

## Electoral winner-take-all proposals considered

Two measures aimed at reinstating a winner-take-all system for allocating Nebraska's five presidential electoral votes were heard by the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee Jan. 30.

Currently, the winner of Nebraska's statewide popular vote receives two Electoral College votes. Since 1991, the state's three congressional districts also award one electoral vote each based on the popular vote winner in each district. Maine is the only other state to use this system.

LB3, introduced by Central City Sen. Loren Lippincott on behalf of Gov. Jim Pillen, would reinstate a winner-take-all system and award all five electoral votes to the winner of the state's popular vote.

Lippincott said a winner-take-all allocation of Nebraska's electoral votes could prevent "pockets of power" in the state's more densely populated areas and would "spread out" repre-



Sen. Loren Lippincott said LB3 would put Nebraska on a more equal footing with other states in the Electoral College system.

sentation geographically.

A winner-take-all system would allow Nebraskans to have a "unified voice" in presidential elections, he said.

Kenny Zoeller, director of the Governor's Policy Research Office, testi-

fied in favor of LB3, calling the current system "just bad public policy." He said the promised benefits of potentially splitting Nebraska's electoral votes — including bringing presidential

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## Chief justice focuses on cooperation, funding concerns

In his first State of the Judiciary address Jan. 28, newly appointed Chief Justice Jeffrey Funke focused on successful past collaborations between the legislative and judicial branches and asked lawmakers to ensure adequate funding for ongoing needs.

"The partnerships and cooperation between our branches are vital to maintain a society where the law is applied fairly and justice is accessible to all," Funke said.

The chief justice noted successful partnerships on probation, post-

release supervision, problem-solving courts and public guardianships in his remarks.

The work of the judicial branch to provide innovative and effective adult and juvenile probation and post-release supervision has prevented future crime and kept thousands of individuals from returning to prison, Funke said, at a low cost to taxpayers.

He noted that the recidivism rate for individuals who successfully complete adult probation is 19%, and that less than 10% of individuals under post-release supervision return to the

Department of Correctional Services because of a probation revocation.

Funke also touted the success of the Access to Justice Commission, which is working to identify and resolve barriers to equal access to the courts in Nebraska. One result of its work has been the establishment of an in-person self-help center in Douglas County to assist self-representing litigants in filing and processing their cases, he said.

"Over the years, I have seen the positive impact of the work of this

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## Chief justice focuses on cooperation, funding concerns

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body, from approving funds that enable us to maintain and improve court and probation operations across the state, to passing legislation so that our laws remain responsive to the needs of our citizens,” Funke said.

Almost every success, however, engenders additional challenges, the chief justice said.

For example, there currently are more than 800 participants in a variety of problem-solving courts in Nebraska, Funke said, which have a recidivism rate of only 24%.

“However, more Nebraskans can and should be served,” he said. “To do so we will need your continued commitment to provide additional

resources.”

The courts also require funding to continue improving language access, he said. Currently, interpreting services are provided in more than 60 different languages, Funke said, and the administration is working to produce videos in various languages that detail court procedures and the role of interpreters.

In addition, he said, technology advances include equipping nearly every courtroom in the state with infrared assistive listening devices for those experiencing hearing loss and enhancing virtual courtrooms to provide remote hearings.

“Our past accomplishments have built a strong foundation for our future success,” Funke said. “And this legislative session marks the next opportunity for our branches to work together to serve the people of Nebraska.” ■



Nebraska Supreme Court Chief Justice Jeffrey Funke urged lawmakers to support the judiciary’s efforts to improve court access in his Jan. 28 address.

## UNICAMERAL UPDATE

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candidates and campaign spending to the state — have not materialized.

“We ignore two-thirds of our state by prioritizing one single congressional district,” Zoeller said. “We are simply not on a level playing field with the other 48 [winner-take-all] states.”

The second proposal would achieve the same aim through an amendment to the state constitution. If approved by the Legislature, LR24CA, sponsored by Sen.

Myron Dorn of Adams, would place the question of reinstating winner-take-all on the 2026 general election ballot.



Sen. Myron Dorn

Dorn said he favored Lippincott’s bill, but that he wanted to keep his proposal as a back-up option should LB3 fail to win approval.

“When looking at a national election, I think all states should have the same standard,” Dorn said.

Testifying in support of LB3, John Mark Rule agreed. He said Nebraska’s current system of allocating electors has “divided and diluted” the state’s influence in presidential elections.

“It has pitted a majority of Nebraska voters against a minority, Omaha-based group of contrary voters,” Rule said.

Michael Tiedeman, speaking on behalf of the Nebraska Republican Party, also supported the measure. He said the current system encourages outside influence in the state’s politics.

“Our state has been plagued by outside donation money in excess of \$50 million every presidential cycle ... we have allowed Nebraska to be a political pawn, not by candidates, but

by outside special interests who try to impact our elections and erode our values,” Tiedeman said.

In a hearing lasting more than five hours, over 75 people testified — the majority of them in opposition to one or both measures. Many cited the unique nature of Nebraska politics — including being home to the nation’s only unicameral legislature — in their remarks.

Heidi Uhing, public policy director at Civic Nebraska, testified against both proposals. The district system of allocating Electoral College votes ensures more localized representation of voter intent, she said.

Uhing noted that Lippincott’s proposal received a much different reception when introduced in 2023, when only 12 people testified. That measure did not advance from committee and was not prioritized, she said, suggesting that the governor made it a top priority this session in response to political pressure from national actors.

“I encourage you to prioritize issues that are homegrown priorities for Nebraskans, to resist partisan pressure when it’s not in the best interest of Nebraskans [and] prioritize process over partisan outcomes,” Uhing said.

Also speaking in opposition was Warren Phelps, chairperson of the Cheyenne County Republican Party. Even in the “deep red sea” of his heavily Republican county, Phelps said, no one he talks with supports winner-take-all. Population growth in Lincoln and Omaha is going to continue to outpace the rest of the state, he said, and voters in western Nebraska don’t want to be “drowned out” by Democrats in the future.

“As long as the 3rd District in

Nebraska has that electoral vote, we have a chip in the game,” Phelps said.

As a political independent, Melina Arroyo said the current system serves voters well. Testifying against both measures, she said the potential of splitting the state’s electoral votes encourages presidential candidates to engage with Nebraskans and voters to engage with the political process.

“The district-based system gives weight to minority voter voices in each congressional district, preventing the marginalization of voters who might not align with the majority in the state,” Arroyo said.

Vickey Parks of Omaha also testified against both proposals. Black voters in North Omaha were shut out of representation in local government for generations, she said, until the implementation of district elections. Bringing the vote closer to the people is a better way to represent the concerns of all Nebraskans, she said.

“We see this as another attempt to take our power and our voice out of the political process,” Parks said. “We can’t see it any different because you can’t show us any different.”

The committee took no immediate action on either proposal. ■



# MEET THE SENATOR

## Rountree begins new chapter of public service

Whether describing the tobacco fields he worked as a young man in the South or being struck by the beauty of his future wife after catching a glimpse of her across a JCPenney department store, Bellevue Sen. Victor Rountree tells a great story.

When asked about that meeting in Georgia with Cheryl, his wife of more than 40 years, his response was a hearty laugh and a question. “How much time do you have?”

Rountree was born in his aunt’s house in Wilson, North Carolina – his mother assisted by a midwife – and grew up in nearby Elm City. The fourth child of nine siblings, he spent his summers and weekends working in the fields and helping with his father’s construction business, laying water and sewer lines and building manholes by hand.

“That’s how we paid for our school clothes and earned our spending money,” he said. “Hard work was all we knew.”

That work ethic served Rountree well as he developed an interest in politics through various youth programs. In 1977, as a high school senior participating in the Presidential Classroom for Young Americans in Washington, DC, he met legendary US Rep. Shirley Chisholm – the

first Black woman elected to Congress and first Black candidate to vie for the presidential nomination of a major political party.

“My luck, she was in her office that day,” Rountree said. “I went in and she took the time to speak with me. I was 17 and she was so inspiring and encouraging. She told me we need good people in government.”

The encounter stayed with Rountree, though it took nearly 50 years for those youthful ambitions to be realized.

After joining the US Air Force, Rountree enjoyed postings all over the world, including two tours in England and a stint at Sembach Air Base in Germany right as the Berlin Wall fell.

But it was a fateful posting at Grand Forks AFB that was unexpectedly pivotal in the trajectory of Rountree’s life. Despite the shock of 40 below zero temps and snow to their knees the day of their arrival, over time the family put down roots in middle America and stayed in North Dakota for nine years.

“We found a church and a community there that provided the stability we needed,” Rountree said. “It would have been a difficult time otherwise. The church became our anchor and our rock.”

Always a devout person, the freshman senator became an ordained pastor after his retirement from military life and founded a ministry in Bellevue in 2012. No matter his role, the District 3 senator has always found a way to serve.

“People are my business,” Rountree said. “As a member of the Air Force, as a pastor, as a fellow human being and now as a state senator – I’m here to do the work of the people.”

And if you see him in the Capitol hallways, you should ask to hear the rest of the story of how he met his wife. It’s a good one. ■



On a 2024 trip to Greece to celebrate daughter Rachel’s elopement ceremony, Sen. Victor Rountree and his wife Cheryl, along with son Isaac and daughter Naomi, visit the village of Kastraki.

## BUSINESS & LABOR

### Bill would broaden veteran employment preference

The Business and Labor Committee heard testimony Jan. 27 on a bill that seeks to broaden the hiring preference given to veterans.

Currently, a veteran seeking initial employment with the state of Nebraska, political subdivisions and certain private businesses is granted a hiring preference based on their prior active duty service if two or more equally qualified candidates are being considered for a position. This preference also is extended to the spouses of 100% disabled veterans.

LB144, introduced by Bellevue Sen. Victor Rountree, would expand the hiring preference to include spouses of active duty service members, including National Guard and reserves, and spouses of veterans who were killed in the line of duty or died as a result of their service.

The bill also would extend preference beyond a veteran's initial employment to include promotions, reassignments and transfers to a new position.

Rountree said that in order to be prepared on a national level, service members need to be well established at the local level.

"Ensuring that military families are financially secure helps our service members carry out their duties confidently without any additional stressors back home," he said.

Michelle Richart testified in support of LB144 on behalf of the Department of Defense-State Liaison Office.



Sen. Victor Rountree

A study conducted by the department found that nearly half of all active duty spouses reported finding employment as one of the most difficult aspects of a relocation, she said.

"Due to the high demands of military service, a majority of families relocate to new duty stations every few years," Richart said. "These rates of relocation often hinder employment and career potential [for] military spouses."

Randy Norwood, speaking on behalf of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, also testified in support of the measure. He said spouses of service members often face discrimination in the workforce due to their military affiliation.

"LB144 is clear, deliberate action that sends a powerful message: Nebraska values its military community and is committed to being a military friendly state," Norwood said.

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

## EDUCATION

### Reporting requirements for foreign contributions to colleges, universities proposed

Nebraska's colleges and universities would be required to report any funding received from foreign governments or individuals under a proposal considered by the Education Committee Jan. 27.

LB378, introduced by Omaha Sen. Bob Andersen, would establish the Foreign Accountability and College Trans-



Sen. Bob Andersen

parency in Sourcing Act and require public and private postsecondary institutions to provide quarterly reports detailing funds of more than \$50 received from a foreign source. A foreign source is defined in the bill as a foreign government, legal entity established under the laws of a foreign government or an individual who is not a citizen or national of the United States.

Under the bill, the attorney general would be responsible for enforcing the act, imposing civil penalties for non-compliance and posting the reports on the attorney general's website.

Andersen said U.S. postsecondary institutions have received millions of dollars from the Chinese government or others acting on its behalf over the last four years. China and other adversarial nations have shown a pattern of manipulating the higher education system by stealing intellectual property, spying on students and promoting anti-democratic philosophies through campus programs, he said.

"The Legislature annually provides over \$800 million in funding for public institutions of higher education and funding for private colleges and universities through programs such as the Nebraska Opportunity Grant," Andersen said. "We have a duty to oversee the activities of these institutions, and this bill would ensure needed oversight of their other funding sources."

John Murante testified in support of a bill on behalf of State Shield, an organization that works to combat threats to the U.S. posed by the Chinese Communist Party.

Murante said that while similar federal disclosure requirements currently exist, a recent report revealed that almost 200 U.S. colleges and universities have failed to report approximately \$13 billion in foreign funds. Enacting

disclosure requirements at the state level could ensure better enforcement, he said.

Additionally, Murante said, LB378 would not prevent postsecondary universities from accepting funds or contracts from foreign sources, allowing continued collaboration with foreign nonprofits and peer institutions in research and business.

“Our goal is not to hinder those programs but rather increase transparency in cases where these foreign governments might have more nefarious intent,” he said.

Testifying in opposition to the bill was Matt Blomstedt on behalf of the University of Nebraska.

Blomstedt said federal law already requires higher education institutions to report foreign funds of \$250,000 or more biannually. Provisions of LB378 could create duplicate requirements and cause administrative burdens for colleges and universities, he said.

“This added workload could divert resources from core academic and research missions, all while duplicating the existing federal and state requirements,” Blomstedt said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

## GENERAL AFFAIRS

### Changes to casino, racetrack regulation proposed

The General Affairs Committee heard testimony Jan. 27 on a number of proposed changes to casino and racetrack enclosure regulation in Nebraska.

Bellevue Sen. Rick Holdcroft, chairperson of the committee, said oversight responsibilities for the State

Racing and Gaming Commission have “expanded exponentially” since casino gaming was legalized in Nebraska in 2020.

Holdcroft said the changes outlined in LB357, introduced by the committee, would help the commission keep up with that expansion and ensure “operational integrity, transparency and fairness” within the gaming industry.

“It has taken a large effort by the commission to get the now four operating casinos up and running,” he said, “and in that time the commission has expanded by over 30 workers to keep up [with] this fast growth.”

Among other changes, the bill would:

- create a new Racetrack Gaming Fund and consolidate two existing commission cash funds into it;
- reduce the required number of annual commission meetings from eight to six;
- update commission background check and fingerprint procedures;
- clarify licensing fee structures and requirements; and
- provide for an application process for a \$10,000 three-year racetrack enclosure license.

Casey Ricketts, executive director of the State Racing and Gaming Commission, testified in support of the proposal. She said the commission currently licenses race days in Nebraska, but has no authority under state law to license racetrack enclosures.

Ricketts said having jurisdiction over the physical space in which races are held would help the commission better carry out their oversight duties.

“LB357 was drafted to help the



Sen. Rick Holdcroft

commission be more efficient at regulating horse racing and casino gambling,” she said.

The bill also changes the payment process for an existing one-time authorized gaming operator license, which has a \$5 million fee. Under LB357, the license fee still must be paid over a five-year period – with \$1 million due at the time an application is issued – but each additional \$1 million payment would be required annually until the fee is paid in full.

Ricketts said the current fee structure gives the commission no recourse if a licensee chooses not to pay annually. This potentially could create cash flow issues for the commission, she said, hindering their oversight ability.

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

## GOVERNMENT, MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS

### Bill seeks to limit local rent control ordinances

A measure that would prohibit local government entities from imposing rent controls was considered by the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee Jan. 29.

LB266, introduced by North Platte Sen. Robert Dover, would prohibit any Nebraska municipality, county or other political subdivision from enacting or enforcing an ordinance that would have the effect of imposing rent controls on private property.

The bill would not apply to pro-



Sen. Robert Dover

grams meant to increase affordable housing or a program entered into voluntarily by a property owner.

Dover said Nebraska is one of only 13 states without a law prohibiting rent control, a policy that he said “throws off market dynamics” and disincentivizes housing development. Builders choose not to take on new projects if they don’t see the potential for a return on their investment, he said.

“With that in mind, prohibiting rent control may foster housing development and help address housing supply shortages,” Dover said. “A free market approach allows prices to reflect the actual value of housing based on location, amenities and demand.”

Testifying in support of the measure was Lynn Fisher, president of the Statewide Property Owners Association. He said association members in Omaha are concerned that rent control may be part of the city’s long-term plan to address a lack of affordable housing.

Fisher said a recent rent control ordinance enacted in St. Paul, Minnesota, is now being rescinded because new property development ceased and housing costs climbed as property owners raised rents to the maximum amounts allowed.

“When government at any level adds more regulation and chooses winners and losers in the economy, everyone loses,” he said.

Also supporting LB266 was Dennis Tierney of the Metropolitan Omaha Property Owners Association. Rent control has been used as a means to encourage affordable housing, he said, but research has shown it to have the opposite effect.

“We need to keep private property rents market driven rather than government determined,” Tierney said.

Testifying in opposition to the measure was Erin Feichtinger, policy direc-

tor for the Women’s Fund of Omaha. Calling LB266 a “solution in search of a problem,” she said there are no political subdivisions in Nebraska currently proposing rent control policies.

Omaha’s affordable housing action plan does not recommend rent controls, she said, but merely mentions in a report that the concept was raised during a community engagement process mandated by the state law that requires cities to develop such plans.

Feichtinger said the lack of affordable housing is a “crisis” across Nebraska, but not one that should be solved by a one-size-fits-all approach imposed by the state. Housing instability and housing needs look different in each community, she said, and lawmakers shouldn’t preemptively remove from consideration any tool that might prove useful.

“Local government is the best government because it’s closest to the people,” Feichtinger said.

The committee took no immediate action on LB266.

### Competing daylight saving bills considered

Nebraskans would no longer reset their clocks twice a year under two proposals considered Jan. 31 by the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

LB302, sponsored by Glenvil Sen. Dave Murman, would eliminate observation of daylight saving time in Nebraska. Under the bill as introduced, the state would adopt the practice of permanent standard time upon adoption of the same policy by the neighboring states of Iowa, Kansas, South Dakota and Wyoming.

Murman brought an amendment to the hearing that would remove the contingency that neighboring states also adopt permanent standard time and instead would make the change effective upon passage of LB302.

Conversely, LB34, introduced by Sen. Megan Hunt of Omaha, would adopt permanent daylight saving time. The switch would take effect contingent on a change in federal law or policy allowing states to do so and would require adoption of the same policy by three adjacent states.



Sen. Megan Hunt

States currently are allowed under federal law to permanently adopt year-round standard time — as Arizona and Hawaii have done — but Congress would have to act to authorize states to change to year-round daylight saving time.

Both senators said changing clocks twice a year has negative impacts on health, sleep, workplace safety and productivity, and that there is wide support in Nebraska for ending the practice.

Murman said his bill should be the preferred method to end time changes in Nebraska because it could be adopted immediately without having to wait for Congress to act. In addition, he said, many rural Nebraskans favor the proposal.

“The most compelling argument to me is that very shortly after I introduced this legislation, I received emails in support from Nebraska farmers, writing about how they would appreciate the extra morning sun,” Murman said.

Hunt said her personal preference is for more daylight hours in the evening, but that her primary concern is doing away with the time change — in



Sen. Dave Murman

whatever way senators decide to accomplish it.

“I’d just like to stop the madness,” she said.

Jay Pea, president of Save Standard Time, a nonprofit that advocates on behalf of permanent standard time, testified in support of LB302 and in opposition to LB34. Natural light is important for individuals whose jobs require them to be up early, he said, and that is what standard time provides.

“Standard time is the real, honest-to-God sundial time,” Pea said. “There are hundreds of studies across decades showing that standard time is best for our health, safety and our performance in school and the workplace.”

Speaking against LB34, Pea said permanent daylight saving time was tried twice nationally and was quickly reversed due to its unpopularity. Government-mandated time changes shouldn’t be used to favor a few industries that benefit from more daylight at certain times of year, he said.

Also testifying on both bills was Jason Jackson, who said the extra hour of sunlight during daylight saving time is a benefit to Nebraska families. Speaking in favor of LB34, he said the measure would expand opportunities for young people to participate in sports because of the additional sunlight at the end of the day.

“I know that for my own children, if they weren’t involved in sports after school, they’d probably be looking at screens the whole time,” Jackson said.

In his testimony against LB302, Jackson expressed concern that schools and workplaces would not adjust their schedules to align with permanent standard time. The result, he said, would be fewer parents who could get their kids to practice earlier in the day while the sun is still out.

Joe Kohout, testifying on behalf

of the Nebraska Golf Alliance, also supported LB34 and opposed LB302. Adopting permanent standard time would adversely impact the more than 300 golf courses in Nebraska, he said, which earn between 35% and 40% of their revenue after 4 p.m.

Fewer evening hours of daylight would result in lost revenue, Kohout said, which likely would result in increased prices and less access to the sport for all Nebraskans.

The committee took no immediate action on either proposal.



### Emergency notification system for child care facilities proposed

The Health and Human Services Committee considered a bill Jan. 29 that seeks to establish emergency notification and response protocols for child care facilities.

LB162, introduced by Omaha Sen. Margo Juarez, would adopt the Child Care Safety and Security Act to be administered by the state Department of Education. Under the bill, child care and early education facilities could voluntarily partner with their area’s educational service unit and community based organizations to establish an emergency notification system and standard response protocols.

The bill also would require each ESU to have three designees to operate an emergency response system to

notify providers of local area emergencies, provide safety and reunification materials and coordinate age-appropriate safety and reunification training.

LB162 also would create the Child Care Safety and Security Fund and direct the department to award grants of up to \$3,000 per ESU. The department would be required to submit an annual report to the Clerk of the Legislature detailing the number of grants awarded, how funds were used and the number of children served.

Juarez indicated she would offer an amendment stating legislative intent to authorize a one-time \$300,000 appropriation from the Cash Reserve Fund to the Child Care Safety and Security Fund in fiscal year 2025-26 to carry out the bill’s provisions.

Juarez said the proposal is designed to mirror emergency response protocols already in place in elementary and secondary schools in the state.

School systems in Nebraska are notified by law enforcement of nearby incidents that may have implications for the safety and security of children and staff, she said, but child care centers and home providers do not receive the same notice.

“Every day, thousands of working Nebraska parents entrust the care of their youngest children to these hard-working professionals,” Juarez said. “These parents not only deserve to go to work knowing they can rely on child care providers to educate their children and prepare them for school ... they should be assured that their child is safe.”

Suzanne Schneider, speaking on behalf of Lincoln Littles, testified in support of LB162. She said the organization has been working with local entities, including Lincoln Public Schools and the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, to implement a standard response protocol



Sen. Margo Juarez



and emergency notification system for child care providers in Lincoln.

Establishing a statewide training and notification system will help keep Nebraska’s youngest residents safe, she said.

“Being proactive is much better than being reactive,” Schneider said.

No one testified in opposition to LB162 and the committee took no immediate action on the proposal.

## JUDICIARY

### Expansion of housing discrimination protections proposed

A measure that would prohibit housing discrimination based on lawful sources of income was considered by the Judiciary Committee Jan. 30.

LB223, introduced by Omaha Sen. Dunixi Guereca, would designate a source of income as a protected category under the Nebraska Fair Housing Act. Under the bill, a lawful source of income could include income derived from Social Security, child support, foster care subsidies, alimony, veteran benefits or any other form of federal, state or local public general assistance or housing assistance.

Guereca said one of the most common sources of income discrimination relates to housing choice vouchers. Commonly known as Section 8, the federal voucher program assists low-income families, the elderly and individuals with disabilities in securing housing in the private market, he said.

Applicants approved for a voucher

are placed on a waitlist, which in Omaha can range from six months to a year, Guereca said. Once a voucher is received, participants have 60 days to find a landlord who accepts Section 8, he said, and a local public housing agency then uses federal funds to directly pay landlords the portion of the rent covered by the voucher.

“We’re not forcing [landlords] to accept the tenant if they hold the voucher,” Guereca said. “We’re merely opening up housing possibilities for families that do hold the voucher and preventing them from being disqualified solely on the fact that they have Section 8 income to cover part of their rent.”

Sarah O’Neill supported the bill on behalf of Legal Aid of Nebraska’s Housing Justice Project. O’Neill said she has seen firsthand the challenges tenants face in finding landlords who will accept their housing assistance.

“Federal Section 8 housing choice vouchers provide some relief to cost-burdened tenants renting from private landlords,” O’Neill said. “However, [that relief] is frustrated by the burdens tenants face trying to find and secure housing that will accept this lawful source of income.”

Kasey Ogle also supported the measure on behalf of Collective Impact Lincoln. U.S. residents typically wait an average of 1.5 years to receive a housing voucher, she said, and 20% of individuals who obtain assistance cannot use it because of a shortage of available housing options or because landlords are unwilling to accept Section 8.

“Studies show that housing voucher recipients are 12% more likely to use their voucher in a jurisdiction with a law like LB223 than in a jurisdiction without such a law, which cuts the voucher failure rate in half,” Ogle said.

Testifying on behalf of the Apart-

ment Association of Nebraska, Ryan Norman opposed the bill.

A similar New York law recently was overturned because it violated landlord’s rights, he said.

“By requiring landlords to accept Section 8 vouchers, source of income discrimination statutes compel landlords to consent to warrantless searches of their properties and records, in violation of the Fourth Amendment,” Norman said.

Omaha landlord Dave Ulferts also opposed LB223, saying it won’t help solve the city’s housing issues.

The problem isn’t that landlords are unwilling to accept Section 8 tenants, he said, but rather the difficulty of dealing with local housing authorities.

Ulferts said he has reduced his rental units by half in recent years due to the challenges of working with the Omaha Housing Authority, and is prepared to sell his remaining properties to avoid working with OHA should LB223 pass.

“It’s bureaucratic, you can’t get ahold of anybody, no one has an answer and they’re not helpful,” he said.

The committee took no immediate action on the proposal.

### Proposal would ban hemp-derived cannabinoids

The Judiciary Committee heard testimony on a measure Jan. 29 that would prohibit the sale of hemp-derived cannabinoids, commonly known as delta-8.

LB316, introduced by Omaha Sen. Kathleen Kauth, would prohibit the sale in Nebraska of hemp products containing more than



Sen. Dunixi Guereca



Sen. Kathleen Kauth

0.3% of any strain of THC.

Hemp-derived cannabinoid products often are cultivated using chemicals that mimic marijuana and its intoxicating effects, Kauth said. Use of these products, she said, is known to cause adverse health effects like vomiting, hallucinations, low blood pressure, difficulty breathing, psychosis and other mental health conditions.

“We constantly talk in this state about the serious mental health crisis we are experiencing in society as a whole,” Kauth said. “These unregulated and unsafe chemical concoctions will only exacerbate these issues.”

Nebraska Attorney General Mike Hilgers testified in support of the bill.

Hilgers said the 2019 Legislature passed a law legalizing hemp products with no greater than 0.3% delta-9 THC, the psychoactive compound found in marijuana. The law did not, however, impose restrictions on other cannabinoids like delta-8 or delta-10, he said, which unintentionally created a legal loophole allowing retailers to sell “illegal” products.

“At no time [in 2019] did anyone suggest that this would create a synthetic-recreational marijuana regime in the state of Nebraska,” Hilgers said. “Because if they had, and if it did, that bill wouldn’t have gotten 10 votes.”

Lorelle Mueiting, prevention director at Heartland Family Service, also supported the measure. There is no minimum age requirement to purchase hemp derivatives, she said, resulting in dangerous products ending up in the hands of children and teenagers.

“Students are using these products,” Mueiting said. “There’s no age limit — anyone can walk into these stores and purchase these products.”

Sarah Linden, owner of the stores Generation V and Grateful Green opposed the bill. She said her 24 storefronts across the state generate

\$910,000 in sales tax and \$154,000 in property tax revenue annually. Banning hemp-derived products, 99% of which are federally legal, would negatively impact small business owners and employees, Linden said.

“I would be forced to close at least eight of my retail stores and lay off at least 32 employees immediately upon the passage of [the] bill,” she said. “Most of the small business owners in the hemp industry in Nebraska will lose everything.”

Also testifying in opposition to the bill was Joseph Fraas, owner of G&G Smoke Shops in Lincoln and Omaha.

Most hemp-derived products are safe and tested for potency, adulterants and contaminants, Frass said. Banning these products could result in Nebraska consumers turning to less safe alternatives, he said.

“The U.S. experiment with prohibition has been abysmal,” Fraas said. “Bans do not stop the sale of these products — they are simply driven into a black market.”

The committee took no immediate action on LB316.

### **Proposal to abolish death penalty discussed**

Nebraska voters would decide whether to repeal the state’s death penalty under a proposal considered by the Judiciary Committee Jan. 31.

LR15CA, introduced by Omaha Sen. Terrell McKinney, would place a death penalty prohibition in the Nebraska Constitution if approved by voters at the 2026 general election. If the proposed amendment were approved by voters, existing death sentences would be commuted to life

imprisonment.

Research has shown little difference between crime rates in states that have abolished the death penalty and states where it is still permitted, McKinney said. Life imprisonment without parole is a more constructive alternative, he said, because it forces individuals to confront their actions and provides an opportunity for accountability and rehabilitation.

“This philosophy of excessive punishment is outdated and ineffective,” McKinney said. “It’s time to focus on approaches that truly promote justice and safety.”

Testifying in support of the measure on behalf of Amnesty International was Christy Hargeseheimer.

A 2016 study by Creighton University Professor Ernie Goss found that the death penalty costs Nebraska \$14.6 million annually, Hargeseheimer said. There are more productive ways to utilize those state funds, she said.

“The money now used on a failed policy might be used instead to enhance educational opportunities,” Hargeseheimer said. “In fact, shifting the funding from the death penalty to education may actually prove to be a preventative measure that will help to reduce crime in general.”

Speaking on behalf of ACLU Nebraska, Jason Witmer also supported LR15CA.

Witmer said the death penalty has a disproportionate impact on poor individuals who often cannot afford adequate legal representation. Additionally, he said, the death penalty disproportionately impacts America’s Black population, who make up 41% of the individuals on death row and 34% of those who have been executed.

“Fair application of the death penalty does not exist in this country,” Witmer said. “Neither placing someone on death row nor executing them



Sen. Terrell McKinney

has true deterrence to crime.”

Tom Venzor, executive director of the Nebraska Catholic Conference, spoke in support of the proposal. A person’s dignity remains intact even after they commit a serious crime, he said.

“More effective systems in detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens, but at the same time do not definitively deprive the guilty of possible redemption,” Venzor said.

No one testified in opposition to LR15CA and the committee took no immediate action on it.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

### Geologist regulation changes clear first round

A bill that would update state law governing the licensure and regulation of professional geologists working in Nebraska received first-round approval from lawmakers Jan. 30.

North Platte Sen. Mike Jacobson, sponsor of LB38, said the measure would “streamline” licensure requirements, improve administrative practices and modernize terms in the Geologists Regulation Act.



Sen. Mike Jacobson

Among other changes, the bill would:

- reduce the minimum number of years of geologic work experience required for licensure from five to four;
- allow individuals who practice any combination of certain geology-related activities for at least 15 years to apply for licensure; and

- require that one member of the state Board of Geologists be a professional geologist who also is a faculty member of a geology or related geosciences department of a Nebraska college or university.

“These changes provide straightforward updates to align the act with current times, improving efficiency and reducing unnecessary barriers,” Jacobson said.

A Natural Resources Committee amendment, adopted 39-0, would, among other technical changes, clarify that board members would serve five-year terms ending on the last day of February.

LB38 advanced to select file on a vote of 42-0.

### Electric infrastructure security updates advance

Senators gave first-round approval Jan. 30 to a bill that would update provisions intended to prevent electronics made by foreign adversaries from being installed in electric infrastructure near sensitive military installations in Nebraska.

Under a bill passed last session, electric suppliers must provide written notice to the Nebraska Power Review Board before beginning construction on or acquiring certain electric generation facilities or transmission lines located within a 10-mile radius of a military installation.

A similar requirement applies to the owner of a privately developed renewable energy generation facility.

The notice certifies that the infrastructure contains no materials, electronics or other components manufactured by any foreign government or foreign nongovernment person determined to be a foreign adversary under federal regulations.

Under LB43, sponsored by Niobrara Sen. Barry DeKay, the notice requirement also would apply if a supplier expands, alters, reconstructs, upgrades, repairs, engages in maintenance on or installs new or replacement equipment or components in such infrastructure.



Sen. Barry DeKay

DeKay said the bill would ensure the requirement applies only to “electronic-related” equipment and components – not parts such as nuts, bolts and screws – in electric infrastructure located near Offutt Air Force Base and ballistic missile silos in western Nebraska.

Among other changes, LB43 also would allow an electric supplier to submit a one-time written notice to the board certifying that the supplier is continually operating in compliance with the notice requirements. A supplier would have to submit further notice any time it no longer is in compliance.

“[LB43] streamlines what we passed last year in LB1370 and makes it much easier for electric suppliers and the Power Review Board to work with,” DeKay said.

After adopting a technical amendment on a vote of 41-0, lawmakers voted 39-0 to advance the bill to select file.

## NEBRASKA RETIREMENT SYSTEMS

### Update to firefighter retirement changes advanced

Lawmakers gave first-round approval Jan. 31 to a measure intended to refine changes approved last session to the retirement contribution rates

for certain Nebraska firefighters.

Nebraska law classifies cities based on population. First class cities are those with a population between 5,001 and 100,000.

Under LB108, beginning March 1, 2025, firefighters in an absolute coverage group – those who contribute to both the state’s firefighter retirement system and Social Security – would contribute 6.5% of their salary if they are employed by a city with more than 60,000 residents that is located in a county with a population of more than 100,000.

A qualifying city would contribute a sum equal to 13% of such firefighter’s salary to the retirement system.

North Platte Sen. Mike Jacobson, sponsor of LB108, said the measure would correct a provision in a bill passed last session that changed contribution rates for firefighters and municipalities in first class cities.



Sen. Mike Jacobson

The current proposal would impact only the city of Bellevue and full-time firefighters working there, he said.

Jacobson said an attempt in the 2024 bill to accommodate the desire of Bellevue to maintain contribution rates that existed prior to the measure’s passage inadvertently resulted in them being opted out of an offset included in the bill.

“The unintended result is that cities such as Bellevue are now subject to the higher contribution rates established by [that bill] without the benefit of the offset,” Jacobson said. “This oversight has created an undue financial burden on Bellevue firefighters, since they are contributing more than intended and taking home less pay.”

LB108 advanced to the second round of debate on a 35-0 vote.

## REVENUE

### Child care, affordable housing tax credit changes advance

A bill intended to create additional investment in affordable housing and child care programs in Nebraska received first-round approval from lawmakers Jan. 30.

Under a measure passed by the Legislature in 2023, individuals, businesses and other entities subject to state income tax may apply for a non-refundable credit of up to \$100,000 for contributions they make to eligible child care programs.

Lincoln Sen. Eliot Bostar, sponsor of LB182, said his proposal would lead to more private contributions by allowing insurance companies and financial institutions – which are subject to premium and related retaliatory taxes and franchise taxes, respectively – to qualify for the credit.



Sen. Eliot Bostar

The bill also would make certain nonprofit corporations eligible for Nebraska affordable housing tax credits and allow a taxpayer to transfer, sell or assign the credits to another taxpayer.

Bostar said the changes would make affordable housing tax credits easier to use for smaller and midsized investors, increasing their value and driving investment without additional cost to the state.

The Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, which distributes the credits, estimates that the changes will create an additional \$8 million to \$10 million in affordable housing investment each year, he said.

Sen. Mike Moser of Columbus

supported the bill. Making affordable housing tax credits easier to sell would make them more valuable to investors and institutions that use them to offset their tax liability, he said. Affordable housing developers then could sell the credits for a higher price and put more money into their projects, making the program more effective, Moser said.

LB182 advanced to select file on a vote of 37-0.

### Expanded homestead exemption considered

The Revenue Committee heard testimony Jan. 29 on two measures that would extend the state’s homestead exemption to partially disabled veterans.

Under LB272, introduced by Lincoln Sen. George Dungan, a veteran who was discharged under honorable conditions, is drawing compensation from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs due



Sen. George Dungan

to a service-connected disability and is not eligible for a total homestead exemption would qualify for a property tax exemption on the value of their home based on their disability percentage.

Under Dungan’s bill, a veteran would qualify if they are at least 10% but less than 100% disabled. If a veteran has a 60% disability rating, he said, they would qualify for a 60% exemption.

LB425, sponsored by Sen. Bob Andersen of Omaha, would set a higher threshold of at least 80% but less than 100%



Sen. Bob Andersen

disabled.

Under both measures, an unmarried surviving spouse of such a veteran or a surviving spouse who remarries after turning 57 also would qualify for the exemption, which would take effect Jan. 1, 2026.

Dungan said LB272 intends to provide property tax relief to a group who would benefit greatly from it. Many Nebraska veterans have a disability rating of less than 100%, he said, but the rating does not necessarily reflect their actual disability.

“A veteran could have a disability rating of 80% with injuries that still significantly limit their ability to work,” Dungan said.

Andersen said his proposal would recognize the sacrifices made by service members and encourage them to stay in Nebraska when they retire.

The state Department of Revenue estimates that LB272 would reduce state general fund revenue by \$63 million in fiscal year 2026-27, \$67 million in FY2027-28 and \$70 million in FY2028-29. The department estimates that LB425 would reduce state general fund revenue by \$19 million in FY2026-27, \$21 million in FY2027-28 and \$22 million in FY2028-29.

Both lawmakers said the significant cost of expanding the homestead exemption will make it challenging to pass either proposal this year, when the state potentially is facing a significant revenue shortfall.

Several representatives of veterans groups testified in support of both measures. Kenneth Yount of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Nebraska, said the bills would demonstrate support for disabled veterans and their families.

“This is one small measure that we should be doing to benefit our veterans,” he said.

Lance Molina, a disabled U.S. Air

Force veteran, testified in support of both measures, saying that only disabled veterans with a 100% disability rating qualify for a homestead exemption under current law. He said 20 states, including Iowa, Kansas and Wyoming, all provide an exemption for veterans with a partial disability rating.

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

## TRANSPORTATION & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

### ATV, UTV county road use considered

All-terrain vehicles and utility-type vehicles could be registered and driven on county roads under a bill heard Jan. 28 by the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee.

Under LB337, introduced by Fremont Sen. Dave Wordekemper, ATVs and UTVs registered under the Motor Vehicle Registration Act could be operated on highways — except when prohibited by a county, city or village ordinance — other than the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, highways that are part of the state highway system, expressways and freeways.

Wordekemper said the bill would not affect a current exemption allowing ATVs and UTVs to be used outside city limits if incidental to the vehicle’s use for agricultural purposes, nor would it change current law allowing a city, village or county board to

prohibit the operation of an ATV or UTV within city limits by ordinance or resolution.

Many Nebraska municipalities allow ATVs and UTVs on their streets, he said, but residents who live outside city limits cannot legally drive their vehicles into town on public roadways. Wordekemper said this “confusing and inconsistent legal framework” inconveniences residents and results in lost economic activity related to ATV and UTV recreation.

LB337 would require the state Department of Motor Vehicles to issue one license plate for each ATV and UTV that is registered. The bill would set a base motor vehicle tax of \$25 for the machines, a base motor vehicle fee of \$5 and a registration fee of \$3.

The department estimates that 30,000 ATVs and UTVs would be registered in fiscal year 2025-26 and an additional 50,000 in FY2026-27, generating \$978,000 in state and local revenue the first year and \$1.5 million the second.

Under the bill, ATV and UTV operators and passengers would be subject to the same requirements regarding the use of helmets and eye protection that apply to motorcycle operators and passengers. ATV and UTV operators and passengers would not have to wear a helmet or eye protection if they are wearing a seatbelt or a three-point safety belt system.

Clayton Novotny, owner of ATV and UTV dealerships in Norfolk and Columbus, testified in support of the proposal. Under LB337, he said, owners could drive their vehicles between municipalities that allow their use, and farmers and ranchers could use the machines for trips and errands at the end of the workday instead of having to drive home to switch to a traditional vehicle.

Vicki Kramer, director of the state



Sen. Dave Wordekemper

Department of Transportation, gave neutral testimony on LB337. She said ATVs and UTVs are off-road vehicles that are not designed to be driven on high-speed roads alongside traditional

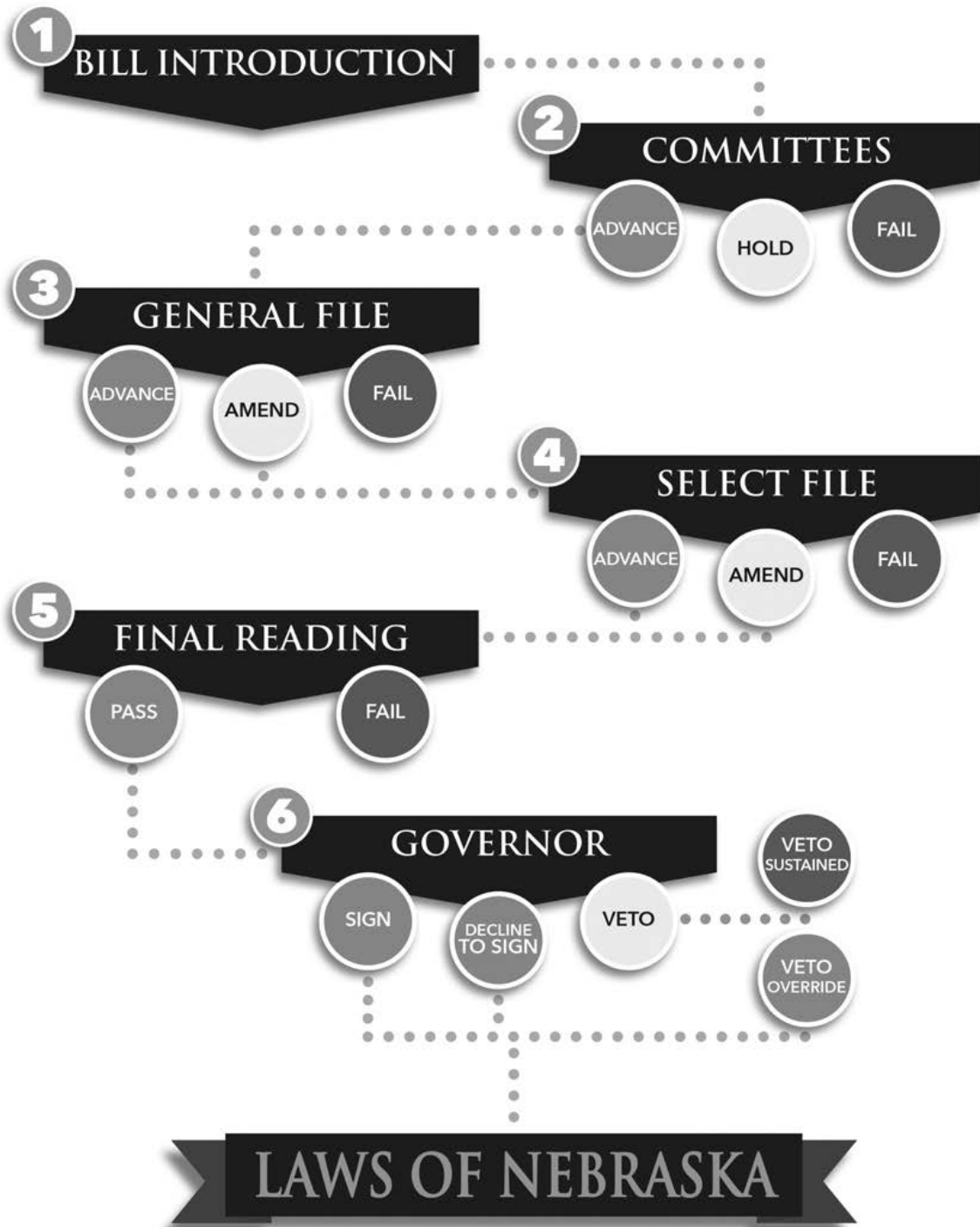
motor vehicles.

Iowa and South Dakota both saw increased fatality rates after allowing broader use of ATVs and UTVs on public roads, Kramer said.

“Experience is showing us that ATVs and UTVs on roadways is going to be more deadly,” she said.

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](http://NebraskaLegislature.gov/calendar)

## **Monday, Feb. 3**

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

LB609 (Bostar) Adopt the Controllable Electronic Record Fraud Prevention Act, require certain notice to purchasers of gift certificates or gift cards, provide for forfeiture of controllable electronic records, and provide for forfeiture of assets for theft by deception, forgery, and identity theft  
 LB504 (Bosn) Adopt the Age-Appropriate Online Design Code Act  
 LB525 (Jacobson) Adopt the Agricultural Data Privacy Act  
 LB241 (Hallstrom) Provide immunity from liability for cybersecurity events  
 LB602 (Juarez) Adopt the Data Elimination and Limiting Extensive Tracking and Exchange Act

### **Business & Labor Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB94 (McKinney) Adopt the Digital Skills Empowerment Act and change the use of the Workforce Development Program Cash Fund  
 LB297 (Ibach) Change provisions relating to the combined tax rate under the Employment Security Law  
 LB265 (Sorrentino) Eliminate certain funds, change provisions relating to the state unemployment insurance tax rate and the Workforce Development Program Cash Fund, and eliminate the Nebraska Worker Training Board  
 LB353 (Lonowski) Allow public school employees to join or terminate membership in a labor organization  
 LB320 (Sanders) Require that hotels and similar public lodging establishments place posters relating to human trafficking in such establishments and provide for training on human trafficking to employees of such establishments  
 LB698 (Strommen) Change provisions of the Nebraska Healthy Families and Workplaces Act

### **Education Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB538 (Hardin) Require school boards and postsecondary educational institutions to adopt a policy and provide

training relating to discrimination and antisemitism and provide for Title VI coordinators

LB143 (Rountree) Change provisions relating to student enrollment  
 LB625 (Dover) Provide for the establishment of a database of financial information from all school districts in the state  
 LB390 (Murman) Require each school board to adopt a policy relating to access by a parent, guardian, or educational decisionmaker to certain school library information  
 LB306 (Education) Change provisions relating to the Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges, the Nebraska Career Scholarship Act, the Coordinating Commission for Post-secondary Education Act, the Door to College Scholarship Act, and budget limitations for community colleges

### **General Affairs Room 1023 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB478 (General Affairs) Provide for an auction permit and a wholesalers shipping license and change other provisions of the Nebraska Liquor Control Act  
 LB33 (Hunt) Remove nonalcoholic beer from regulation under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act  
 LB186 (Dover) Change provisions relating to entertainment districts under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act  
 LB178 (Clouse) Require mandatory server training under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act  
 LB113 (Quick) Change provisions relating to licensees under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act

### **Transportation & Telecommunications Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB97 (Fredrickson) Change provisions relating to deferred judgments, the State Boat Act, the Motor Vehicle Certificate of Title Act, the Motor Vehicle Registration Act, the Motor Vehicle Operator's License Act, the Nebraska Rules of the Road, the Department of Motor Vehicles Cash Fund, the Uniform Motor Vehicle Records Disclosure Act, the Motor Carrier Services Division Dis-

tributive Fund, and the State Treasurer  
 LB114 (Moser) Change provisions relating to Department of Motor Vehicles fees

LB207 (von Gillern) Provide a registration fee under the Motor Vehicle Registration Act for certain commercially registered alternative fuel vehicles  
 LB398 (Moser) Adopt updates to federal law relating to motor vehicles and motor carriers and change provisions relating to commercial driver's licenses and CLP-commercial learner's permits  
 LB543 (Dover) Provide for the delivery of license plates and change provisions relating to the Department of Motor Vehicles' fees

## **Tuesday, Feb. 4**

### **Agriculture Room 1023 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB245 (DeKay) Change provisions of the Nebraska Pure Food Act  
 LB394 (DeKay) Change provisions of the Weights and Measures Act  
 LB375 (Ibach) Adopt the Grocer Reinvestment Option Act

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

LB315 (Sorrentino) Provide a sunset date for required biennial reports of and occupation taxes on domestic and foreign corporations  
 LB293 (Ballard) Change provisions of the Professional Employer Organization Registration Act  
 LB527 (Jacobson) Adopt the Medicaid Access and Quality Act, redefine health benefit plan under the Nebraska Life and Health Insurance Guaranty Association Act, and change provisions relating to taxes on health maintenance organizations, prepaid limited health service organizations, and insurance companies  
 LB168 (Hardin) Adopt the 340B Contract Pharmacy Protection Act

### **Education Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB670 (Murman) Require schools to adopt a safety plan and provide and change requirements related to training

# COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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for staff of child care and schools  
LB140 (Sanders) Require school policies relating to use of electronic communication devices by students  
LB567 (Quick) Authorize school policies relating to community engagement  
LB31 (Conrad) Require school policies relating to the use of student surveillance, monitoring, and tracking technology by school districts  
LB428 (Murman) Change provisions relating to school policies on the involvement of parents, guardians, and educational decisionmakers in schools

## **Transportation & Telecommunications Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB134 (Holdcroft) Change provisions relating to certain license plates issued to persons with military affiliation  
LB279 (von Gillern) Allow operation of registered motor vehicles with either one or two license plates  
LB343 (Brandt) Change the fee for specialty license plates  
LB563 (Brandt) Provide for permanent trailer license plates for commercial fertilizer trailers  
LB568 (Fredrickson) Provide for Arbor Day Plates and the Home of Arbor Day Plate Cash Fund and change provisions relating to license plates

## **Urban Affairs Room 2102 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB324 (Moser) Change protest procedures relating to creation of a proposed business improvement district or modification of an existing business improvement district under the Business Improvement District Act  
LB441 (Spivey) Authorize virtual inspections for certain building permits and require certain inspection records be made available to the public under the Building Construction Act  
LB288 (Urban Affairs) Redefine terms and change provisions relating to grant funding considerations under the Middle Income Workforce Housing Investment Act  
LB291 (Urban Affairs) Adopt the Aid to Municipalities Act  
LB292 (Urban Affairs) Provide for a grant to study prefabricated housing

## **Wednesday, Feb. 5**

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

LB183 (DeKay) Change provisions relating to the Uniform Disposition of Unclaimed Property Act  
LB529 (Jacobson) Provide certain exemptions relating to contracts for the Nebraska Investment Council under the State Procurement Act and the Taxpayer Transparency Act  
LB345 (Government) Change salaries of constitutional officers  
LB445 (von Gillern) Adopt the State Building Construction Alternatives Act and change and eliminate provisions regarding planning, bidding, construction, and procurement of art for state buildings

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

LB274 (Hunt) Change requirements under the Child Care Licensing Act for liability insurance coverage and inspections and investigations  
LB248 (Sanders) Exempt certain programs from child care licensing requirements  
LB154 (Hardin) Change provisions relating to hearing instrument specialists  
LB374 (Hansen) Adopt the Licensed Midwives Practice Act

### **Judiciary Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.**

*Appointment:* Jeff Bucher - Board of Parole  
LB79 (Hallstrom) Provide for dismissal of certain civil actions involving commercial motor vehicles  
LB132 (Kauth) Change provisions relating to admissibility of evidence of use of an occupant protection system or a three-point safety belt system  
LB199 (Sorrentino) Change the statute of limitations for personal injury actions, include administrative proceedings within the Nonrecourse Civil Litigation Act, require disclosures by consumers under such act, and provide for discipline against civil

litigation funding companies  
LB205 (Bosn) Provide requirements for admissibility of evidence relating to medical expenses, require disclosures by plaintiffs seeking damages for such expenses, and provide a cap on noneconomic damages in certain civil actions against commercial motor vehicle carriers  
LB341 (Hallstrom) Adopt the Nebraska Statutory Thresholds for Settlements Involving Minors Act

### **Natural Resources Room 1023 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB489 (Brandt) Prohibit certain entities from operating, maintaining, constructing, or acquiring transmission lines and related facilities  
LB593 (Moser) Update references relating to automotive spark ignition engine fuels  
LB413 (Clouse) Change provisions relating to the setting of rates by certain power districts

### **Revenue Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB468 (Clements) Change provisions relating to inheritance taxes, change certain fee and tax provisions, and eliminate a sales tax exemption relating to data centers  
LB608 (Bostar) Change insurance provisions relating to firefighters and include correctional officers, youth detention officers, and certain children in the First Responder Recruitment and Retention Act  
LB501 (Meyer) Change provisions relating to the assessment of real property that suffers significant property damage  
LB592 (Ballard) Change provisions relating to the achieving a better life experience program

## **Thursday, Feb. 6**

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

LB19 (J. Cavanaugh) Change provisions relating to elections for cities of the metropolitan class  
LB74 (Hunt) Authorize certain



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expenditures under the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act  
 LB32 (Hunt) Change provisions relating to disclaimers on political advertisements

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

LB339 (Hallstrom) Require the Department of Health and Human Services to provide a report regarding the federal Child Care Subsidy program  
 LB304 (DeBoer) Eliminate a sunset date for the federal Child Care Subsidy program  
 LB46 (McKinney) Establish a Restaurant Meals Program under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program  
 LB102 (Spivey) Change requirements relating to the standard of need under the aid to dependent children program  
 LB192 (Quick) Eliminate a sunset date under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

**Judiciary  
 Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB172 (Hardin) Prohibit conduct involving computer-generated child pornography  
 LB371 (DeBoer) Provide liability for computer-generated images under the Uniform Civil Remedies for Unauthorized Disclosure of Intimate Images Act  
 LB383 (Storer) Adopt the Parental Rights in Social Media Act  
 LB642 (Bostar) Adopt the Artificial Intelligence Consumer Protection Act

**Natural Resources  
 Room 1023 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB459 (Conrad) Establish the Home Weatherization Clearinghouse within the Department of Environment and Energy  
 LB247 (DeKay) Change provisions relating to fees and distribution of proceeds under the Integrated Solid Waste Management Act and uses of and transfers from the Petroleum Release Remedial Action Cash Fund

LB396 (DeKay) Change provisions relating to the form and filing of public power district budgets and audits with the Nebraska Power Review Board

**Revenue  
 Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB509 (Sorrentino) Adopt the Opportunity Scholarships Act and provide for income tax credits

**Friday, Feb. 7**

**Government, Military & Veterans Affairs  
 Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.**

*NOTE: This hearing will operate under annotated committee guidelines*  
 LB89 (Kauth) Adopt the Stand With Women Act

**Health & Human Services  
 Room 1023 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB104 (Raybould) Adopt the Family Home Visitation Act  
 LB203 (Kauth) Change powers and duties of health directors in certain local public health departments  
 LB312 (Strommen) Provide for student loans to students in nurse anesthesia practice programs and loan repayments for nurse anesthetists under the Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act  
 LB257 (Quick) Change reciprocity provisions for credentialing of marriage and family therapists

**Judiciary  
 Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB141 (Rountree) Require reporting of child abuse and neglect involving military families to military authorities and military family advocacy programs  
 LB368 (Hunt) Establish the Nebraska Youth in Care Bill of Rights  
 LB369 (Hunt) Allow persons eighteen years of age to make health care decisions and persons under nineteen years of age in correctional facilities to consent to medical and mental health care  
 LB462 (McKinney) Change reporting requirements relating to child abuse

or neglect, parental rights, and juvenile court jurisdiction

**Nebraska Retirement Systems  
 Room 1525 - 12:00 p.m.**

*Appointment:* Brian Christensen - Neb. Investment Council  
 LB179 (Clouse) Change retirement contribution rates for police officers employed by cities of the first class  
 LB461 (Juarez) Change provisions of the Cities of the First Class Firefighters Retirement Act

**Revenue  
 Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB389 (Murman) Eliminate the levy authority of educational service units and provide state funding to educational service units  
 LB709 (Bostar) Adopt the Adoption Tax Credit Act

**Monday, Feb. 10**

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

LB77 (Bostar) Adopt the Ensuring Transparency in Prior Authorization Act  
 LB467 Riepe Provide a duty to implement a prior authorization application programming interface under the Utilization Review Act  
 LB457 (Bostar) Require anaphylaxis policies for school districts and licensed child care facilities and provide a limit on the amount an insured is required to pay by an insurance policy or benefit plan for epinephrine injectors  
 LB109 (Bostar) Prohibit certain provisions in insurance policies and health plans relating to clinician-administered drugs and change provisions relating to pharmacy benefit managers

**General Affairs  
 Room 1023 - 1:30 p.m.**

LB280 (von Gillern) Require audits of authorized gaming operators and provide powers and duties for the Auditor of Public Accounts  
 LB60 (Quick) Eliminate the restriction on selling a lottery ticket through a

# COMMITTEE HEARINGS

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vending or dispensing device under the State Lottery Act  
LB635 (Hansen) Authorize the regulation of professional bare-knuckle mixed martial arts, professional mixed martial arts on ice, amateur kickboxing, and slap fighting by the State Athletic Commissioner

## Transportation & Telecommunications Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB112 (Quick) Change provisions relating to salvage branded certificates of title  
LB225 (Guereca) Change application requirements for duplicate certificates of title under the Motor Vehicle Certificate of Title Act  
LB490 (McKeon) Allow applications for certificates of title for certain agricultural vehicles  
LB191 (Bosn) Change provisions relating to unlawful interference with telecommunications under the One-Call Notification System Act  
LB449 (Fredrickson) Change provisions relating to the priority of projects and requirements of the state highway system plan

## Tuesday, Feb. 11

### Agriculture

#### Room 1023 - 1:30 p.m.

*Appointment:* Duane Gangwish - Neb. Brand Committee

LB646 (Ibach) Provide for exempt feedlots under the Livestock Brand Act  
LB665 (Storer) Prohibit the use of certain electronic identification devices under the Animal Health and Disease Control Act

### Banking, Commerce & Insurance

#### Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

LB482 (Ballard) Change provisions relating to attorney's fees in insurance cases  
LB338 (Wordekemper) Prohibit the use of genetic information for life insurance, disability insurance, and long-term care insurance  
LB326 (Jacobson) Change provisions relating to the Unfair Insurance Trade Practices Act, the Nebraska Property

and Liability Insurance Guaranty Association Act, and mutual insurance holding companies and eliminate the provisions of the Health Insurance Access Act and the Health Care Purchasing Pool Act  
LB325 (Jacobson) Change provisions relating to qualifications and requirements for the board of directors of an insurance corporation  
LB232 (Hallstrom) Provide requirements for life insurance policies

## Transportation & Telecommunications Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB4 (Bosn) Adopt the Telecommunications Exchange Deregulation Act  
LB311 (DeBoer) Change provisions relating to nonregulated activities under the Nebraska Telecommunications Regulation Act  
LB347 (Prokop) Eliminate conditions on the issuance of securities by common carriers  
LB18 (J. Cavanaugh) Require certain determinations prior to utility pole installations under the Small Wireless Facilities Deployment Act  
LB666 (Storer) Change provisions relating to duties of the Public Service Commission under the Rural Communications Sustainability Act

## Wednesday, Feb. 12

### Health & Human Services

#### Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

LB95 (Fredrickson) Provide for a pilot program under the federal Child Care Subsidy program  
LB181 (M. Cavanaugh) Provide for benefits under the Young Adult Bridge to Independence Act for young adults not lawfully present in the United States  
LB668 (Storer) Change provisions relating to the Adult Protective Services Central Registry, the central registry of child protection cases, and child welfare case managers  
LB217 (Fredrickson) Require suicide awareness and prevention training for employees of child-placing agencies and child welfare workers  
LB481 (Ballard) Adopt the Foster Care Child Scholarships Act

### Judiciary

#### Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB150 (Bosn) Change the habitual criminal sentencing enhancement  
LB206 (von Gillern) Provide enhanced penalties for certain offenses committed in a disaster area during an emergency period  
LB322 (Clouse) Prohibit assault on a pharmacist and clarify provisions relating to assault on officers, emergency responders, certain employees, and health care professionals  
LB535 (Kauth) Prohibit assault on a frontline behavioral health provider or health care worker and clarify provisions relating to assault on officers, emergency responders, certain employees, and health care professionals  
LB657 (Andersen) Create the offense of assault on a sports official and provide a penalty under the Nebraska Criminal Code

## Thursday, Feb. 13

### Health & Human Services

#### Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

*NOTE: This hearing will operate under annotated committee guidelines*  
LB512 (Holdcroft) Adopt the Chemical Abortion Safety Protocol Act

### Judiciary

#### Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB216 (Holdcroft) Eliminate elected clerks of the district court, provide for consolidation of duties of court clerks and clerk magistrates, and change certain county employees to state employees  
LB387 (Bosn) Redefine a term under the Nebraska Treatment and Corrections Act  
LB612 (Andersen) Require the state to pay fifty percent of the operational costs of county courts  
LB640 (Judiciary) Change calculation of a sentence reduction for good behavior during confinement in a jail ■

## 2025 Legislative Session\*

| January |               |              |              |              |              |     |
|---------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----|
| Sun     | Mon           | Tues         | Wed          | Thur         | Fri          | Sat |
|         |               |              | 1            | 2            | 3            | 4   |
| 5       | 6             | 7            | 8<br>DAY 1   | 9<br>DAY 2   | 10<br>DAY 3  | 11  |
| 12      | 13<br>DAY 4   | 14<br>DAY 5  | 15<br>DAY 6  | 16<br>DAY 7  | 17<br>DAY 8  | 18  |
| 19      | 20<br>HOLIDAY | 21<br>DAY 9  | 22<br>DAY 10 | 23<br>DAY 11 | 24<br>DAY 12 | 25  |
| 26      | 27<br>DAY 13  | 28<br>DAY 14 | 29<br>DAY 15 | 30<br>DAY 16 | 31<br>DAY 17 |     |

| February |               |              |              |              |              |     |
|----------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----|
| Sun      | Mon           | Tues         | Wed          | Thur         | Fri          | Sat |
|          |               |              |              |              |              | 1   |
| 2        | 3<br>DAY 18   | 4<br>DAY 19  | 5<br>DAY 20  | 6<br>DAY 21  | 7<br>DAY 22  | 8   |
| 9        | 10<br>DAY 23  | 11<br>DAY 24 | 12<br>DAY 25 | 13<br>DAY 26 | 14<br>RECESS | 15  |
| 16       | 17<br>HOLIDAY | 18<br>DAY 27 | 19<br>DAY 28 | 20<br>DAY 29 | 21<br>DAY 30 | 22  |
| 23       | 24<br>DAY 31  | 25<br>DAY 32 | 26<br>DAY 33 | 27<br>DAY 34 | 28<br>DAY 35 |     |

| March |              |              |              |              |              |     |
|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----|
| Sun   | Mon          | Tues         | Wed          | Thur         | Fri          | Sat |
|       |              |              |              |              |              | 1   |
| 2     | 3<br>DAY 36  | 4<br>DAY 37  | 5<br>DAY 38  | 6<br>DAY 39  | 7<br>RECESS  | 8   |
| 9     | 10<br>DAY 40 | 11<br>DAY 41 | 12<br>DAY 42 | 13<br>DAY 43 | 14<br>DAY 44 | 15  |
| 16    | 17<br>DAY 45 | 18<br>DAY 46 | 19<br>DAY 47 | 20<br>DAY 48 | 21<br>RECESS | 22  |
| 23    | 24<br>RECESS | 25<br>DAY 49 | 26<br>DAY 50 | 27<br>DAY 51 | 28<br>DAY 52 | 29  |
| 30    | 31<br>DAY 53 |              |              |              |              |     |

| April |              |              |              |              |                |     |
|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|-----|
| Sun   | Mon          | Tues         | Wed          | Thur         | Fri            | Sat |
|       |              | 1<br>DAY 54  | 2<br>DAY 55  | 3<br>DAY 56  | 4<br>RECESS    | 5   |
| 6     | 7<br>RECESS  | 8<br>DAY 57  | 9<br>DAY 58  | 10<br>DAY 59 | 11<br>DAY 60   | 12  |
| 13    | 14<br>DAY 61 | 15<br>DAY 62 | 16<br>DAY 63 | 17<br>DAY 64 | 18<br>RECESS   | 19  |
| 20    | 21<br>RECESS | 22<br>DAY 65 | 23<br>DAY 66 | 24<br>DAY 67 | 25<br>DAY 68** | 26  |
| 27    | 28<br>DAY 69 | 29<br>DAY 70 | 30<br>DAY 71 |              |                |     |

| May |               |              |              |              |              |     |
|-----|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----|
| Sun | Mon           | Tues         | Wed          | Thur         | Fri          | Sat |
|     |               |              |              | 1<br>DAY 72  | 2<br>RECESS  | 3   |
| 4   | 5<br>RECESS   | 6<br>DAY 73  | 7<br>DAY 74  | 8<br>DAY 75  | 9<br>DAY 76  | 10  |
| 11  | 12<br>DAY 77  | 13<br>DAY 78 | 14<br>DAY 79 | 15<br>DAY 80 | 16<br>RECESS | 17  |
| 18  | 19<br>DAY 81  | 20<br>DAY 82 | 21<br>DAY 83 | 22<br>DAY 84 | 23<br>RECESS | 24  |
| 25  | 26<br>HOLIDAY | 27<br>DAY 85 | 28<br>DAY 86 | 29<br>DAY 87 | 30<br>DAY 88 | 31  |

| June |             |             |             |             |             |     |
|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----|
| Sun  | Mon         | Tues        | Wed         | Thur        | Fri         | Sat |
| 1    | 2<br>DAY 89 | 3<br>RECESS | 4<br>RECESS | 5<br>RECESS | 6<br>RECESS | 7   |
| 8    | 9<br>DAY 90 | 10          | 11          | 12          | 13          | 14  |
| 15   | 16          | 17          | 18          | 19          | 20          | 21  |
| 22   | 23          | 24          | 25          | 26          | 27          | 28  |
| 29   | 30          |             |             |             |             |     |

**Legislative Recess Days**

February 14  
 March 7, 21, 24  
 April 4, 7, 18, 21  
 May 2, 5, 16, 23  
 June 3, 4, 5, 6

**Federal & State Holidays**

January 20 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
 February 17 – Presidents' Day  
 April 25 – Arbor Day\*\*  
 May 26 – Memorial Day

\* The Speaker reserves the right to revise the session calendar.

\*\* The Legislature will be in session on Friday, April 25, the Arbor Day Holiday. Any legislative employees who work that day will receive compensatory time for hours worked on the holiday.

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Chief Justice Jeffrey Funke and other members of the Nebraska Supreme Court are greeted by senators escorting them to the George W. Norris Legislative Chamber for the State of the Judiciary address Jan. 28.