pesticide Act

LB1040 (Vargas) Provide for a state food insecurity nutrition incentive grant program

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB779 (Stinner) State intent regarding appropriations to the Department of Health and Human Services

LB897 (Cavanaugh) Appropriate funds for behavioral health aid

LB1100 (Bolz) State intent regarding appropriations for mental health and behavioral health services

LB1146 (Howard) Appropriate funds for the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center Kearney

LB1161 (M. Hansen) Appropriate funds to the Department of Health and Human Services

*Agency 25: Health & Human Services.
Note: Public Health, Children and Family Services, Behavioral Health, Facilities*

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB997 (Morfeld) Adopt the Out-of-Network Emergency Medical Care Act
LB767 (Lindstrom) Change provisions on breach of warranty on improvements to real property and provisions under the Nebraska Condominium Act

LB1199 (Lindstrom) Change provisions relating to motor vehicle service contract reimbursement insurance

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1076 (Bolz) Change provisions relating to eligible programs for the Community College Gap Assistance Program Act

LB1080 (Lathrop) Require school policies that prohibit sexual conduct with students and former students

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

LB1134 (Wayne) Change enrollment option limits and provisions for part-time enrollment in schools
LB1073 (DeBoer) Create the School Financing Review Commission, add basic funding aid, and change adjusted valuations, the local effort rate, and certification dates

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

LB1046 (Friesen) Change provisions relating to taxes and fees on community antenna television service

Urban Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB743 (Blood) Adopt updated electrical standards
LB1116 (Morfeld) Adopt the New School Construction and Water Access Act
LB864 (Wayne) Adopt the Bed Bug Detection and Treatment Act for cities of the metropolitan class
LB1114 (M. Hansen) Change election provisions for sanitary and improvement districts
LB984 (Hunt) Provide deadlines for filling vacancies on certain city or village boards, authorities, and agencies
LB1178 (Wayne) Prohibit land banks from entering into certain agreements to temporarily hold real property
LB960 (Friesen) Change accounting of income provisions and provide a requirement for use of funds under the Municipal Proprietary Function Act

Wednesday, Feb. 12

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

LB773 (Williams) Appropriate funds for the Rural Workforce Housing Investment Fund
LB1026 (Bolz) Appropriate funds to the University of Nebraska
LB1050 (Vargas) Appropriate funds to the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education
LB1069 (Bolz) Appropriate funds to the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska
LB1098 (McDonnell) Appropriate funds to the Department of Economic Development

Agency 72: Dept. of Economic Development
Agency 50: State College System
Agency 51: University of Nebraska System

Executive Board

Room 1507 - 12:00 p.m.

LB1157 (Vargas) Provide for counting Nebraska residents in Nebraska prisons for redistricting purposes
LB1207 (McCollister) Adopt the Redistricting Act

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1193 (Linehan) Change election provisions for certain bond issue, tax levy, and property tax limitation questions
LB1110 (La Grone) Change procedures for calling a school bond election
LB1119 (La Grone) Restrict special elections under the Election Act as prescribed
LB1120 (La Grone) Restrict special elections under the Election Act as prescribed
LB1086 (M. Hansen) Provide for poll watchers under the Election Act

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Mark M. Bulger - Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
LB833 (Crawford) Exclude certain elderly care programs from the Health Care Facility Licensure Act
LB1053 (Health & Human Services) Require rules and regulations for hospital and nursing facility medicaid reimbursement rates
LB1051 (Wishart) Create the Intergenerational Care Facility Incentive Cash Fund and provide for grants
LB1138 (Wishart) Establish a dementia registry
LB840 (Quick) Prohibit the use of electronic smoking devices as prescribed under the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB786 (Lathrop) Change rules on the use of restrictive housing and require screenings of inmates for

serious mental illness, developmental disabilities, and traumatic brain injuries
LB978 (Murman) Provide for county, city, and village jail reimbursement
LB1082 (Morfeld) Increase the indigent defense court filing fee
LB1171 (Cavanaugh) Change provisions under the Healthy Pregnancies for Incarcerated Women Act
LB1180 (Wayne) Change provisions regarding alternate jurors
LB1208 (Vargas) Change provisions relating to restrictive housing, immediate segregation, discipline, and other conditions of confinement in state correctional facilities

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Dan C. Kreitman - Game & Parks Commission
LB1173 (Erdman) Provide for limited transferable permits to hunt either antelope, deer, or elk
LB861 (Hughes) Change provisions of the Integrated Solid Waste Management Act with respect to consumer merchandise and containers

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB892 (Hilgers) Change individual income tax brackets
LR300CA (Erdman) Constitutional amendment to prohibit all forms of taxation other than a consumption tax
LB1130 (Groene) Change provisions relating to agreements and application deadlines under the Mutual Finance Assistance Act
LB1203 (Linehan) Change provisions relating to an income tax deduction for dividends received from certain corporations

Thursday, Feb. 13

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1154 (M. Hansen) Appropriate funds to the State Department of Education
LB762 (Dorn) Provide for transfers to the Hall of Fame Trust Fund
LB780 (Stinner) Change provisions relating to appropriations from the Nebraska Arts and Humanities Cash Fund

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

Agency 69: Neb. Arts Council
Agency 13: Dept. of Education
Agency 47: Neb. Educational Telecommunications Commission
Agency 54: State Historical Society
Agency 31: Military Department
 Nebraska State Historical Society Cash Gift and an Addendum thereto for renovations to the Abbot Visitor Center at Chimney Rock National Park

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

LB1218 (Wayne) Adopt the Nebraska Historically Underutilized Business Program Act
 LB918 (Wayne) Create the Commission on African American Affairs and require a study
 LB1187 (La Grone) Change provisions relating to the Occupational Board Reform Act
 LB1068 (Hunt) Adopt the Interior Design Voluntary Registration Act

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

Appointments: Brent Heyen; Kimberly Scherbarth - Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
 LB893 (Bostelman) Change provisions relating to emergency care providers and provide for community paramedicine and critical care paramedics
 LB1002 (Bostelman) Change provisions relating to wholesale drug distribution for emergency medical reasons
 LB1124 (Howard) Adopt the Opioid Prevention and Treatment Act
 LB1058 (Howard) Adopt the Population Health Information Act
 LB1183 (Arch) Create the Health Information Technology Board and change prescription drug monitoring program provisions

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB959 (Vargas) Limit habitual criminal enhancement to violent felonies
 LB985 (Pansing Brooks) Provide for Class ICA and IDA felony classifications and change penalties
 LB1117 (Pansing Brooks) Change sentencing provisions for crimes

committed by a person under twenty-one years of age and change provisions relating to jurisdiction over juveniles
 LB1181 (Wayne) Adopt the Fair Sentencing Act and change provisions relating to mandatory minimums, the habitual criminal enhancement, and pretrial detention
 LB1209 (Vargas) Provide a diversion program for caregivers
 LR281CA (McCollister) Constitutional amendment to allow the Legislature to enact legislation authorizing courts to reduce sentences

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Karl Barfuss - Environmental Quality Council
 LB933 (Crawford) Change provisions relating to discontinuance of utility service
 LB1205 (McCollister) Adopt the Renewable Energy Standards Act

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB987 (Pansing Brooks) Impose sales and use tax on dating and escort services and provide for the use of the revenue
 LB989 (Wayne) Impose sales and use taxes on digital advertisements
 LB1013 (Linehan) Change the cigarette tax and exempt certain transactions
 LB1109 (Chambers) Provide a sales tax exemption for the furnishing of water service

Tuesday, Feb. 18

Agriculture

Warner Chamber - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Beth Smith - State Fair Board

State Fair Briefing

LB1200 (Brewer) Rename the Livestock Brand Act and the Nebraska Brand Committee and change provisions relating to livestock
 LB1165 (Stinner) Eliminate the Nebraska Brand Committee and provide powers and duties for the Department of Agriculture under the Livestock Brand Act

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB778 (Stinner) State intent regarding appropriations for the Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act
 LB901 (Cavanaugh) Appropriate funds for the Nebraska Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative
 LB1018 (Vargas) Appropriate funds to the Department of Health and Human Services
 LB1019 (Vargas) Appropriate funds to the Department of Health and Human Services
 LB1102 (Walz) Provide an appropriation for volunteer emergency medical care providers

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB949 (Bolz) Limit the amount an insured individual pays for prescription insulin drugs
 LB804 (Wayne) Provide for insurance coverage of epinephrine autoinjectors
 LB970 (Wayne) Limit the amount an insured individual pays for prescription insulin drugs
 LB948 (Crawford) Change provisions relating to insurance coverage for mammography

Urban Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1003 (Walz) Provide annexation powers to cities of the second class and villages for relocation due to catastrophic flooding
 LB876 (Walz) Change provisions of the Community Development Law relating to limitations on blighted areas
 LB1021 (Groene) Provide for an expedited review of certain redevelopment plans under the Community Development Law
 LB801 (Urban Affairs) Change and eliminate provisions of the Community Development Law

Wednesday, Feb. 19

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Anne C. Boatright - Crime Victims Reparations Committee
Appointment: Mark T. Langan - Board of Parole

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

LB907 (DeBoer) Change provisions relating to adoptions

LB1004 (Lathrop) Change provisions relating to parole eligibility

LB1062 (Lathrop) Allow the Department of Correctional Services to establish a pre-discharge reentry pilot program

LB1081 (Morfeld) Change provisions on postconviction relief

LB1133 (Wayne) Increase caps on medical malpractice liability

Thursday, Feb. 20 Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB766 (Lindstrom) Prohibit sexual assault of a minor by an authority figure, change statute of limitations for failure to make a report of child abuse

or neglect, and change provisions relating to sexual offenses

LB814 (Geist) Prohibit dismemberment abortion

LB991 (Halloran) Create the offense of sexual assault of a student and prohibit related enticement conduct by school officials

LB1048 (Quick) Create the offense of sexual assault by a school employee and provide notification to the Commissioner of Education

LB1210 (Vargas) Create the offense of sexual exploitation of a student

Friday, Feb. 21 Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB816 (McCollister) Provide for

information & Training on firearm safety and suicide prevention and place restrictions and requirements on certain transfers of firearms

LB872 (Hunt) Eliminate requirements for the provision of information and materials regarding finding medical assistance and continuing a viable pregnancy after taking mifepristone
LB958 (Cavanaugh) Change provisions relating to possession or purchase of a firearm by a person convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence or subject to any protection order
LB1221 (Wayne) Change controlled substance schedules for certain federally approved drugs containing derivatives of cannabis ■

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The screenshot shows the official website of the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature. The header includes the state seal and the text "NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE" and "The official site of the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature". The main content area is titled "106th Legislature, 2nd Session - Day 7" and includes a "View Day 7 Activity" button. A "Recent Legislative Information" section lists various reports and schedules. On the right side, there are search boxes for "Search Current Bills" and "Search Laws". A "Live Video Streaming" link is prominently displayed with a black arrow pointing to it. Below it is a "Find Your Senator" search box and a "Legislative Calendar" showing the date "January 16".

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Meets: Tuesdays — Room 1524



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Meets: Mondays and Tuesdays — Room 1507



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Meets: Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays — Room 1525



NEBRASKA RETIREMENT SYSTEMS

Chairperson: Sen. Mark Kolterman

Members: Sens. Bolz, Groene, Kolowski, Lindstrom and Stinner

Meets: At the call of the chairperson — Room 1525



REVENUE

Chairperson: Sen. Lou Ann Linehan

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Meets: Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays — Room 1524



TRANSPORTATION & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson: Sen. Curt Friesen

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Meets: Mondays and Tuesdays — Room 1113



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Meets: Tuesdays — Room 1510



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