

Array of university funding proposals considered

The Appropriations Committee heard several proposals Feb. 17 that would use federal pandemic relief dollars to fund a variety of University of Nebraska projects. The state has been allocated \$1.4 billion in American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Ted Carter, president of the University of Nebraska system, testified in support of all the proposals. He said the university grows Nebraska's economy by \$5.8 billion a year and strategic investment of ARPA funds would allow the state to focus on areas where the university is already strong and has attracted some of the best talent in the world.

"These one-time federal funds offer our state a rare opportunity not only to recover from the pandemic, but to grow our economy and quality of life for generations to come," Carter said.

LB703, sponsored by Gothenburg Sen. Matt Williams,

would appropriate \$25 million in ARPA funds toward construction of an agricultural innovation facility at the



Sen. Matt Williams said investment in the state's agricultural sector would strengthen Nebraska's overall economy.

University of Nebraska Innovation Campus in Lincoln. The bill would require \$25 million in matching funds from private sources. Williams said the facility would be a companion to the National Center for Resilient and Regenerative Agriculture, a \$140 million facility proposed by the US Department of Agriculture that also would be located at Innovation Campus. The USDA center would provide "cutting edge" research to help Nebraska producers boost their yields, manage drought and improve animal health, he said.

"The kind of research we're talking about isn't ivory tower activity with meager relevance to practical agriculture," Williams said. "The USDA

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Regulatory review, temporary exemption process sought

The Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee heard testimony Feb. 14 on a bill that would create a new regulatory review program and an office within the state Department of Economic Development to act as a liaison between private businesses and state regulators.

LB1127, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Anna Wishart, would create the Regulatory Relief Office, which could review state laws and regulations that may unnecessarily inhibit new business creation or the success

of established businesses, and analyze the risk to the health, safety and financial well-being of consumers related to permanently removing or temporarily waiving regulations.

The office also would administer the Regulatory Sandbox Program and create a process through which businesses could apply for a maximum 12-month demonstration waiver of licensure and state regulations related to a specific innovative offering, such as a new product or technology.

When an application is received,

the office would be required to consult with an advisory committee, also created by the bill. The 11-member committee, made up of business interests, state regulators and non-voting members of the Legislature, would consult with appropriate state agencies and recommend granting or denying the waiver.

Wishart said 12 states have adopted a similar approach to reviewing outdated or unnecessary laws.

"It's just as important for us to be looking to get rid of bad, outdated

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Regulatory review, temporary exemption process sought

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policies as it is for us to be introducing new laws,” she said.

Nicole Fox of the Platte Institute testified in support of LB1127, saying it would promote economic growth and foster innovation.

“Nebraska’s venture capital funding remains low compared to the rest of the nation. In fact, Nebraska has one of the lowest startup densities in the country,” Fox said. “To remain a vibrant place for business, the state must create an environment that better enables entrepreneurs and their companies to succeed.”

Jack Russell of the Lincoln Independent Business Association also supported the bill. He said LB1127 would make Nebraska more competitive with other states in attracting business.

“By reviewing state laws with the intention of removing unnecessary regulation, we send the right message to those looking to start a business in Nebraska,” Russell said.

Jim Macy, director of the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy, spoke in opposition to the bill. He said state agencies already can

grant a variance to a state law, and that LB1127 would create a complex and confusing regulatory system.

“We’re not aware of Nebraska’s regulatory environment posing any barrier to new companies locating in Nebraska,” Macy said.

Kelly Lammers, director of the state Department of Banking and Finance, also opposed the measure. Lammers said he supports innovation but that the bill would not provide sufficient safeguards for consumers.

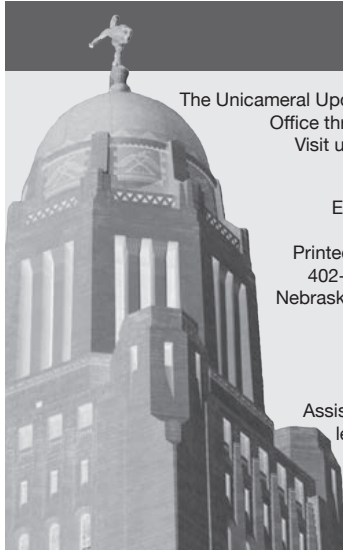
“LB1127 removes the department’s ability to utilize enforcement actions that are contemplated under any specifically waived statutory section [of state law],” Lammers said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill. ■



Sen. Anna Wishart said programs similar to LB1127 have helped other states identify outdated regulations and new technologies.

UNICAMERAL UPDATE



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researchers, along with direct participation by dozens of UNL faculty members, will be expanding scientific knowledge with the utmost real world utility to farmers and ranchers.”

Lisa Lunz, a Dixon County farmer, testified in support of the bill. LB703 could help farmers produce more food with fewer resources, she said, by bridging the gap between research and actual farming practices. Lunz said precision agriculture tools have allowed her and her husband to produce greater yields of corn and soybeans with fewer inputs.

“We need research and technology to take advantage of the limited resources we have,” she said. “Agriculture needs to ... attract the best students to help grow the workforce and turn innovation into tools that farmers and ranchers can use to improve their safety, profitability, efficiency and resiliency.”

Burlington Capital Investment president Michael Jung also testified in favor. Jung said his company, which develops agricultural technology, is often told that innovations developed outside the Midwest aren’t the right fit for Nebraska producers. Local innovation could help solve that problem, he said.

“[LB703] will allow for Nebraska to become a leader in developing, attracting and retaining ... ag-minded entrepreneurs, engineers, startups and innovative thinkers,” Jung said.

Also considered was LB721, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Robert Hilkemann, which would appropriate \$60 million in ARPA funds for a facility at the University of Nebraska Medical Center Rural Health Complex on the University of Nebraska at Kearney campus. The proposal would require \$60 million in private matching funds.



Sen. Robert Hilke

Hilkemann said the ability to train health care workers in rural areas would help strengthen and maintain community ties. The center would create new programming in allied health professions, medicine, nursing, pharmacy and public health, he said.

“Ensuring [an] adequate health care workforce for rural communities has been a long-standing challenge for Nebraska,” he said. “The pandemic has accentuated this challenge and the need for definitive action.”

Doug Kristensen, chancellor of the University of Nebraska at Kearney, testified in support of the proposal. Fourteen of the state’s 93 counties lack a primary care physician, he said, yet Nebraska currently lacks the capacity to train those needed providers.

“If you provide students comprehensive, quality educa-

tion in rural Nebraska, they will stay in rural Nebraska,” Kristensen said. “LB721 is not just a building, it’s a chance to deliver to Nebraska the high-quality rural health care it so desperately needs.”

The committee also considered the following ARPA appropriations to the university:

- \$50 million to establish the Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity and Holland Computer Center at Innovation Campus under LB904, sponsored by Adams Sen. Myron Dorn;



Sen. Myron Dorn



Sen. Mark Kolterman

- \$15 million for pancreatic cancer research under LB766, sponsored by Seward Sen. Mark Kolterman;

- \$10 million to the Global Center for Health Security at the University of Nebraska Medical Center under LB950, sponsored by Bennington Sen. Wendy DeBoer;



Sen. Wendy DeBoer



Sen. Tony Vargas

- \$4 million for the Global Center for Health Security at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, under LB961, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Tony Vargas;

- \$5 million to construct a Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) Trail Center at UNO under LB962, also sponsored by Vargas; and

- \$16 million to modernize academic research laboratories and equipment at the UNO College of Education, Health and Human Sciences to support work in the Department of Biomechanics and for the Health and Kinesiology Research, Engagement and Community Hub initiative under LB1054, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Mike McDonnell.



Sen. Mike McDonnell

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Nuclear reactor feasibility study proposed

Nebraska would use pandemic relief funds to conduct a feasibility study on siting options for nuclear reactors under a bill considered Feb. 16 by the Appropriations Committee.

LB1100, introduced by Brainard Sen. Bruce Bostelman, would appropriate \$1 million of the American Rescue Plan Act funds allocated to Nebraska to the state Department of Economic Development for use by a political subdivision that owns or operates a nuclear plant in the state to conduct a feasibility study.



Sen. Bruce Bostelman

The study would assess siting options for new, advanced nuclear reactors throughout Nebraska and existing electric generation facilities based on key compatibility assets for such reactors.

Bostelman said ARPA funds can be used to mitigate the economic impacts of COVID-19 on low-income communities. One such impact was the lack of resiliency in the state's energy grid exposed by last February's extreme cold weather event that led to rolling power outages and interrupted health care provision, drinking water purification and employment, he said.

"These communities were already dealing with COVID-19 effects," Bostelman said, "and then on top of [that], their employers were shut down as a result of electrical power outages throughout the state."

The event also impacted agriculture through loss of animals and the

temporary shutdown of processing facilities due to the severe weather that added stress to already strained food supply chains, Bostelman said. All of which points to a need for a "weather-resilient, green" source of power for businesses, homes and the medical industry, he said.

Daniel Buman, director of nuclear oversight and strategic asset management at Nebraska Public Power District, testified in support of the proposal on behalf of NPPD and the Nebraska Power Association, which represents all of Nebraska's public power utilities.

Calling a siting study the "next logical step" for meeting the state's energy needs, he said a new generation of nuclear facilities could provide reliable, baseload carbon-free energy for the state. Cooper Nuclear Station currently provides approximately 65 percent of the electricity for Nebraska customers over a rolling two-year average, he said.

"Siting studies are needed to identify the best combination of features and locations to maximize the value [of new nuclear sites] for Nebraska," Buman said.

Also testifying in support was Jacob Meysenburg, a student in Southeast Community College's energy generation operations program.

Cooper Nuclear Station functioned during the entire severe weather event last year, he said, demonstrating the resilience of nuclear energy. The state's coal plants are aging, Meysenburg said, providing an opportunity to expand the state's nuclear capacity.

"Nuclear is a safe, clean technology," he said. "It's powered Nebraska for decades."

No one testified in opposition and the committee took no immediate action on LB1100.

Grant program proposed for small town businesses

The state would develop a federally funded economic development grant program focused on smaller Nebraska communities under a bill heard Feb. 14 by the Appropriations Committee.

LB1210, sponsored by Sterling Sen. Julie Slama, would appropriate \$10 million in federal pandemic relief funds allocated to Nebraska to the state Department of Economic Development to develop the grant program.



Sen. Julie Slama

Businesses in villages and second class cities would be eligible. Under state law, a village is classified as having a population between 100 and 800 residents, and a second class city has a population between 801 and 5,000. Grants would be available for acquisition and redevelopment of buildings and to expand, modify or locate a small business in a downtown area.

Slama said the average small business in the U.S. saw a 50 percent decrease in revenue during the pandemic and Nebraska small businesses faced similar challenges.

In addition, she said, many main street businesses in Nebraska's smaller communities are in historic buildings that need work to maintain — work that won't happen without assistance, given the thin margins within which such businesses operate and the revenue losses they faced over the last two years.

"A lot of our larger communities in Nebraska are very blessed to have folks whose job it is to seek out the different grants, the different funds, available for investment in their communities and it shows," she said. "[Smaller communities] just don't have access to a

person who can seek out those kinds of resources.”

Kristen Hassebrook of the Nebraska State Chamber of Commerce and Industry testified in support of the proposal, saying main street businesses were some of the hardest hit by the pandemic.

“It’s these same businesses across the state that are relied upon as the heart of our communities,” she said, adding that LB1210 could “bridge the gap” until those businesses are able to recover fully from the pandemic.

Crystal Dunekacke, Auburn city administrator, also testified in support on behalf of the city of Auburn and the Nebraska Economic Developers Association. Nebraska’s smallest communities have limited access to the state’s available economic development tools, she said, and the 117 second class cities and 380 villages would benefit from the grant program.

The pandemic decreased travel and tourism in the state, Dunekacke said, bringing less traffic to small communities. In addition, daycare and school closures further limited an already depleted workforce because workers were required to stay home and care for children, she said.

“When you put funding together for small communities, we’ll put our dollars together – match those funds – and put those dollars to work in our communities,” Dunekacke said.

The committee took no immediate action on LB1210.

Pandemic recovery funds sought for South Omaha

The state would direct \$50 million in federal pandemic relief funds to South Omaha under a bill heard Feb. 14 by the Appropriations Committee.

Omaha Sen. Tony Vargas, sponsor of LB1238, said South Omaha has

been one of the hardest hit areas in Nebraska by COVID-19. The area’s Latino population has kept the state’s meatpacking, construction and food

service industries functioning during the pandemic, he said, and the bill would be an “unprecedented opportunity” to respond to the crisis and promote economic development in the community.

“We should be investing in the parts of our state that have been ... greatly affected by this public health crisis,” he said. “All of the metrics and data points show that South Omaha is one of those communities.”

The bill would create the South Omaha Recovery Grant Program within the state Department of Economic Development and allocate \$50 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to the program. Funds would be granted to public and private entities to respond to the negative impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency within qualified census tracts – as defined in federal law – within the boundaries of a metropolitan class city.

Omaha currently is the state’s only metropolitan class city.

Nearly two dozen community leaders and activists testified in support of the proposal, noting past discrimination, historic lack of investment in South Omaha and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on its population.

Itzel Lopez, president of the Latino Economic Development Council, testified in favor of the bill. Latinos comprise 13.4 percent of the total population of Douglas County, but were 21.7 percent of COVID-19 cases, she said, making them the ethnic group hardest hit by the pandemic.



Sen. Tony Vargas

“Businesses and families in this district have been devastated,” Lopez said. “As a result, the community has endured physical sickness and distress while also suffering economic hardship.”

Alfonso Vaca-Lubischer, representing Voices for Children in Nebraska, also spoke in support. More than 60 percent of the South Omaha population lives in a qualified census tract, he said, and both the unemployment and poverty rates there are more than double the state average.

“Unfortunately, in Nebraska right now, access to opportunity is often determined by the zip code in which a child lives,” Vaca-Lubischer said. “The federal funding currently available is an opportunity to make a transformative investment in the next generation of kids in South Omaha.”

Also testifying in support was acting Deputy Chief Sherie Thomas, speaking on behalf of the Omaha Police Department. The bill would address the negative impacts of COVID-19 in the community, including unemployment, wage losses, homelessness and food insecurity, she said, and would help deal with the root causes of crime in South Omaha.

Armando Salgado of Omaha said the pandemic has been particularly deadly for the South Omaha community. Speaking on behalf of several organizations, he said that 40 percent of Nebraskans hospitalized with COVID-19 in mid-2021 identified as “Hispanic,” even though the group represents only 11 percent of Nebraska’s population. In addition, he said, Latinos accounted for about 20 percent of COVID-19 deaths in the state.

Salgado said the South Omaha business community has thrived for years, contributing billions to the state’s economy, without assistance from the banking community or investment of state dollars. The pan-

demarc has placed those achievements in jeopardy, he said.

“This crisis has set us back enormously,” Salgado said.

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



Insurance coverage for clinician-administered drugs sought

The Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee heard testimony Feb. 15 on a bill that would prohibit health insurance coverage restrictions on medication that is administered by a clinician.

The bill defines such drugs as outpatient prescription medications that a patient cannot administer themselves and requires the assistance of a health care provider in a clinical setting.

LB943, introduced by Sen. Eliot Bostar of Lincoln, would prohibit most health insurance policies in Nebraska from:



Sen. Eliot Bostar

- refusing to cover clinician-administered medication and related services;
- imposing coverage and benefit limitations or charging a higher premium or copay for clinician-administered medication;
- interfering with a patient obtaining clinician-administered medication;
- requiring clinician-administered medication to be dis-

pensed by a pharmacy chosen by the insurer or reimbursing the insured at a lower rate; or

- limiting or excluding coverage of a clinician-administered medication when such medication would otherwise be covered.

Policies that cover a specific illness and employee self-funded benefit plans would be excluded from the bill’s provisions.

Bostar said insurers currently can require patients to purchase prescription medication from a contracted specialty pharmacy — a practice he called “white bagging.” The practice limits patient choice and has led to negative health outcomes, Bostar said.

“White bagging has caused delays in patients getting their medications and has even resulted in hospitals being sent the wrong dose or the wrong medication,” he said.

Lori Murante of the Nebraska Medical Center testified in support of LB943. Federal law requires medicine to be tracked, she said, but white bagging complicates that process, burdening hospitals and causing delays in patients receiving prescriptions.

“White bagging allows insurers rather than health care providers to mandate where, when and how drugs are purchased, prepared and administered,” Murante said.

Elizabeth Boals-Shively of Henderson Health Care Services also spoke in support. She said white bagging has caused pharmacies to send an incorrect medicine or the wrong dosage of a correct medicine to her hospital.

“LB943 means that patients can receive their injections and infusions when and where it is most accessible,” Boals-Shively said.

David Root of pharmacy benefit manager Prime Therapeutics testified against LB943. He said the bill is anti-competitive and would cause patients

to pay more.

“These drugs are incredibly expensive,” Root said. “The idea that we as PBMs are simply going to waste that product is, frankly, insane.”

Also in opposition was Jeremiah Blake of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska. White bagging is used sparingly and helps control costs and keeps premiums low, he said.

“From the patient’s perspective, these tools are a safe and effective way to get the same medication, administered by a health care provider with the same therapeutic outcome, at a lower cost,” Blake said.

The committee took no immediate action on LB943.

Bill would expand eligibility for supplemental Medicare

Nebraskans who are younger than 65 and receiving Medicare benefits because of a disability could apply for supplemental Medicare coverage under a bill considered Feb. 15 by the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee.

LB1190, introduced by Omaha Sen. Steve Lathrop, would allow individuals within the first six months of becoming eligible for Medicare because of disability, or within 63 days following termination of group coverage, to purchase supplemental Medicare health insurance policies. Rates for such a policy could not exceed the cost charged to individuals who qualify for Medicare by age.



Sen. Steve Lathrop

Lathrop said individuals who qualify for Medicare before turning 65 often are denied supplemental coverage or are required to pay prohibitively expensive premiums. The bill would

protect Nebraskans who earn too much to qualify for Medicare but are unable to afford out-of-pocket medical costs, he said.

“These are people who have worked hard and saved and now we’re saying ‘you really don’t have any options until you get poor enough,’” Lathrop said.

Jean Kay of North Platte testified in favor of LB1190. Multiple sclerosis caused her to buy into Medicare before she was 65 to pay for medication that cost \$8,000 a month, she said. Still, treatment and medication were too expensive without Medicare supplemental insurance, causing her husband to close his law practice and obtain a job with health insurance coverage. The closest job he could find was in Fargo, N.D., Kay said.

“We could call each other daily, that way he [could] rest assured that if I fell and couldn’t get up – and he couldn’t get ahold of me – he could send someone over,” she said. “No one plans to have a disease lead to a disability.”

Wendy Schrag of Fresenius Medical Care also testified in support. Her company operates in 49 states, she said, many of which allow individuals under 65 to purchase supplemental Medicare plans, and none have seen an increase in premiums for Medicare customers 65 and older.

Robert Bell, testifying on behalf of the Nebraska Insurance Federation, opposed LB1190. The bill could lead to increased premiums for older Nebraskans, he said, and those unable to buy into Medicare have access to other insurance products like Nebraska Advantage.

“If there’s an increase in claim amounts, premiums will have to increase,” Bell said. “How much, I can’t say.”

April Ayres of Mutual of Omaha also spoke in opposition. She said in-

dividuals younger than 65 who receive Medicare benefits make claims that average six times higher than traditional Medicare recipients.

The committee took no immediate action on LB1190.



County minimum wage proposed

A bill that would allow a county to raise its minimum wage above the state level was heard by the Business and Labor Committee Feb. 14.

Nebraska’s minimum wage currently is set at \$9 per hour. Under LB935, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Eliot Bostar, a county board would have the option to enact a higher minimum wage for individuals working within its physical boundaries. The minimum wage would apply to all municipalities within the county, but an ordinance could set a different minimum wage for student-learner employees, training wages and those compensated by means of gratuity.



Sen. Eliot Bostar

An employer could apply for an exemption by demonstrating that an increased wage would be unduly burdensome because they employ individuals who work in multiple counties.

Under the bill, an employer who fails to pay the county minimum wage could be subject to a Class IV misdemeanor and be liable to the employee for unpaid wages.

Bostar said LB935 would equip county leaders with the necessary flexibility to set a minimum wage that makes sense for the economic charac-

teristics of their county without unduly impacting neighboring counties.

“LB935 acknowledges that economics and the cost of living are regional and what may be appropriate in one area may be a poor fit in a different part of the state,” Bostar said. “The cost of housing, dining out [and] groceries are fundamentally inconsistent from one county to another.”

In support of the bill was Ken Smith of Nebraska Appleseed. Counties would have good reason to set their own minimum wage if they find that the state’s rate is not meeting their residents’ needs, he said.

“Increasing wages has widespread positive economic impact – from increasing consumer spending, boosting worker productivity, reducing turnover and helping efforts to recruit and retain a talented workforce – to name a few,” Smith said. “Raising the minimum wage also addresses well-established racial and gender pay disparities.”

Also in support was Tim Mussack, who spoke on behalf of the Center for Rural Affairs. He said granting local control could help alleviate the complex and often divisive challenges involved in minimum wage decisions.

“County leaders are in a position to best understand economic and wage issues facing businesses and residents in their county,” Mussack said. “They’re members of the communities they serve – they are accessible to and held accountable by their friends, family and neighbors. These leaders are regularly trusted to make hard decisions and we believe are most capable of deciding on an appropriate minimum wage for their county.”

Representing the Nebraska Association of County Officials, Jon Cannon opposed the bill. Cannon expressed concern over the unknown effects of increased competition among counties and on interstate commerce for coun-

ties near state borders under the bill.

“These are all things that we think need to be studied in order to have a fuller view of what the County Minimum Wage Option Act would look like,” he said.

Also in opposition was Robert Hallstrom, who spoke on behalf of the National Federation of Independent Business, Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry and an array of other associations. He said the bill would be a “nightmare” for small businesses that operate in multiple counties and their payroll systems.

Bud Synhorst of the Lincoln Independent Business Association also testified against the bill. Synhorst said LB935 would cause confusion for business owners.

“After two years of restrictions, closures and revenue uncertainty due to COVID-19, the last thing our local business owners need is the potential for 93 different minimum wage laws,” he said. “Allowing county boards to increase their minimum wage will open doors for [excessive] government involvement in our local economies.”

The committee took no immediate action on LB935.

Proposal would extend, increase funding for rural housing program

The Business and Labor Committee heard testimony Feb. 14 on a bill that would update an existing grant program in an effort to increase workforce housing in rural communities.

The Rural Workforce Housing Investment Act, passed by the Legislature in 2017, provides grants for the construction of workforce housing in counties with fewer than 100,000 people. Grants are available to nonprofit development organizations in eligible communities.

LB1069, introduced by Gothenburg Sen. Matt Williams, would extend the grant program – which had been set to expire at the end of this fiscal year – through FY2026-27. The bill also would increase the maximum allowable cost to construct an owner-occupied housing unit from \$275,000 to \$325,000 and for rental housing units from \$200,000 to \$250,000.



Sen. Matt Williams

The current \$2 million cap that a nonprofit development organization can receive would be removed and replaced by an amount set by the director of economic development. Additionally, the bill would reduce the required local matching grant from a one-to-one match to 50 percent. Projects that receive funds from the National Housing Trust Fund would be ineligible for the program.

Williams said \$7 million was awarded to 14 rural nonprofit organizations in 2018 under the existing program, and by 2021, over \$110 million worth of property, including 800 housing units, had been built in rural communities. The return on investment for the state is significant, he said, but workforce housing needs persist.

“In addition to a worker shortage, we also have a significant shortage of available workforce housing,” Williams said. “With COVID-19, we have seen increased housing costs, supply chain delays and fewer contractors – amplifying this problem.”

In support of the bill was Bob Hallstrom of the Nebraska Bankers Association. Increasing the maximum cap for housing units is necessary, he said, due to high housing occupancy rates, inflation and pandemic supply chain issues. Additionally, Hallstrom said, decreasing the required local matching

grant would help small communities.

Korby Gilbertson testified in support of the bill on behalf of the Nebraska Realtors Association and several home builders associations. She said the rural housing program isn’t taking anything away from the free market, but rather is benefiting everyone who uses the grant funds.

“Builders can’t afford to take the risk and in light of the cost of building in rural areas ... the pandemic and the massive increase in the costs of inputs, many builders have had losses,” Gilbertson said. “This grant process at least allows them to remain whole.”

No one testified in opposition to LB1069 and the committee took no immediate action on the bill.

EDUCATION

Limits on health education proposed

The Education Committee heard testimony Feb. 15 on a bill intended to prevent the State Board of Education from creating health education standards for Nebraska public schools.

LB768, introduced by Sen. Joni Albrecht of Thurston, would prohibit the board from developing, approving, distributing, adopting or promulgating academic content standards for subjects other than reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies.



Sen. Joni Albrecht

The bill also would limit schools’ health education programs to instruction on drug use, misuse and abuse.

Under current law, programs must include that instruction but may be comprehensive. The commissioner of education is responsible for preparing and distributing teaching aids and materials for health education courses.

Albrecht said LB768 would be a “long overdue check” on the State Board of Education and the state Department of Education. She said those entities broke the public trust last year after proposing health education standards containing controversial material that an “overwhelming” number of Nebraskans oppose.

“The State Board of Education and the Department of Education should focus on improving the standards that they have been authorized to formulate by this legislative body,” Albrecht said. “Everything else should be returned to and be decided by the local schools themselves.”

Jill Greenquist of Omaha testified in support of the bill. She said she wants to protect her children from “activist individuals and entities” who believe education should go beyond essential subjects.

Greenquist said it is clear to her that the department cannot be trusted to create “common-sense” health education standards.

Mary Hamilton, a District 25 resident, also testified in support, saying parents and teachers felt left out as the board drafted the proposed standards. She said comprehensive sex education should not be part of those standards.

“I want to see the curriculum and programs that public schools use align with the values of the majority of the Nebraska parents,” Hamilton said.

Doug Kagan of Omaha testified in support of LB768 on behalf of Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom. Limiting the board’s authority to draft academic content standards is necessary because a majority of board mem-

bers earlier this month voted against a proposal to end work on the draft standards, which “violate traditional societal norms,” he said.

If LB768 passes, Kagan said, local school boards still could adopt their own health education curriculum.

Testifying in opposition to the bill was Jesse Barondeau, an adolescent medicine specialist. He said every major medical organization that focuses on caring for youth and adolescents supports medically accurate health education, which can improve health outcomes and save tax and health care dollars.

“It does get frustrating when misunderstandings and inaccurate political rhetoric drown out the good intentions of such health education,” Barondeau said.

Denise Powell of Omaha also testified in opposition. She said the health education her daughter, who is in 6th grade, received in school helped them have more open, age-appropriate conversations about puberty, sex and sexuality.

Also in opposition was Abbi Swatworth of OutNebraska. She said all respondents to a recent survey of Nebraska youths indicated that they need more information on sexual orientation, gender identity, consent and healthy relationships.

Swatworth said the survey also found that only one in three LGBTQ youth in Nebraska feel affirmed in their identity at home. Comprehensive health education, which would include education on sexual orientation and gender identity, could prevent suicide among those young people by helping them feel seen and respected, she said.

Jill Brown, a developmental psychologist and professor at Creighton University, also testified in opposition to the bill. She said comprehensive sex education for public school students

is necessary because gaps in parental knowledge are “huge and real.”

“[Health education] needs to be comprehensive if it’s going to be effective,” Brown said.

The committee took no immediate action on LB768.

Bill seeks to protect student groups against viewpoint discrimination

The Education Committee heard testimony Feb. 14 on a bill that intends to ensure that the University of Nebraska, state colleges and community colleges could not deny a benefit to a student group based on its beliefs.

LB1050, introduced by Norfolk Sen. Michael Flood, would prohibit public postsecondary institutions from discriminating against a political, religious or ideological student organization because of its viewpoint or because it requires leaders or members to adhere to or comply with its sincerely held beliefs and standards of conduct or be committed to furthering the organization’s mission.



Sen. Michael Flood

Under Flood’s proposal, a student or student organization aggrieved by a violation of that requirement could bring a civil action against a public postsecondary institution and obtain actual damages, other equitable or declaratory relief and reasonable attorney’s fees and other litigation costs.

The student or student organization also could assert such a violation as a defense or counterclaim in any civil or administrative proceedings brought against them.

Flood said he introduced the bill in response to an incident last year in which Ratio Christi, a recognized stu-

dent organization at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, sued the university after it denied the organization's request for funds to host a speaker based on the expected nature of his speech.

LB1050 would clarify the existing legal standard that prohibits postsecondary institutions from discriminating against students and student groups based on their viewpoints, Flood said, thereby avoiding costly litigation in the future.

Matthew Romer, a UNL student and former Ratio Christi president, testified in support of the bill. He said the Constitution requires the university to disperse student activity funds in a viewpoint-neutral way, but an "imprecise and ambiguous" rule allowed it to discriminate against his group because of its religious beliefs.

In denying Ratio Christi's request for funds, Romer said, the university claimed it could not use student fees to promote a speaker of a political or ideological nature, specifically one with a Christian viewpoint, although it had done so several times in the past.

"We are glad that students have brought diverse speakers to address challenging topics to our campus," he said. "We just think all students should be allowed to do the same."

Adam Johnson, who said he founded Ratio Christi at UNL, also testified in support. He said every student group should have access to campus benefits on equal terms and be able to require their student leaders to affirm their groups' core beliefs.

Bren Chambers testified in opposition to LB1050 on behalf of the University of Nebraska. He said the bill is unnecessary because existing federal law and university policies prohibit the university from discriminating against a student or student group based on their religious beliefs.

Chambers did not comment on

the Ratio Christi lawsuit but said the university is working to evaluate its education and training of individuals who make funding decisions related to student groups.

"I don't think it's a secret that a mistake was made," he said, "and we're working on fixing it."

Abbi Swatsworth testified in opposition to the bill on behalf of OutNebraska. She said it would allow student groups, which are funded partially through student fees, to prohibit LGBTQ and other minority students from joining and leading those groups.

"Students of minority races or faiths, or among the LGBTQ community, should not expect that their student fees support organizations that actively discriminate against them," Swatsworth said.

The committee took no immediate action on LB1050.

Bill would update school parental involvement policies

The commissioner of education would withhold state aid from school districts that fail to make learning materials available to the public under a bill heard Feb. 15 by the Education Committee.

Bellevue Sen. Rita Sanders, sponsor of LB1158, said the bill is a needed update to a nearly 30-year-old state law requiring public schools to develop and adopt policies on parental involvement.

"I hope that this will foster a stronger relationship with the school and the parents," she said. "Our world has changed, and our transparency laws should change."

Under LB1158, a policy would

include how the district will provide parents and guardians access to digital and learning materials and training materials for teachers, administrators and staff as well as procedures for the review and approval of such materials and activities, among other information.

A policy would have to describe under what circumstances a parent or guardian could ask that their child be excused from learning materials, activities and guest speakers that the parent finds objectionable. Parents already may request that their children be excused from testing, classroom instruction and other school experiences.

LB1158 would require a "reasonable opportunity for public comments" at a required public hearing on the policy.

The bill also would require each school district to make all district and school policies accessible by a prominent link on the school's website and make a reasonable effort to make any learning materials available for public inspection upon request.

If the commissioner of education determines that a school district has failed to comply with the bill's requirements, the commissioner would be required to direct that the district's state aid be withheld and that any county with territory in the district withhold all money belonging to the district.

Doug Kagan of Omaha testified in support of LB1158 on behalf of Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom. He said some Nebraska school districts do not publicize the process by which they select and order staff training and learning materials or make such materials easily available for public inspection and comment before they are purchased.

"We view LB1158 as a solution by requiring every school district to uphold the same standards for public examination of policy and material



Sen. Rita Sanders

comment,” Kagan said. “We believe it would cultivate a solid working relationship between parents, taxpayers and public school districts.”

Janet Johnson, a Sarpy County resident, also testified in support, saying she wants transparency in school district policies and curricula.

“As a parent and a grandparent, that is of the utmost importance to me – that we would be able to access what materials are being taught in the schools that our children and grandchildren and neighbors and friends go to,” Johnson said.

Anne Hunter-Pirtle testified in opposition LB1158 on behalf of Stand for Schools. She said parents, guardians and the public already have access to much of the material that LB1158 seeks to make available and that the bill would discourage teaching about “challenging but essential topics.”

“In our view, this bill assumes an adversarial relationship between parents and teachers as well as between parents and schools, which is not consistent with the reality that we see and hear about from the vast majority of parents in Nebraska,” Hunter-Pirtle said.

The bill also would impose “punitive” clawback measures on school districts that do not comply with its overly broad requirements, she said.

Kyle McGowan gave neutral testimony on behalf of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association and an organization that represents several midsized school districts. LB1158 would make it easier for parents to get information on a school’s curriculum, he said, but the organizations he represents cannot support the bill because of its “excessive penalty.”

At a time when every subject seems to be getting more controversial, McGowan said, the proposal also could

encourage more parents to ask schools to excuse their children from learning activities.

Sarah Centineo also gave neutral testimony on behalf of the Nebraska Association of School Boards. She said the association has never received a complaint from a parent who was unable to access requested curriculum materials.

Centineo asked the committee to remove or modify the provision that would require the commissioner of education to withhold funds from schools that fail to comply with the bill’s requirements. It is unclear whether schools could appeal the commissioner’s decision, she said, and the requirement would be difficult for county treasurers to implement because some school districts have territory in multiple counties.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.



Volunteer entity would become state agency

The Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission, also known as ServeNebraska, would be restructured as a state agency under a bill heard Feb. 17 by the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

The commission currently is administratively under the state Department of Health and Human Services.

LB910, introduced by Omaha Sen. Mike McDonnell, would make



Sen. Mike McDonnell

the commission a stand-alone state agency. The 15 to 25 commission members would include the state commissioner of education and governor-appointed community, labor, youth and business leaders.

Among other provisions, the bill would require the commission to:

- recommend to the governor a three-year national community service plan to be updated annually;
- collaborate with and provide technical assistance to community and nonprofit organizations;
- administer, oversee and monitor the performance and progress of funded programs; and
- coordinate with other state agencies that administer programs under the federal Community Services Block Grant program.

McDonnell said the bill would stabilize ServeNebraska and help it operate more effectively.

“This bill will align ServeNebraska with other similar organizations, such as the other state boards and commissions,” McDonnell said.

Marjorie Maas, chairperson of ServeNebraska, testified in support of LB910. She said ServeNebraska operates under an executive order signed by then-governor Ben Nelson in 1994, meaning it could be eliminated by a future governor.

“Being a statutory agency will provide the commission with stability and preserve its autonomy,” Maas said.

Former Nebraska first lady Sally Ganem also testified in support of the bill. She said reorganizing ServeNebraska as a state agency would help it carry out critical programming.

“These programs keep our kids in school, help our children learn to read and write ... and help prepare our students for the next century’s workforce,” Ganem said.

No one testified in opposition and the committee took no immediate action on LB910.

Campaign funds could cover child care

Elected officials in Nebraska could use campaign funds to pay for child care under a bill heard Feb. 16 by the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

LB930, introduced by Omaha Sen. Megan Hunt, would expand the allowable uses of campaign funds to include child care expenses for both the officeholder and their staff when the individual is involved in official duties.

Currently, campaign funds can be used for travel and meals but not for child care, Hunt said.

“It makes no sense that I could use my campaign funds to take the entire Legislature out for drinks after this hearing but I can’t use those same funds [that] I worked so hard for to bring my kid with me to a Council of State Governments conference,” she said. “I can even take my staff to those events, but I can’t take my kid.

Denise Powell of She’s Electable Nebraska testified in support of the bill, saying finding quality child care is expensive and difficult. Allowing a candidate to use their campaign funds to take care of their children would help ease burdens on lower-income candidates and single parents, she said.

“Nebraska needs to look for innovative ways to build the workforce of public servants,” Powell said.

Julie Wertheimer of the ACLU of Nebraska also testified in support. She said Nebraska has fewer women

in office than most states and allowing child care expenses to be paid with campaign funds would empower more women to run for office.

“Given the expense of child care and the low salaries for state senators, this bill is critical to ensuring that Nebraskans of all genders and all kinds of families can pursue public office,” Wertheimer said.

No one testified in opposition to LB930 and the committee took no immediate action on it.

Museum would honor former state senator

The Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee heard testimony Feb. 16 on a bill to facilitate creation of a museum honoring former state senator Ernie Chambers of Omaha.

Chambers left office for a second time due to term limits in 2021 after serving a record 46 years in the Nebraska Legislature.

LB1205, introduced by Chambers’ successor Sen. Terrell McKinney of Omaha, would create the Ernie Chambers History-Arts-Humanities Museum Assistance Fund to be administered by the Nebraska State Historical Society, informally known as History Nebraska.

The fund could receive legislative appropriations and gifts, grants or bequests from any source. The historical society would be required to develop plans for the museum by Dec. 31, 2022.

McKinney called Chambers a “fearless” leader who championed the effort to divest Nebraska from apartheid South Africa, helped create

local district elections that increased diversity, established the right to seek reparations for wrongful felony convictions and tirelessly advocated to repeal the state’s death penalty.

“Regardless of how many have felt about senator Chambers throughout his time in the Legislature, the lasting comment I’ve always heard is ‘I respected him and I understand what he was doing.’” McKinney said. “It should be a priority for our state to enshrine his legacy.”

Chambers’ daughter and president of Together We Achieve Miracles, Gayla Lee-Chambers, testified in support of LB1205. She said the museum would be a landmark for the North Omaha district that Chambers represented and could display many aspects of his life.

“He’s more known for his political side, but my father has an artistic side that we want to highlight,” Lee-Chambers said.

Urban planner Manuel Cook also spoke in favor of the bill. He said the museum would serve as a community center and increase tourism in North Omaha.

“I know from my work on other projects that the community wants to see Ernie Chambers recognized more than any other person,” Cook said.

No one spoke in opposition to LB1205 and the committee took no immediate action on it.



Sen. Megan Hunt



Sen. Terrell McKinney



COVID-19 vaccine exemption advanced after cloture

A bill that would provide an exemption process for employer COVID-19

vaccine mandates advanced from select file Feb. 16 following a successful cloture vote.

LB906, introduced by Blair Sen. Ben Hansen, would require the state Department of Health and Human Services to create and publish a form on its website to be filled out by employees seeking an exemption based either on a health care practitioner's recommendation or the individual's sincerely held religious belief, practice or observance.



Sen. Ben Hansen

The bill would apply to entities with one or more employees, including state agencies and other political subdivisions. The federal government, any corporation wholly owned by the federal government, Indian tribes and bona fide private membership clubs, other than labor organizations, that are exempt from federal taxation would be exempted from the bill's provisions.

Under LB906, employers could require unvaccinated employees to wear personal protective equipment or submit to COVID-19 testing at the employer's expense.

The bill was amended on general file to allow Medicare-certified and Medicaid-certified providers or suppliers and federal contractors to require additional processes, documentation or accommodations as necessary to comply with federal law and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services regulations.

Sen. Mike Groene of North Platte offered an amendment during select file debate to remove the optional PPE and testing requirement for unvaccinated employees and the exemption for federal contractors.

Groene said those provision could result in employers discriminating

against unvaccinated employees.

Hansen initially supported the amendment but later said he opposed it because conversations with health care associations had changed his mind.

The amendment failed on an 18-20 vote.

After four hours of discussion, Hansen moved to invoke cloture, which ends debate and forces a vote on the bill and any pending amendments. The motion was adopted on a 38-3 vote; 33 votes were needed. Senators then voted 7-28 to defeat an amendment from Omaha Sen. Megan Hunt that would have exempted businesses with fewer than 15 employees, and advanced LB906 to final reading 36-2.

Bill would prevent local vaping bans

Political subdivisions in Nebraska would be limited in how they regulate electronic smoking devices under a bill heard Feb. 17 by the Health and Human Services Committee.

LB954, introduced by Omaha Sen. Justin Wayne, would prohibit counties and municipalities from adopting ordinances or resolutions regarding electronic smoking devices that are more restrictive than the provisions of the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act. This would include banning certain smoking devices or flavors.



Sen. Justin Wayne

Wayne said the bill would prevent a "patchwork" of vaping regulations across the state.

"It would make it easier for the industry to provide their services to their customers," he said.

Sarah Linden, president of the Nebraska Vape Vendors Association, testified in support of the bill. She said

the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act allows vape shop customers to sample products, but, Lincoln and Grand Island have ordinances banning indoor vaping in all circumstances. LB954 would standardize the law across the state and enable customers to try out various products before they purchase them, she said.

"There's nothing worse than buying something and deciding you don't like it once you get home," Linden said.

Dave Watts, president of the Nebraska Medical Association, spoke in opposition to the bill. He said state law should apply equally to vaping and cigarettes.

"Vaping devices don't simply emit harmless water vapor ... heating the substances in the chamber of a vaping device creates an aerosol," Watts said. "Unlike water vapor, that aerosol contains nicotine — ultra-fine particles that can worsen asthma — and toxins that are known to cause cancer."

Maggie Ballard of Heartland Family Service also testified in opposition to LB954. She said nicotine is a "pilot light" for other addictions and that individuals with substance abuse disorders are better off without it.

"Community members want to see less vaping, not more," Ballard said.

Also in opposition was Lash Chaffin of the League of Nebraska Municipalities. He said the bill would take away a municipality's ability to regulate vaping as it sees fit.

The committee took no immediate action on LB954.

Senior LGBTQ protections considered

LGBTQ Nebraskans would be protected from discrimination in senior care facilities under a bill heard Feb. 16 by the Health and Human Services Committee.

LB1136, introduced by Omaha Sen. Megan Hunt, would prohibit licensed care facilities from denying admission to an individual who identifies as LGBTQ or transferring or refusing to transfer a resident within the facility or to another facility – or discharging or evicting a resident – on that basis or because of their HIV status.



Sen. Megan Hunt

Among other provisions, the bill also would prohibit senior care facilities from restricting access to living spaces or restrooms based on gender identity.

Hunt said older LGTBQ Nebraskans face a unique set of challenges that remain unaddressed.

“This kind of discrimination is not often reported and there are many stories about how these seniors have to go back into the closet when entering long-term senior care for fear that their rights won’t be respected,” she said.

Todd Stubbendieck, director of AARP Nebraska, testified in support of the bill, saying older individuals should be able to live their final years with dignity and without having to hide who they are.

“Many LGBTQ elders are worried about their safety in care facilities,” Stubbendieck said.

Randy Hagar also testified in support of LB1136. Hagar, a therapist, said many of his clients face multiple physical and mental losses as they age. Those issues are compounded by being LGBTQ, he said.

“To think of having reduced care, of having less social support or even to worry if you’re going to be discriminated against in your residence, just adds layers of stress,” Hagar said.

Representing OutNebraska, Abbi Swatsworth spoke in favor of the bill. She said LGBTQ seniors are twice as

likely to live alone and four times less likely to have children than heterosexual seniors, meaning they are more likely to need senior care living.

Becky Wisell of the state Department of Health and Human Services testified against the bill. She said LB1136 would require DHHS to hire additional staff to handle paperwork, oversight and inspections.

“This bill would require the Division of Public Health licensure unit to develop new inspection processes for five different licensed facility types,” Wisell said.

The committee took no immediate action on LB1136.

JUDICIARY



Bill would allow judges to authorize virtual conferencing

A Nebraska judge could authorize the use of video, electronic or telephonic technology for certain hearings under a proposal heard by the Judiciary Committee Feb. 17.

Current state law allows for use of virtual conferencing when all parties give consent. Under LB1053, introduced by Omaha Sen. Steve Lathrop, a judge who finds good reason could use their discretion to authorize the use of virtual conferencing for civil, juvenile and some pre-trial motion hearings, as long as the hearing allows for public access and for an accurate record to be preserved.



Sen. Steve Lathrop

In addition, a virtual hearing would require that a party could communicate confidentiality with

counsel. A judge could require the parties to pay for costs incurred for the virtual conferencing.

For a criminal case that involves live testimony, a court would require consent from all parties for the use of virtual conferencing.

Lathrop said virtual court proceedings would provide courts and lawyers an opportunity to increase efficiency.

“COVID has brought our judicial system to the realization that sometimes there are other ways to discharge the function of having hearings and having trials other than in person,” Lathrop said.

State court administrator Corey Steel testified in support of LB1053. Judges are trusted every day to make decisions, Steel said, and they also should be authorized to decide how a court proceeding is held. Additionally, he said, research shows there was a dramatic increase in divorce and child custody proceedings when many courts across the country went virtual during the pandemic.

“This is another mechanism in order for the judicial branch to continue to move cases through our dockets so that we do not continue to see a backlog,” Steel said. “Justice delayed is justice denied.”

Spike Eickholt, testifying on behalf of the Nebraska Criminal Defense Attorneys Association, spoke in opposition to the bill. It’s “disingenuous” to say that a Zoom hearing is the same as an in-person proceeding, he said, even if it is convenient.

“Courts are for litigants. Courts are for the people to use as a branch of government,” Eickholt said. “It’s not for the convenience of judges. If somebody wants to have a live hearing to try to convince a judge of something ... even on a procedural matter, that is their prerogative.”

Jason Grams, president-elect of the Nebraska State Bar Association, also

spoke in opposition. Currently, courts are allowed to determine how a non-evidentiary hearing is held — virtually, by telephone or live — however, evidentiary hearings require the consent of all parties, he said.

Grams said the NSBA opposes the bill because it would expand the court’s discretion to order all hearings over the objection of one of the parties, adding that not even all judges among the organization’s membership agree with the proposal.

The committee took no immediate action on LB1053.



Reclamation requirements for abandoned pipelines proposed

The Natural Resources Committee heard testimony Feb. 16 on a bill to rename and update the Nebraska Oil Pipeline Reclamation Act to apply to abandoned pipelines.

Lincoln Sen. Elliot Bostar, sponsor of LB1186, said current state law does not cover carbon dioxide pipelines, a fast-growing industry, and fails to protect landowner property rights by allowing pipeline companies to keep permanent right-of-way easements after a pipeline ceases operation.



Sen. Elliot Bostar

Under LB1186, the renamed Hazardous Liquid Pipeline Reclamation Act would apply to pipelines carrying liquified carbon dioxide as well as petroleum.

It also would add the costs of mitigating the impacts of an abandoned

pipeline to a list of reclamation costs for which a pipeline carrier is financially responsible.

The bill would require a pipeline carrier to provide written notice that it has abandoned a pipeline to all owners or holders of real estate in which the carrier owns an easement for the pipeline.

Upon request of the landowner, a carrier then would complete the landowner’s chosen reclamation activities within three years and revert its easement to the landowner.

If the carrier fails to comply with the proposal’s requirements, a landowner whose property contains an abandoned pipeline could revert the carrier’s easement and recover reclamation costs from the carrier and its successors through a process outlined in the bill.

Finally, LB1186 would create a cash fund, administered by the state Department of Environment and Energy, that would be funded by amounts paid by pipeline carriers when they abandon a pipeline.

A carrier or landowner could apply to the department for reimbursement for their reclamation costs.

“This cash fund will ensure that the dollars necessary to meet private and public landowner reclamation costs after possible pipeline abandonment will be paid by the owner of the pipeline and not by impacted landowners, a county or the state,” Bostar said.

Brian Jorde, a lawyer at Domina Law Group in Omaha, testified in support. Because pipeline carriers have the power of eminent domain, he said, landowners have no power to negotiate terms related to the abandonment or reclamation costs of a pipeline on their land.

Jorde said pipelines are an inconvenience that prevent landowners from using their property in certain ways. When a company abandons a pipe-

line, he said, landowners should be able to require that it be removed and regain full rights over their property.

Megan Hammond, a York County landowner, also testified in support. She said she and her family worked unsuccessfully with local commissioners and zoning boards to establish pipeline regulations after learning that their land was in the Keystone XL project’s proposed route.

Now, she said, her land is in the path of a proposed carbon dioxide pipeline.

“I am sure this contract will have no mention as to what happens when they’re done with it,” Hammond said. “We don’t get our easement back, and we’re stuck with their junk pipe.”

Jane Kleeb testified in support of the bill on behalf of Bold Alliance. She said the proposal would create jobs and protect landowners’ property rights.

“At the very least,” Kleeb said, “our state owes farmers and ranchers the opportunity to choose if a pipeline is removed from their land, not at their cost, but at the ... [cost of the] company that makes billions of dollars transporting oil, gas or, potentially, carbon dioxide.”

Dawn Caldwell testified in opposition to LB1186 on behalf of Renewable Fuels Nebraska. She said the state’s ethanol industry seeks to improve its “value chain” by sequestering the carbon dioxide emissions from ethanol plants.

However, Caldwell said, most plants would have to pipe their carbon dioxide to suitable sites where it can be injected into underground geologic formations. She said the additional proposed regulations on pipelines would discourage carbon capture and sequestration companies from working in Nebraska.

Bruce Riecker also testified in opposition to the bill on behalf of

the Nebraska Farm Bureau. He said pipelines already are regulated by the federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

Additionally, Rieker said, digging up buried pipelines would disrupt the surrounding soil, increasing erosion and destroying organic matter.

“As stewards of the land, we believe the changes called for would cause more harm than good to our valuable ecosystem,” he said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

REVENUE

Income tax deduction proposed for employers of felons

Companies that hire felons would receive a state income tax deduction under a proposal heard Feb. 17 by the Revenue Committee.

Under LB917, introduced by Omaha Sen. Justin Wayne, a company’s federal adjusted gross income or federal taxable income would be reduced by 65 percent of the wages paid to an individual who has been convicted of a felony.



Sen. Justin Wayne

The deduction would apply to wages paid during the first 12 months of the individual’s employment, and the total deduction per employee could not exceed \$20,000.

Wayne said the bill is intended to reduce Nebraska’s recidivism rate by incentivizing companies to hire felons within the first year after they are released from prison.

“The quickest and easiest way to reduce recidivism is to get people a good-paying job as soon as they come out,” he said.

Employers of felons generally pay higher insurance premiums, Wayne said, and the proposed tax deduction would help offset those costs.

The state Department of Revenue estimates that LB917 would reduce general fund revenue by \$2.6 million in fiscal year 2023-24 and \$2.6 million in FY2024-25.

Danielle Conrad testified in support of the bill on behalf of the ACLU of Nebraska. She said it would complement a federal tax credit for employers of felons and help address overcrowding in Nebraska’s prisons.

“Every single investment that we can make to ensure successful reentry and reduce recidivism helps to address our ongoing challenges related to mass incarceration and racial injustice, which is literally busting our budgets and burdening our taxpayers,” Conrad said.

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

Income tax deduction for law enforcement officers considered

Nebraska law enforcement officers could deduct 50 to 100 percent of their pay from state income tax under a bill heard Feb. 16 by the Revenue Committee.

Hastings Sen. Steve Halloran, sponsor of LB1265, said the tax benefit would help Nebraska communities recruit and retain officers.



Sen. Steve Halloran

Under his proposal, officers who have completed at least one year but

less than 10 years of service could reduce their federal adjusted gross income by 50 percent of their pay to the extent that the amount is included in federal adjusted gross income.

Officers who have completed at least 10 years but less than 20 years of service could deduct 75 percent, and officers who have completed at least 20 years of service could deduct 100 percent.

The state Department of Revenue estimates that LB1265 would reduce state general fund revenue by \$16.9 million in fiscal year 2022-23, \$12.3 million in FY2023-24 and \$12.7 million in FY2024-25.

Anthony Conner testified in support of the bill on behalf of the Omaha Police Officers Association. He said an increase in “anti-police rhetoric and activism” has helped create a nationwide law enforcement recruitment problem.

LB1265 would help the Omaha Police Department compete with the private sector and other law enforcement agencies around the country when trying to recruit talented young people and retain current officers, Conner said.

“We believe LB1265 will not only provide an immediate boost in morale for law enforcement across the state but also send a message to potential recruits or disaffected officers in other states that [we] support law enforcement,” he said.

Washington County Sheriff Mike Robinson also testified in support of the bill on behalf of the Nebraska Sheriffs Association, Police Officers Association of Nebraska and Police Chiefs Association of Nebraska. He said his office recently received only four applications for an open position when it typically would receive 40.

The proposed incentive could help offset the low pay and benefits that have contributed to a “crisis” in hiring and retaining law enforcement officers

across the state, Robinson said.

No one testified in opposition to LB1265 and the committee took no immediate action on it.

TRANSPORTATION & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Proposal seeks to accelerate precision agriculture

The Transportation and Telecommunications Committee heard testimony Feb. 15 on a bill intended to advance precision agriculture in Nebraska through enhanced internet access.

LB761, introduced by Adams Sen. Myron Dorn, states legislative intent to appropriate \$10 million in American Rescue Plan Act pandemic relief funds in fiscal year 2022-23 to incentivize broadband providers and agricultural producers to adopt precision agriculture strategies. Precision agriculture is a farm management approach that uses technology to analyze data to improve production while also preserving resources.

The state Department of Economic Development would administer the grant program. Half of the funds would be allocated to broadband providers and the remaining half to agriculture providers and producers.

Under the bill, a broadband provider could apply for a grant to provide symmetrical download and upload speeds of at least 50/50 Mbps to farm structures and devices. A provider would be required to complete their project within 12 months and would be subject to speed tests.



Sen. Myron Dorn

An agricultural cooperative, agronomist or agricultural producer also could apply for funds for the development of soil health and water management products and the implementation of on-farm traceability solutions and autonomous agricultural machinery.

Dorn said Nebraska always has been a leader in agricultural research, practices and products, however, the state is at risk of losing its status as the industry changes globally due to consumer demands and changing perceptions of how food is grown.

“If we maintain the status quo and don’t adapt to these changes, we will be a stepping stone for other states, businesses and universities to lead the conversation and dictate to us how the industry will develop,” Dorn said. “LB761 is a nudge in the right direction for Nebraska to continue its domination in the agriculture industry.”

Julie Bushell, president of Page Wireless, testified in support of LB761. The foundation outlined in the bill is a way to accelerate precision agriculture and would put power back in the hands of Nebraska producers, Bushell said.

“[Stakeholders] have made clear that they favor data-backed verified information [and] are willing to pay a premium for products that are grown in a sustainable and humane way,” she said. “Here in Nebraska, that is what we do, but without sufficient producer-owned data to back that assertion, our ag products may lose market share and take a backseat to those that can substantiate their farming practices.”

Also in support of the bill was Brandon Hunnicutt who testified on behalf of the Ag Leaders Working Group – which represents eight Nebraska agricultural associations. Public and private industries continuously innovate products, sensors and management tools for farmers and

ranchers, Hunnicutt said, but these innovations come at a cost. LB761 would promote use of those innovations through grant funding, which would increase efficiency while also reducing agriculture’s environmental footprint, he said.

Tip O’Neill, president of the Nebraska Telecommunications Association, spoke in opposition to the bill. He said the measure would create a different standard of adequate broadband speed to qualify for grants than the standard adopted in the Broadband Bridge Act passed by the Legislature last session.

“We also believe the PSC, not the Department of Economic Development, should be the governmental entity that administers any broadband grant created for the utilization of federal ARPA funds,” O’Neill said.

The committee took no immediate action on LB761.

Proposal for expedited rail crossing permits discussed

A bill heard by the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee Feb. 15 would allow the Public Service Commission to issue an expedited rail crossing permit for telecommunications carriers in certain cases.

Under LB1234, sponsored by Henderson Sen. Curt Friesen, a telecommunications carrier could submit a request to the PSC for an expedited wire-crossing permit if a railroad company does not respond to an application made by the carrier within 30 days. The PSC would be responsible for entering an order for an expedited permit within 15 days of receipt of an application.



Sen. Curt Friesen

A wire-crossing permit allows a telecommunications carrier to place a line, wire or cable across a railroad right-of way in a manner that meets the requirements of the Federal Railroad Administration and rail industry standards.

Friesen said the bill wouldn't affect railroad companies that already process applications in a timely manner, but instead is directed at companies that use delay tactics such as ignoring applications or claiming an application isn't complete due to minor errors.

Tip O'Neill, president of the Nebraska Telecommunications Asso-

ciation, spoke in support of the bill. Deployment of broadband in rural areas to grant recipients needs to be completed within a time frame established by state and federal programs, O'Neill said, but in many instances projects have been delayed by a lack of response from railroad companies.

"Delays in materials caused by supply chain interruptions and workforce issues exacerbated by COVID-19 are undesirable, but understandable," he said. "However, projects delayed because of lack of responsiveness to completed applications for crossing rights-of-way of railroads are less un-

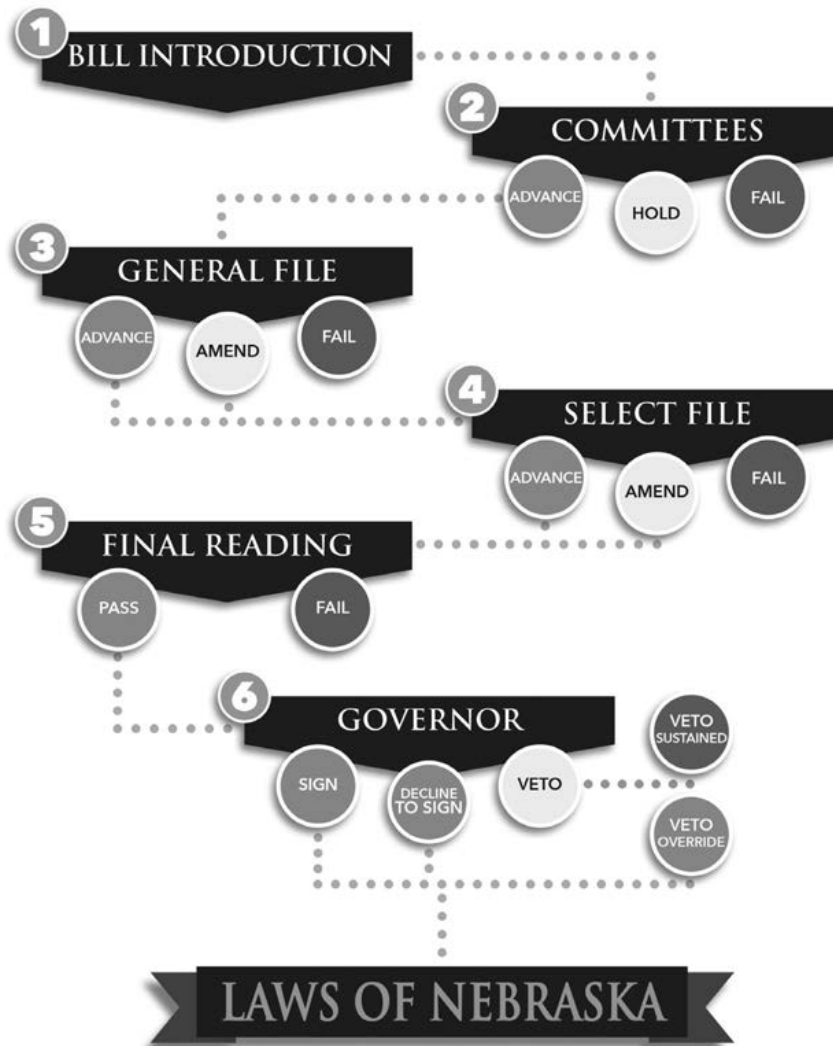
derstandable and more frustrating."

Dan Watermeier, chairperson of the PSC, also spoke in support of the proposal, while also suggesting that the commission be given 21 days to order an expedited permit.

"Crossing railroad rights-of-way can be a major stumbling block to getting broadband deployment in a timely fashion," Watermeier said. "[Telecommunications] carriers are also experiencing delays due to the negotiation required for access to the right-of-way."

No one testified in opposition to LB1234 and the committee took no immediate action on the bill. ■

HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW



COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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

Tuesday, Feb. 22

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB996 (Dorn) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for assisted-living facilities
 LB1055 (McDonnell) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for premium pay to front-line nurses
 LB1089 (Stinner) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for licensed and medicaid-certified nursing facilities
 LB1269 (Murman) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for repayment of qualified educational debts owed by certain health professionals
 LB1183 (Aguilar) State intent to appropriate federal funds for federally qualified health centers
 LB1066 (Stinner) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services and the University of Nebraska for behavioral health care services
 LB1172 (Hilkemann) Appropriate federal funds for rate increases for certain providers of developmental disabilities services

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1187 (Flood) Change provisions relating to controllable electronic records in the Uniform Commercial Code
 LB1061 (Albrecht) Change provisions relating to the board of directors of an insurance corporation
 LB948 (Wayne) Require insurers to reveal certain liability coverage limits to injured parties
 LB1258 (Bostar) Adopt the Peer-to-Peer Vehicle Sharing Program Act

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB838 (Kolterman) AM1889
 LB1027 (Hunt) Provide for grants to schools that discontinue use of American Indian mascots
 LB852 (Day) Require behavioral health points of contact for school districts
 LB1211 (Linehan) Change provisions

relating to option enrollment for students
 LB1212 (Linehan) Change provisions relating to individualized education plans under the Special Education Act

Transportation & Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1105 (Day) Provide for Autism Awareness Plates
 LB1149 (Friesen) Change registration fees for motor vehicles powered by alternative fuel

Urban Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1108 (Day) Provide certain sanitary and improvement districts the power to regulate the discharge of fireworks
 LB726 (M. Hansen) Change provisions relating to sanitary and improvement districts
 LB727 (M. Hansen) Change provisions relating to the board of trustees of a sanitary and improvement district
 LB821 (M. Hansen) Adopt the Aid to Municipalities Act
 LB1118 (Wayne) Provide for election of airport authority board in a city of the metropolitan class
 LB1119 (Wayne) Change powers of an airport authority created by a city of the metropolitan class

Wednesday, Feb. 23

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1267 (Vargas) Appropriate federal funds for health equity liaisons for various state commissions
 LB760 (Dorn) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for grants to licensed emergency medical services programs
 LB1194 (McDonnell) Appropriate federal funds to the Public Service Commission for public safety answering points and cloud-based software services to process 911 emergency calls
 LB1199 (McDonnell) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Administrative Services for the Chief Information Officer to provide radios to volunteer departments
 LB1257 (Bostar) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of

Transportation for grants for electric vehicle direct-current fast charging stations

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointment: Ann Ashford - Accountability and Disclosure Commission
 LB793 (McCollister) Provide for ranked-choice voting for certain city and village offices
 LB794 (McCollister) Provide for nonpartisan election of the State Treasurer and Auditor of Public Accounts

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointments: Linda Mentink, Cheryl Livingston - Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Appointment: Richard L. Wiener - Foster Care Advisory Committee
Appointment: Peggy A. Williams - Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
 LB710 (McCollister) Change provisions relating to federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program eligibility
 LB1107 (Day) Change provisions relating to provider reimbursement for an absent child under the federal Child Care Subsidy program

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB907 (DeBoer) Adopt the Uniform Community Property Disposition at Death Act and change provisions relating to court jurisdiction
 LB1260 (DeBoer) Change provisions relating to the Public Guardianship Act
 LB1275 (Groene) Adopt the Medicinal Cannabis Act

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

Appointments: Paul E. Strommen, Dallen R. Juelfs - Neb. Oil and Gas Conservation Commission

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1264 (McDonnell) Change provisions relating to inheritance taxes, sales and use taxes, and income taxes
 LB827 (Lindstrom) Provide income

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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tax deductions for the cost of certain property and for certain research or experimental expenditures

LB936 (Bostar) Change provisions relating to the taxation of nonresident income

LB984 (Moser) Change sales and use tax collection fees

LB1005 (DeBoer) Change notice provisions relating to treasurer's tax deeds

LB1168 (Linehan) Provide an income tax deduction for the costs of medical care

Thursday, Feb. 24

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1167 (Flood) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Economic Development for internships and expanding and retaining Nebraska's workforce

LB1072 (McDonnell) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Economic Development for a financial success program

LB1063 (Morfeld) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Labor to increase the number of apprentices and provide premium pay

LB1206 (Kolterman) Appropriate federal funds to the Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges for infrastructure, technology, and equipment

Executive Board

Room 1525 - 12:00 p.m.

LR159 (Blood) Request the Executive Board to appoint an AltEn LLC, Ethanol Plant Special Investigative and Oversight Committee

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB965 (Bostar) Change the day the state observes Arbor Day

LB1077 (B. Hansen) Prohibit public schools, public postsecondary institutions, and governmental entities from training or teaching certain concepts relating to race and sex and provide for withholding of state funds

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1129 (Morfeld) Provide free contraceptives for women as prescribed

LB716 (Hunt) Allow qualified practitioners to perform abortions

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB781 (Slama) Adopt the Heartbeat Act

LB933 (Albrecht) Adopt the Nebraska Human Life Protection Act

LB1086 (Geist) Adopt the Chemical Abortion Safety Protocol Act

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB687 (Blood) Adopt the Property Tax Circuit Breaker Act

LB784 (Groene) Change provisions relating to a property tax exemption for hospitals

LB1020 (Brewer) Change homestead exemption provisions relating to application requirements for certain veterans

LB1080 (Sanders) Change homestead exemption provisions relating to qualifications, application requirements, and penalties

LB995 (Linehan) Limit the total amount reimbursed by the state for homestead exemptions

Friday, Feb. 25

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

LB867 (Morfeld) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for Health Aid

LB1221 (Morfeld) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for remdesivir for patients suffering from COVID-19

LB959 (McCollister) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for the statewide designated health information exchange

LB1075 (Stinner) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for technology that will support statewide pediatric mental health services

LB1076 (Stinner) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services to develop software to streamline coordination of care for children with medically complex conditions

LB1254 (B. Hansen) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for services relating to youth who have aged out of the foster care system

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1134 (Morfeld) Prohibit use of public resources by a board member or employee of an electric cooperative corporation under the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act

LB1139 (M. Hansen) Prohibit certain corporations from making contributions or expenditures or providing personal services under the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB885 (M. Cavanaugh) Require implicit bias training for certain applicants and credential holders under the Uniform Credentialing Act

LB1106 (Day) Change provisions of the Mental Health Practice Act

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB772 (Day) Prohibit certain providers of health care and medical services from taking certain debt collection actions against victims of sexual assault, domestic assault, and child abuse

LB909 (McDonnell) Authorize mental health professionals and practitioners to take persons into emergency protective custody and provide for a training and certification process

LB1009 (Brandt) Adopt the Domestic Abuse Death Review Act

LB1171 (Sanders) Provide for the clerk of the district court to serve as the ex officio jury commissioner in all counties and change provisions relating to compensation

LB1216 (M. Cavanaugh) Change provisions relating to appointment of guardians and conservators

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB881 (McKinney) Provide a sales tax exemption for feminine hygiene

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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products and require detention facilities to provide feminine hygiene products to prisoners free of charge
 LB941 (Slama) Provide a sales and use tax exemption for net wrap
 LB944 (McCollister) Change the sales tax rate imposed on the furnishing of electricity service
 LB1097 (Halloran) Change sales tax provisions relating to motor vehicle towing
 LB1225 (Wayne) Eliminate the franchise tax and require financial institutions to pay the corporate income tax
 LB1209 (Linehan) Change sales tax provisions relating to purchasing agents

Monday, Feb. 28

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB696 (Blood) Appropriate federal funds to the State Department of Education for school employee retention payments
 LB1085 (Pansing Brooks) Appropriate federal funds to the State Department of Education for career and technical educational student organizations
 LB1182 (Pansing Brooks) Adopt the School Employees Pandemic Protection Act and state intent regarding federal funds
 LB1198 (McDonnell) Appropriate federal funds to the State Department of Education to provide grants to nonprofit organizations providing programming for mentorship, career exploration, and access to job readiness or postsecondary education
 LB1220 (Morfeld) Appropriate federal funds to the State Department of Education for premium payments for teachers working in underserved communities
 LB1240 (Albrecht) Appropriate federal funds to the State Department of Education to provide family-directed education recovery accounts for low-income children and families
 LB1217 (Walz) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Administrative Services for incentive payments to eligible school employees

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB689 (Blood) Change provisions relating to fees in the Nebraska Uniform Limited Liability Company Act
 LB718 (Morfeld) Provide requirements for cost-sharing and coverage relating to health care benefits and pharmacy benefit managers
 LB1188 (Flood) Adopt the Uniform Personal Data Protection Act

Business & Labor

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1083 (Business & Labor) Provide for payment of claims against the state
 LB1084 (Business & Labor) Deny claims against the state
 LB1130 (Morfeld) Require data sharing and execution of agreements with the Nebraska Statewide Workforce and Education Reporting System by various state departments
 LB815 (McKinney) Adopt the Diaper Changing Accommodation Act
 LB1140 (M. Hansen) Change provisions relating to withholding of wages for health and human services agencies and associations
 LB834 (Hunt) Redefine a term under the Wage and Hour Act
 LB1029 (Hunt) Prohibit harassment by certain employers and provide an unlawful employment practice for a covered entity under the Nebraska Fair Employment Practice Act

Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1034 (Pahls) Provide for designation of progress schools and progress plans and state intent to appropriate federal funds
 LB1251 (B. Hansen) Adopt the Equal Opportunity Scholarship for Students with Special Needs Program Act and change provisions relating to the distribution of lottery funds
 LB1179 (Groene) Adopt the Classroom Safety Intervention and Behavioral Awareness Training Act
 LB912 (Morfeld) Provide for mental health first aid training for school districts and change provisions relating to the use of lottery funds

General Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1268 (Bostar) Remove the prohibition that a lottery ticket cannot be sold through a vending or dispensing device under the State Lottery Act
 LB1109 (Murman) Provide for the issuance of a liquor license to the spouse of a law enforcement officer
 LB1239 (Vargas) Change and eliminate provisions relating to liquor and agreements between manufacturers and wholesalers and beer suppliers and beer wholesalers

Tuesday, March 1

Appropriations

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1161 (Wishart) Appropriate federal funds to the State Department of Education for programs and interpreters that provide services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing
 LB1162 (Wishart) Appropriate federal funds to the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to support in-person interpreting in rural areas and legal communication access
 LB1087 (Stinner) Appropriate federal funds for Aid to Community Colleges for dual enrollment
 LB1079 (B. Hansen) State intent to appropriate federal funds for disbursement to Nebraska residents as prepaid debit cards
 LB1131 (Morfeld) State intent to appropriate federal funds for bonus payments for teachers, child care workers, and health care workers
 LB1138 (Vargas) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for local public health departments
 LB1203 (Briese) Appropriate federal funds for child care programs

Banking, Commerce & Insurance

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB715 (Hunt) Eliminate the prohibition regarding publicly funded insurance coverage for abortion and repeal the Mandate Opt-Out and Insurance Coverage Clarification Act

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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Education

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1078 (B. Hansen) Prohibit possession of personal electronic devices by students in public school classrooms
LB711 (Hughes) Change provisions relating to the sale of educational land
LB1157 (Linehan) Require the State Department of Education to submit reports on federal funds
LR278CA (Linehan) Constitutional amendment to eliminate the State Board of Education and provide for the Governor to appoint the Commissioner of Education
LB1143 (Linehan) Require approval by the voters of a school district or educational service unit for the issuance of certain bonds under the Interlocal Cooperation Act

Wednesday, March 2

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1141 (Vargas) Appropriate federal funds to the Commission on Public Advocacy for legal representation for indigent clients
LB1002 (McDonnell) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for low-income home energy assistance
LB1052 (J. Cavanaugh) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for the Nebraska Homeless Assistance Program
LB1159 (Wishart) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for a model system of care
LB1201 (DeBoer) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for grants to nonprofit organizations providing food assistance
LB1193 (McDonnell) Provide limitations regarding federal funds appropriations relating to the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, and the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1181 (Groene) Change provisions relating to required identification documents for registering to vote and

voting and procedures for early voting
LB1123 (Erdman) Change procedures for counting ballots under the Election Act
LB1121 (Albrecht) Require inspection of vote counting devices under the Election Act

Health & Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB859 (Clements) Require city-county health departments to obtain approval for directed health measures
LB963 (Murman) Adopt the Medical Ethics and Diversity Act Briefing by the Department of Health and Human Services on the Heritage Health Procurement

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB828 (Briese) Prohibit manipulation of elections under the Election Act and provide a penalty
LB829 (DeBoer) Change provisions relating to offenses against animals
LB851 (Wishart) Change enforcement procedures and redefine terms related to certain crimes involving animals
LB903 (Bostar) Change provisions relating to criminal privacy violations and prohibit spying by unmanned aircraft
LB990 (B. Hansen) Create the offense of stolen valor and provide a penalty
LB994 (Lathrop) Change provisions relating to sale of catalytic converters to secondary metals recyclers and change a penalty

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB972 (M. Hansen) Change provisions relating to agricultural or horticultural land receiving special valuation
LB1115 (McKinney) Require the development of certain property in order for the property to retain its property tax exemption
LB1250 (B. Hansen) Change provisions relating to joint public hearings and postcards under the Property Tax Request Act

Thursday, March 3

Appropriations

Room 1003 - 1:30 p.m.

LB1160 (Wishart) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Environment and Energy for reverse osmosis systems
LB1248 (B. Hansen) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Environment and Energy for a municipal water treatment plant
LB1191 (Brewer) Appropriate federal funds to the Commission on Indian Affairs to improve tribal-owned community drinking water
LB1196 (McDonnell) Appropriate federal funds to the Department of Economic Development for lead service line replacements for a utilities district
LB1048 (Blood) Appropriate federal funds to the University of Nebraska to evaluate the chemicals released and pollution caused by ethanol production facilities
LB1255 (Bostar) Appropriate federal funds to the University of Nebraska for an updated climate change report

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

LB692 (Blood) Prohibit causing sexual contact when a condom has been removed without consent
LB1000 (B. Hansen) Change provisions relating to child abuse and neglect under the Child Protection and Family Safety Act and the Nebraska Juvenile Code
LB1223 (M. Hansen) Require reimbursement for lodging certain defendants in county jails and require state hospitals to maintain beds for certain patients

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

LB979 (McCollister) Adopt the Remanufacturing Pilot Project Act and provide income tax credits
LB982 (Hilkemann) Adopt the Education Savings Account Act and provide income tax adjustments
LB1039 (McDonnell) Provide for state reimbursement of certain annual costs under the Firefighter Cancer Benefits Act
LB1261 (Murman) Change limitations on tax credits under the Nebraska Advantage Rural Development Act ■

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