

Retention incentives proposed for 'anchor' companies

The Revenue Committee heard testimony Feb. 25 on a measure that would provide tax incentives to certain large businesses to encourage them to remain in Nebraska after merging with an out-of-state company.

Elkhorn Sen. R. Brad von Gillern, who introduced LB1165 on behalf of Gov. Jim Pillen, said the bill is intended to help Nebraska retain and grow key employers like Union Pacific, which has proposed merging with Atlanta-based railway Norfolk Southern.



Sen. R. Brad von Gillern

Von Gillern said Union Pacific, which employs approximately 3,000 people at its Omaha headquarters, is the latest major Nebraska business at risk of relocating to another state that offers more favorable economic incentives.

"We don't want to see a relocation of one of our largest employers ... a company whose history is inextricably tied to our own and is a terrific corporate citizen," he said.

As introduced, LB1165 would update the Key Employer and Jobs Retention Act, which provides a wage retention credit to certain businesses experiencing a change in ownership and control.

Von Gillern brought an amendment to the hearing that would replace the bill with a modified version of the original measure.

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Bill to prohibit certain weapons in Capitol amended, advanced

After debate spanning three days, lawmakers amended and advanced a bill from general file Feb. 24 that would prohibit entering the Nebraska State Capitol with a weapon or other banned substance.

LB1237, introduced by the Executive Board, would provide exceptions for individuals who have received prior approval from the Nebraska State Patrol and would allow possession of a weapon by law enforcement officers in the course of their official duties. It also would allow qualified law enforcement officers, including retired officers, to carry concealed handguns in the building.

An Executive Board committee amendment, adopted Feb. 23 on 36-6 vote, would add a fourth exception to allow carrying of a concealed handgun by an individual holding a current and valid permit issued pursuant to the Concealed Handgun Permit Act.

Under the bill, the Nebraska State Patrol would be charged with implementing procedures to provide for detection of weapons and controlled substances to prevent them from being



Sen. Ben Hansen said the Legislature has sufficient funds in its existing budget to cover the cost of implementing LB1237.

brought into the Capitol by no later than Jan. 1, 2027.

Sen. Ben Hansen of Blair, chairperson of the committee, said the measure was the product of extensive consultation among the three branches of government, who all have offices in the Capitol, as well as the State Patrol.

The goal, he said, is to implement appropriate security measures to ensure that all Nebraskans can safely enjoy the Capitol and participate in governmental functions that take

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Retention incentives proposed for ‘anchor’ companies

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Under the proposed Grow the Good Life Act, a qualified employer that merges with an out-of-state company would receive a similar wage retention credit of no more than \$5 million per year, or \$50 million in total.

Among other requirements, a company would have to employ at least 3,000 employees in Nebraska before the merger and retain at least 90% of that number throughout the 10-year performance period.

If the company fails to retain the required number of employees, all or a portion of the credits would be recaptured or disallowed.

Von Gillern’s proposal also would increase wage credit percentages for qualifying companies that meet certain job creation and investment thresholds under the ImagiNE Nebraska Act.

Under the amendment, those percentages would increase by one point if an employer hires 500 or more full-time employees who are paid average annual wages of at least \$100,000 within seven years of a merger.

Additionally, the measure would al-

low the state Department of Economic Development to award an employer a grant of no more than \$5 million for capital improvements related to employee retention and recruitment before and after a merger.

Finally, the proposal would require the state Department of Labor to create a grant program for economic development organizations that assist companies with employee retention and relocation when they are experiencing a merger. Total grants for any organization would be limited to \$300,000.

Matt Williams testified in support of the amended proposal on behalf of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He said the enhanced ImagiNE Nebraska Act credits would help the state compete for manufacturing expansion projects in both rural and urban areas.

Williams said the measure also could increase workforce participation by allowing companies to use the credits to offset employees’ child care costs.

Also in support was Marco Floreani, who testified on behalf of the

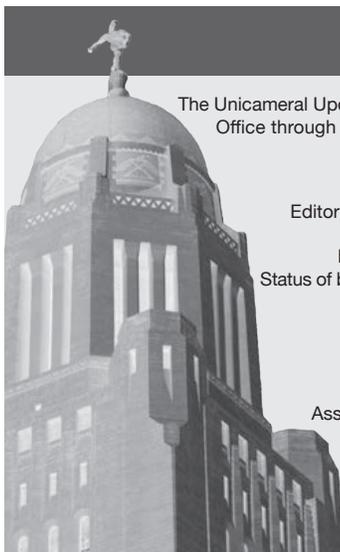
city of Omaha. He said the proposal is a “strategic necessity” at a time when “anchor” companies often are targets for mergers with out-of-state corporations.

The measure could help retain thousands of high-wage jobs in Omaha and encourage companies to modernize their offices, Floreani added, attracting new workers and ensuring commercial buildings remain occupied.

Josh Perkes testified in support of LB1165 on behalf of Union Pacific, saying the railroad intends for its headquarters to remain in Omaha if its proposed merger is approved by federal regulators.

He said the measure would “complement” the company’s efforts to retain and grow its workforce after the merger, boosting the local economy by helping it relocate hundreds of highly paid workers to Omaha.

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



UNICAMERAL UPDATE

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Bill to prohibit certain weapons in Capitol amended, advanced

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place in the building.

“LB1237 is a commonsense measure to protect everyone who works in or visits our State Capitol — legislators, staff, visitors and the public — while respecting the rights of individuals,” he said.

Hansen said the committee heard concerns at the bill’s public hearing about the measure potentially limiting Second Amendment gun rights. Several firearms organizations indicated after the hearing, however, that allowing an individual with a permit to carry a concealed weapon in the Capitol would remove their opposition to the bill, he said.

Under the measure, weapons would include guns, knives, brass or iron knuckles, pepper spray, tasers and stun guns. Prohibited substances would include explosives, incendiary or other combustible devices, hazardous materials and paint and spray paint.

As introduced, violations of LB1237

would be a Class III misdemeanor.

Hansen said he was working on a possible amendment for the next round of debate that would either narrow or strike the language listing prohibited weapons. Tasers, brass knuckles and pepper spray likely would be allowed under the amendment, he said, because they are non-lethal devices.

Adams Sen. Myron Dorn supported the bill, saying his position on enhanced security has changed during his seven years in office. While there may be “growing pains” and future adjustments regarding implementation, he said, the bill is needed in light of the current political climate.

“I think the time has come for the people [in] the state of Nebraska, and particularly the state Capitol, to have some different security measures than what we’re used to,” Dorn said.

Sen. Stan Clouse of Kearney agreed. He supported moving the bill

forward, despite “questions and concerns” about implementation. It’s important for the Legislature to create a “secure and safe” environment in the building, Clouse said, particularly for the many schoolchildren who visit the Capitol every year.

Several senators expressed concern regarding how the bill would comport with current “an-

notated hearing” guidelines. Under those guidelines, committee chairpersons may choose to have metal detectors outside of hearing rooms if large crowds are expected for controversial bills.

Bennington Sen. Wendy DeBoer noted that if members of the public are allowed to carry concealed weapons in the building with a permit, a committee chairperson who does not want guns inside a hearing on a politically heated topic would have no way to know if audience members were armed.

“I would be a little concerned about having folks, even though they’ve been through training, coming in with a weapon into those hearings, and I think we would be moving backwards on our security in those particular hearings,” DeBoer said.

Calling the proposal “at best half-baked,” Sen. Danielle Conrad of Lincoln argued that LB1237 could have a “chilling” effect on participation in the legislative process, without addressing the root causes of escalating political violence.

“In a free society, we need to think carefully about infringements on public participation and individual rights and liberties,” she said.

During the second day of debate, Conrad offered an amendment, adopted 30-8, to remove the criminal penalty for violation of the bill’s provisions. She said creating a new criminal penalty under the measure was “unwarranted and unworkable.”

Another amendment from Conrad to ensure that security procedures enacted under the bill would not



Sen. Wendy DeBoer expressed concern about the potentially negative impact of LB1237 on existing legislative security measures.

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Bill to prohibit certain weapons in Capitol amended, advanced

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provide any special, preferential or differential access to any registered lobbyists or their clients was defeated on a 15-22 vote. Twenty-five votes were needed.

Conrad argued the amendment was needed to ensure that the Capitol was not treated like a “country club” and that access was equitable for everyone entering the building.

“We want to make sure that there is no VIP pass now or moving forward,” she said.

Hansen said the amendment was unnecessary because lobbyists, who are not issued ID badges as senators and legislative staff are, would be required to use the same entrance as the general public.

Several lawmakers, including Omaha Sen. Megan Hunt, expressed concern that enhanced security measures would harm the Capitol’s “culture of welcome,” where there are no hindrances to entering the building to participate in the political process or simply enjoy the beauty of the architecture.

In addition, she said, the uncertainty of knowing who is carrying a concealed weapon – and whether or not they are authorized to do so under the bill – would create confusion and concern among others in the building.

“I trust the State Patrol to keep us safe,” Hunt said. “And that work is happening right now, every day, without the additional unanswered questions that this bill creates.”

Lawmakers advanced LB1237 to select file on a vote of 37-4. ■

Economic forecasting board lowers revenue projections

The Nebraska Economic Forecasting Advisory Board voted Feb. 27 to lower revenue projections over the next two fiscal years in their last meeting before debate begins on possible budget adjustments.

The board provides an advisory forecast of general fund receipts used by the Legislature when crafting and revising the state budget. Prior to the meeting, lawmakers were facing a projected \$471 million shortfall.

Revenue projections for the current fiscal year were raised slightly based on an anticipated increase of \$100 million in sales and use tax receipts, offset by projected decreases of \$80 million in corporate, individual and miscellaneous income tax receipts.

Total projected revenue receipts for FY2025-26 were set at \$6.970 billion, an overall increase of \$20 million above the previous projection.

That slight increase was offset, however, by the forecast for projected total revenue receipts for FY2026-27. That projection was set at \$6.625 billion, a decrease of \$175 million, and was based on anticipated decreases across all categories except individual income tax receipts.

The next board meeting is scheduled for Oct. 30. Legislative budget debate is expected to begin March 9. ■

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Current hearing schedules at: NebraskaLegislature.gov/calendar

Thursday, March 5

Judiciary

Room 1524 - 12:00 p.m.

AM2313 (Bostar) Amending LB1096

Monday, March 9

Nebraska Retirement Systems

Room 1525 - 12:00 p.m.

Appointment: Horacio J. Wheelock - Public Employees Retirement Board

*Presentation of the Omaha School Employees Retirement System Experience Study to the Retirement Committee pursuant to section 84-1503 (4) (a)

(*Note: Invited testimony only)

AGRICULTURE



New grant source approved for noxious weed projects

Senators approved a bill Feb. 27 that provides a new grant source for programs aimed at controlling certain noxious weeds in Nebraska.

LB807, sponsored by Sumner Sen. Teresa Ibach, establishes riparian vegetation management projects as eligible activities for state aid grant assistance through the Water Resources Cash Fund administered by the state Department of Water, Energy and Environment.



Sen. Teresa Ibach

Administration of the Noxious Weed Control Act remains within the state Department of Agriculture.

Eligible grant fund uses under the bill include riparian vegetation removal that improves streamflow conveyance and acquisition of equipment related to that purpose. Eligible entities who may receive funds include natural resources districts, weed control authorities and other weed management entities.

Priority in awarding grants will be given to applicants with projects within streams that are subject to an interstate compact or decree.

LB807 passed on a vote of 39-9.

Grain dealer measure clears first round

Lawmakers amended and advanced a bill from general file Feb. 24 that would expand oversight of grain warehouses and dealers, revise payment timelines for producers and authorize

regulators to adjust license fees.

Introduced by Niobrara Sen. Barry DeKay, LB894 proposes several changes to the Grain Dealer Act. An Agriculture Committee amendment, adopted 27-1, replaced the bill with a modified version that would make changes to both grain dealer and warehouse laws.



Sen. Barry DeKay

As amended, LB894 would eliminate an exemption that allows certain warehouses to avoid classification as grain dealers if grain was first unloaded at their facilities, subjecting those engaged in direct delivery transactions to licensing, bonding and oversight requirements.

The measure also would replace the current \$100 annual grain dealer license fee with a fee established by the Nebraska Public Service Commission, capped at \$1,500. Existing fees would remain in place until July 1, 2027, and the commission would be required to submit a proposed fee schedule to the Legislature by Dec. 1, 2026.

DeKay said the \$100 statutory fee has not changed since 2003 and covers only about 15% of the Nebraska Public Service Commission's grain regulatory costs. Allowing the commission to increase fees could enable it to reduce its general fund appropriation request in the next budget cycle, he said.

License revenue would continue to be deposited in the state's General Fund until July 1, 2027, when it would be redirected to a newly created Grain Dealer and Grain Warehouse Cash Fund.

Additionally, LB894 would revise payment provisions to require dealers to pay within 10 business days after receiving a written demand with proof of delivery, unless a contract provides

otherwise, with interest accruing after the deadline.

The measure also would repeal certain notice requirements and streamline claims against a dealer's security, allowing unpaid producers to seek recovery during a commission administrative action while excluding obligations not yet due under deferred payment contracts.

The committee amendment also incorporates provisions of DeKay's LB895, which would remove an exemption from licensure for federally licensed warehouses and instead provide that all federally licensed warehouses automatically qualify for state licensure.

Columbus Sen. Mike Moser spoke in support of the bill, calling it a "producer protection" measure. Dealers and warehouses handle large volumes of grain and can incur significant losses, he said, and the Nebraska Public Service Commission plays a key role in verifying inventory and financial capacity to help ensure farmers are paid.

Addressing the proposed fee increases, Moser said grain dealers and warehouses, not general taxpayers, should shoulder more of the industry's regulatory costs.

"The fee is still only going to pay a portion of the cost, but there's no reason why citizens from all across the state should pay to measure grain in grain warehouses when it's an ag issue," Moser said. "The grain dealer should pay some of that cost, and that's what this bill does."

Lincoln Sen. Danielle Conrad opposed LB894, saying the proposed fee hikes could negatively impact everyday Nebraskans. Past state fee increases have contributed to higher costs, she said, and the state's agriculture sector already is facing financial challenges, including tariffs, rising health care costs and increasing bankruptcies.

“Whether its court fees, whether its garbage fees [or] whether it’s the fees put forward in LB894 – they have negative implications for Nebraskans,” Conrad said.

Sen. George Dungan of Lincoln also spoke in opposition to the measure. The proposal directs fee revenue to a dedicated regulatory fund, he said, but past Legislatures have swept similar cash funds during budget shortfalls, raising concern that the same could happen again.

Senators adopted a DeKay amendment 31-0 that would make technical changes to the creation and administration of the cash fund and clarify that the commission could not charge a state license fee to federally licensed warehouses.

Lawmakers then voted 27-6 to advance LB894 to select file.



Bill would require asthma inhaler insurance coverage

The Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee heard testimony Feb. 24 on a bill that would require insurance coverage of maintenance and rescue asthma inhalers.

Under LB971, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Dunixi Guereca, coverage would be provided for one form of each type of inhaler, not subject to a deductible, copayment, coinsurance or other cost-sharing arrangement. The bill would not apply to policies that provide coverage for a specified disease



Sen. Dunixi Guereca

or other limited benefit coverage.

For high-deductible plans, such coverage could be subject to the plan’s annual deductible if application of the requirement would result in ineligibility for a health savings account.

Guereca said there is no cure for asthma, but most individuals can manage the disease with regular use of a maintenance inhaler to prevent symptoms and a rescue inhaler for acute episodes. Coverage for both, he said, would increase patients’ ability to manage their disease and reduce emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

An amendment brought by Guereca to the hearing would specify that children younger than 12 would receive a metered-dose inhaler and a spacer – a holding chamber that slows down the spray of medication and helps it reach the lungs more effectively.

“Asthma disproportionately impacts children, working families and communities [that are] exposed to environmental triggers,” Guereca said. “Ensuring access to inhalers is crucial to advancing health equity and supporting evidence-based management of chronic diseases.”

Casey Burg, chief of pulmonology at Children’s Nebraska, a pediatric specialty health center, supported the bill. Asthma is the leading chronic disease among children in the state, he said, adding that those children often end up in the hospital’s emergency department due to lack of consistent, affordable access to their prescribed inhalers.

For example, Burg said, a two-year-old from a rural Nebraska community recently was admitted after his parents cut his inhaler dosage in half to try to reduce treatment costs that they could not afford.

“The result was a pretty preventable medical catastrophe,” he said. “This toddler ended up spending three days in a hospital on IV steroids, oxygen

and around-the-clock breathing treatments. The child’s life was at risk because their parents couldn’t bridge that \$20 gap.”

Also testifying in favor was Micheal Dwyer, a 42-year volunteer EMS provider. Treating children with breathing difficulties is one of the hardest parts of the job, Dwyer said, and LB971 would provide a narrow insurance coverage mandate to help Nebraska children maintain their health.

Jeremiah Blake, testifying in opposition on behalf of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska, said putting coverage mandates in state law makes it harder for insurance providers to adjust their coverage as standards of care and products evolve.

In addition, Blake said, the bill’s cost-sharing prohibition would result in a small fiscal impact to plan sponsors.

The committee took no immediate action on LB971.



Changes proposed to workers’ compensation disability benefits

The Business and Labor Committee heard joint testimony Feb. 23 on two measures related to workers’ compensation disability benefits.

Currently, the Nebraska Workers’ Compensation Act provides benefits for lost wages beginning the eighth calendar day of disability due to a work-related injury. The first seven days of benefits are retroactively paid to the employee if the injury continues for at least six weeks.

LB1009, introduced by Lincoln Sen. George Dungan, would allow employees to begin collecting benefits

on the fourth calendar day and to qualify for retroactive payments after two weeks of continued disability.



Sen. George Dungan

Dungan also introduced a measure to extend temporary disability benefits if an injury becomes permanent. LB1011 would continue benefits until a maximum medical impairment rating is determined, with no credit against the permanent benefit, or until a loss of earning capacity is determined.

The bill also would require employers to provide a 30-day notice to employees before ceasing temporary disability benefits and to share the evidence used to make that determination. In addition, an employee could request an independent medical evaluation, at the employer's expense, if evidence other than that from the treating physician was used to make the determination.

Dungan said the measures would provide important and practical updates to improve timely access to benefits, promote fairness, increase transparency and provide clear standards for both employers and employees.

"For many Nebraskans, even a short interruption in income can create significant financial strain," Dungan said. "These adjustments recognize the real world challenges faced by workers recovering from injuries."

Nick Grandgenett of Nebraska Appleseed testified in support of LB1009, noting that the seven-day delay before an injured employee can receive benefits is the longest in the country.

"These long waiting periods can mean opportunities for bad actor employers to steer people away from the workers' [compensation] system," he said.

Grandgenett said the measure mirrors workers' compensation practices

in several neighboring states — including Iowa, Missouri and Colorado — that all provide benefits to injured employees after three days, with a retroactive period of 14 days.

Brody Ockander testified in support of LB1011 on behalf of the Nebraska Association of Trial Attorneys.

The process to determine if an individual qualifies for permanent disability can take several months, he said, and includes obtaining an impairment rating, permanent restrictions from a physical therapist and a loss of income determination from a vocational specialist.

"[This measure] helps injured workers ... level the playing field," Ockander said.

Phoebe Lurz, assistant attorney general in the Civil Litigation Bureau, testified in opposition to LB1011. She said employees already have the right to choose their own treating physician, who is given significant deference throughout the determination process.

"[LB1011] effectively results in [employers] paying litigation expenses by providing the employee with an opportunity to back up the opinions of their treating provider," Lurz said. "We believe this disincentivises a return to work and return to health."

Ryan McIntosh spoke in opposition to both proposals on behalf of Nebraskans for Workers' Compensation Equity and Fairness, the National Federation of Independent Business and a number of other business organizations.

He expressed concern that the bills could lead to providing additional disability benefits to individuals who have returned to work or who have engaged in fraudulent or improper conduct within the workers' compensation system.

"There's no reason why an employer should have to pay an additional 30

days of benefits to a claimant if the employer has a valid reason to terminate temporary disability payments," McIntosh said.

The committee took no immediate action on LB1009 or LB1011.

EDUCATION

Suspension exemption approved for young students

Lawmakers passed a bill Feb. 27 restoring Nebraska schools' ability to suspend pre-K through second-grade students in certain cases.

Introduced by Glenvil Sen. Dave Murman, LB653 partially repeals a 2023 law banning the suspension or expulsion of pre-K through second-grade students by creating an exception for those who engage in physical violence that harms others.



Sen. Dave Murman

Schools must provide parents oral and written notice when a child is suspended, including available resources, steps taken to address the behavior and strategies to keep the student in school. Schools also must hold a meeting with a parent, guardian or educational decision-maker following a suspension and allow such a meeting to be requested if it does not occur.

Additionally, LB653 requires option school districts that are not in a learning community to automatically accept siblings of currently enrolled option students with individualized education programs without regard to capacity limitations.

LB653 passed on a 33-15 vote.

Bill seeks to restrict foreign adversary funding in higher ed

A measure that would bar Nebraska postsecondary institutions from accepting gifts, grants, contracts and other funding from certain foreign governments and entities that are deemed U.S. adversaries was considered Feb. 24 by the Education Committee.

LB1262, introduced by Omaha Sen. Bob Andersen at the request of Gov. Jim Pillen, would prohibit public and private colleges and universities, along with their affiliated foundations and research entities, from entering into funding relationships, partnerships or research agreements with foreign adversaries.

The legislation defines foreign adversaries as China, Russia, Iran, North Korea and Qatar, as well as affiliated entities such as Confucius Institutes, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Al Jazeera Media Network. Programs covered under the ban would have to conclude by Dec. 31, 2026, or when existing contracts expire.

Institutions in violation of the act would be required to forfeit the value of the prohibited funding and could lose eligibility for state research grants for up to five years and face civil penalties of up to \$250,000 per violation. The bill also would authorize the state attorney general to investigate violations and require the state auditor to conduct annual compliance reviews of a sample of institutions.

Additionally, LB1262 would require colleges to report to the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education within a year of receiving foreign gifts of \$10,000 or more — down from the current threshold of



Sen. Bob Andersen

\$250,000 — and contracts totaling \$50,000 or more, and to publish the source, amount, terms and conditions of such gifts and grants in a public online database.

Andersen described the bill as a “preventive and protective” measure intended to safeguard students, intellectual property and national security while also encouraging universities to strengthen ties with democratic allies rather than foreign adversaries.

“Institutions of postsecondary education play a vital role in research, national competitiveness, development of future leaders and nurturing core American liberties,” Andersen said. “They should be catalysts for strengthening ties with American allies who share our values, rather than adversaries who exploit them.”

Kenny Zoeller, director of the Governor’s Policy Research Office, testified in support of the proposal, citing a 2020 federal investigation that found universities nationwide systematically underreported foreign gifts, with reporting thresholds too high and enforcement too weak to ensure transparency.

He said LB1262 would address the issue by tightening oversight of foreign funding, enhancing public transparency and giving the attorney general authority to investigate violations and impose penalties.

“By empowering the attorney general with specific authority to investigate and enforce these rules, we’re sending a clear message that securing our homeland starts at home, and we will not allow foreign adversaries to purchase influence in our state or harvest research funded by Nebraska taxpayers,” Zoeller said.

Also supporting the bill on behalf of the Combat Antisemitism Movement, David Soffer said antisemitic incidents have surged globally and

in the U.S., particularly on college campuses, and often are reinforced by institutional influences rather than occurring organically.

He said large sums of foreign funding, especially when underreported or insufficiently monitored, can shape campus policies and narratives in ways that undermine accountability and contribute to hostile environments for Jewish students.

“Meaningful transparency and enforceable safeguards are essential to protecting academic integrity, national security and student civil rights,” Soffer said.

No one testified in opposition and the committee took no immediate action on LB1262.

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Bill to allow progressive jackpot games heard, advanced from committee

Members of the General Affairs Committee heard testimony Feb. 23 on a bill that seeks to provide an additional gaming option for authorized organizations in the state.

LB1120, introduced by Blair Sen. Ben Hansen, would amend the Nebraska Lottery and Raffle Act and the Small Lottery and Raffle Act to allow a licensed organization to conduct a lottery or raffle game with a progressive jackpot or multiple drawing dates, such as Queen of Hearts. Tickets to such games could be sold through a vending or dispensing device.



Sen. Ben Hansen

The measure would require a licensee to register each lottery or raffle game with the state Department of Revenue and post the rules in a visible location where the game is conducted or tickets are sold. At least 50% of the gross proceeds from such games must be used for prizes.

The department would be authorized to establish rules and regulations to carry out provisions of the bill.

Hansen said progressive jackpot games often are used to fund various community projects, including food pantries, disaster relief, scholarships and school programming.

“Nebraska is proud of its tight-knit, Midwestern communities and the values that inspire families and friends to ... support each other locally,” he said. “These fundraising efforts are opportunities for whole towns to come together and build their community.”

Russ Cook of the American Legion supported the measure, saying many nonprofit and veterans organizations rely on donations, small fundraising and volunteer labor to keep their doors open. He said the measure would permit another source of revenue to allow organizations to continue providing important services to community members.

“When the costs rise, something has to give,” Cook said. “Sometimes that means fewer community programs, fewer outreach events for veterans, fewer resources for families and in the worst cases, [organizations] have to close.”

Proponent Jeffrey Baker of the Veterans of Foreign Wars echoed those sentiments, saying the updated raffle format proposed in LB1120 has proven to be a “lifeline” for organizations in other states.

Nebraska has always prided itself on local community involvement, he said, and the proposal would reinforce that tradition by giving organizations the necessary flexibility to thrive in

today’s world.

“The bill simply modernizes outdated statutory language so community groups can utilize tools that have already proven successful and safe in other states,” Baker said. “This isn’t an expansion of gambling, this is an expansion of opportunity.”

No one testified in opposition to the proposal. Following the hearing, the committee voted 8-0 to advance LB1120 to general file.

GOVERNMENT, MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS



Protection from trespass charges sought for county assessors

The Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee heard testimony Feb. 25 on a bill that seeks to protect county assessors from trespassing charges in the course of their work.

Under LB1019, sponsored by Sen. Myron Dorn of Adams, no county assessor could be prosecuted for trespass while performing his or her official duties unless they enter an enclosed building without the express permission of the property owner or occupant.

Dorn said the bill was introduced following a recent attorney general’s opinion indicating that real property assessors could be held liable for trespass.

“That opinion replaced a longstanding opinion that assessors had relied upon that allowed them to enter property, but not homes, without being held liable for trespass,” Dorn said. “Without the ability to access

property, assessors cannot evaluate the quality of the property and see whether the property owner has improved or changed [it].”

Drones and aerial photography are helpful in the assessment process, he said, but are costly options. He noted that the Nebraska Association of County Officials estimates that it would cost \$14 million to assess property through those means on a statewide basis.

NACO Executive Director Jon Cannon testified in support of the measure, which he said is necessary to provide clarity to county attorneys so that assessors can perform their duties without fear of prosecution.

County assessors have a legal obligation to review and assess all real property in the county at least every six years, Cannon said, and that duty can be satisfied only through an accurate physical inspection. He said drones and aerial photography are more expensive and less accurate alternatives and are meant to supplement on-site evaluations rather than supersede them.

“I understand that exempting someone from the law of trespass is a big deal and property rights are a huge deal to people in Nebraska,” Cannon said. “[But] is the solution to a property tax crisis in the state to make assessment less accurate and/or ... more expensive for the taxpayer?”

Also testifying in favor of LB1019 was Johnson County Assessor Terry Keebler, representing the Nebraska Association of County Assessors. He said members of the organization received “very muddy” responses from their respective county attorneys regarding what is allowed in the wake of the AG opinion.

“We’re requesting this statute change so that we all have clarity and [the rules are] consistent,” Keebler said. “What the assessors are trying to do is to be fair and equitable in



Sen. Myron Dorn

assessing the value of property. We're trying to do it correctly."

No one testified in opposition to LB1019 and the committee took no immediate action.

Measure would allow Osborne early hall of fame induction

A bill that would require the induction of a living individual into the Nebraska Hall of Fame this year was heard Feb. 25 by the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Currently, the Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission selects one inductee every five years and the honor is limited to individuals who have been dead for at least 35 years. LB1159, sponsored by Hastings Sen. Dan Lonowski at the request of Gov. Jim Pillen, would require that the commission name one living inductee before Jan. 1, 2027.



Sen. Dan Lonowski

The bill also would require that the inductee:

- be a prior member of the U.S. House of Representatives;
- be a former head coach of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln football team;
- have served as athletic director of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; and
- have attended Hastings High School.

Lonowski said it is "not surprising" that those requirements are met by former UNL head football coach Tom Osborne. He said Osborne has embodied "nearly every aspect of what it means to be a Nebraskan," from leading the Huskers to three national championships, starting the Team-Mates mentoring program and serving the state in the U.S. Congress.

The purpose of the Nebraska Hall of Fame is to showcase outstanding Nebraskans who have achieved prominence while living in the state, Lonowski said, noting that the College Football Hall of Fame waived their standard three-year waiting period when they inducted Osborne in 1998.

"For all the joy and celebration Coach Osborne has brought us over his 89 years of life, he deserves to enjoy the celebration of his induction into our great state's hall of fame," Lonowski said. "His career achievements and personal values have made him an enduring icon in college football in our state and well beyond."

Nicklas Stefanik, testifying on behalf of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska, supported the measure. Osborne left a lasting legacy at the university that continues to impact students, he said, including through volunteer opportunities provided by the mentoring program he created.

"For such a man that has dedicated his life to our state and this university, it is truly the least that we can do," Stefanik said.

No one testified in opposition to LB1159 and the committee took no immediate action on the proposal.



Bill seeks to roll back SNAP work requirements for certain groups

The Health and Human Services Committee considered a bill Feb. 26 that seeks to opt Nebraska out of recent federal changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

LB734, sponsored by Omaha

Sen. Megan Hunt, would require the state Department of Health and Human Services to submit an application to the U.S. Department of



Sen. Megan Hunt

Agriculture by Oct. 1 to waive SNAP work requirements for unhoused individuals, veterans and youth aging out of foster care who are between ages 18 and 24.

If approved, the waiver would restore SNAP work requirement exemptions for the three groups as they existed in Nebraska before passage of the federal One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025.

The measure also would eliminate a provision in state law, enacted last year, that prohibits DHHS from applying for any waiver of SNAP work requirements unless required by federal law.

Hunt said the OBBB contains stricter requirements than previously existed in Nebraska's food assistance program at a time when everyone is struggling with food affordability. In addition, she said, the groups that would be impacted by LB734 previously were exempt from work requirements because they face specific challenges that increase their risk of food insecurity.

For example, Hunt said, veterans have higher rates of cognitive impairments, often tied to their service, and unhoused individuals often struggle with mental health issues and substance use disorders.

Perhaps the most vulnerable, she said, are young people aging out of foster care. Even with the state's Bridge to Independence Program, many former state wards have great difficulty overcoming unstable, sometimes abusive, pasts and lack the support and opportunities that other Nebraskans take for granted.

“They’ve had the deck stacked against them in one way or the other their whole life, through no fault of their own,” Hunt said, “and the least we can do is remove a completely new barrier to meeting one of their most basic needs.”

Testifying in support of the proposal, Robin Nolte said she and her children were homeless for 10 months after she lost her job amid a health crisis. Access to SNAP benefits without work requirements provided her the stability to find housing and full-time employment, she said.

“SNAP work requirements can prevent struggling families from getting the food they need to survive,” Nolte said. “When life changes in an instant, like it did for me, these programs are not just support, they’re survival.”

Also supporting LB734 was Bre Grandstaff of No More Empty Pots. The Omaha nonprofit is a certified SNAP E&T provider and partners with DHHS to help individuals who have difficulty meeting the program’s work requirements to gain the skills and training necessary to find employment, she said.

The training can be crucial for success, Grandstaff said, but it is not available in many rural parts of the state and does not address root causes of food insecurity, such as severe mental health disorders, chronic substance abuse and domestic violence.

“Unfortunately, simply securing employment will not solve all of the struggles that these groups face,” she said.

Alynn Sampson, executive director of Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach in Lincoln, said people experiencing homelessness spend most of their time managing crises. Requiring them to work does not help them build stable lives, she said.

“When someone does not know

where they will sleep, how they will eat or how they will stay safe, employment becomes exponentially more difficult,” Sampson said. “It is hard to prepare for a job interview when you’ve not slept. It’s hard to maintain employment when you have no reliable transportation, no permanent address, no secure place to store your belongings and no consistent access to showers, clean clothes or communication.”

Katie Nungesser of Voices for Children in Nebraska also spoke in favor of the proposal, saying young people aging out of foster care face some of the highest barriers to stability of any group in the state. In 2025, she said, 179 youth aged out of the Nebraska foster care system and that rate has doubled in the last decade.

Youth who do not achieve permanency have had, on average, four times more placements than other foster children, she said, and are much more likely to have mental health issues and lack support systems, reliable transportation and solid financial foundations.

“If SNAP is unavailable to certain young people through these new requirements and intensive reporting systems, the result is not going to end up being employment,” Nungesser said. “It will be hunger and desperation.”

No one testified against LB734 and the committee took no immediate action on the bill.

JUDICIARY

Study of missing Black women and children authorized

A bill aimed at improving the reporting and investigation of missing Black women and children in Nebras-

ka was given final approval Feb. 27.

Under LB751, introduced by Sen. Ashlei Spivey of Omaha, the Nebraska State Patrol is required to conduct a study to determine ways to expand criminal justice resources for reporting and identifying missing Black women and children.



Sen. Ashlei Spivey

The patrol will collaborate with state and federal agencies, including the Nebraska Commission on African American Affairs and the U.S. Department of Justice, to assess the scope of the issue, identify barriers and improve information sharing and coordination.

An electronic report detailing the study’s findings — including data, analysis, identified barriers and possible future legislation — is due to the Legislature’s Executive Board by June 1, 2027.

Lawmakers passed the measure on a 47-1 vote.

Fentanyl enhancement, controlled substance cleanup provisions passed

A measure that enhances penalties for certain drug offenses involving fentanyl was given final approval Feb. 27.

LB795, introduced by Sen. Barry DeKay of Niobrara, makes a number of technical changes to the state’s Uniform Controlled Substances Act, including correcting the spelling in statute of three chemicals. It also designates bromazolam as a Schedule 1 controlled substance under the act.



Sen. Barry DeKay

The bill was amended on select file to include provisions of Whitman Sen. Tanya Storer’s LB817.

Those provisions add fentanyl to the list of controlled substances in state law that if knowingly or intentionally manufactured, distributed, delivered, dispensed or possessed with the intent to distribute — either by itself, or in a mixture or substance containing a detectable amount of fentanyl — are subject to an enhanced penalty depending on the quantity.



Sen. Tanya Storer

Under the proposal:

- 140 grams is a Class IB felony;
- at least 28 grams but less than 140 grams is a Class IC felony; and
- at least 10 grams but less than 28 grams is a Class ID felony.

A Class IB felony is punishable by a mandatory minimum sentence of 20 years in prison up to a maximum of life imprisonment.

Lawmakers passed LB795 32-14.

Bills would restrict mask usage by on-duty law enforcement

Two measures aimed at prohibiting on-duty law enforcement officers from concealing their identities were considered Feb. 27 by the Judiciary Committee.

LB854, introduced by Omaha Sen. Megan Hunt, and LB906, sponsored by Sen. Margo Juarez of Omaha, would bar law enforcement officers, including local, state and federal authorities, from wearing facial coverings or personal disguises that obscure their identities while on duty.



Sen. Megan Hunt

Under both measures, officers could wear translucent face shields

or clear masks. Additionally, officers could wear face coverings — including masks, helmets, respirators and protective eyewear — in certain circumstances, including when:

- protecting themselves from exposure to bodily fluids, smoke, airborne toxins, gas or other irritants that could impair health or trigger illness;
- protecting themselves from physical harm while engaged in high-risk situations such as a shootout, standoff, hostage situation or terrorist incident;
- protecting their eyes from retinal weapons such as lasers; or
- operating a motorcycle or other vehicle that requires a helmet for safe operation.

Both bills also would require on-duty law enforcement officers to wear “appropriate identification,” including visible information such as their name, badge number and agency affiliation.

Under both measures, an officer who violates the identification requirements or facial-covering prohibitions would be guilty of a Class III misdemeanor, punishable by up to three months imprisonment, a \$500 fine or both.

Additionally, Juarez’s proposal would require Nebraska law enforcement agencies to adopt and publicly post masking policies by Oct. 1, 2026, prohibit supervisors from allowing violations and bar evidence or related testimony obtained in violation of the bill from being used in court, with limited exceptions.

Hunt and Juarez said they introduced the measures in response to issues involving U.S. Immigration



Sen. Margo Juarez

and Customs Enforcement officers concealing their identities during operations in Nebraska and elsewhere.

Juarez cited an ICE raid last year at Glenn Valley Foods in her legislative district — where masked agents arrested and detained more than 70 workers — saying the face coverings officers used intensified fears.

She said masks make it harder to distinguish legitimate officers from impostors and limit facial visibility, hindering nonverbal communication and increasing the risk that residents might misinterpret an officer’s tone and intent.

“As lawmakers, we share a collective obligation to ensure that law enforcement is conducted responsibly and in a way that builds and fosters trust with the community,” Juarez said.

Hunt echoed that sentiment, saying requiring officers to display ID is essential to maintaining public trust and accountability. Nebraskans should not have to wonder whether the person attempting to detain them is an actual officer or an impersonator, she said.

“Requiring identification for any law enforcement makes sense and it’s an important civil liberty protection for our citizens, whether they come in contact with a city police officer, a county sheriff or an ICE officer,” Hunt said. “They deserve to know that an officer that might be giving them instructions, pulling them over, entering their home, arresting them or detaining them is a legitimate officer.”

Holly Burns, a mental health professional, testified in support of both proposals. She said allowing officers to wear full facial masks during arrests can intensify trauma responses, heighten fear and anxiety and undermine the sense of safety that is essential to healthy community relationships.

Masks also can make officers ap-

pear unapproachable or threatening, she said, eroding public trust and reducing the likelihood that residents will cooperate with law enforcement or report crimes.

“This perception diminishes the possibility of community cooperation [and] open dialogue, which are vital for fostering safer neighborhoods,” Burns said.

Grant Friedman, representing the ACLU of Nebraska, also supported both bills. In his work involving alleged police misconduct, Friedman said, he historically has been able to assume that individuals identified as law enforcement officers were legitimate.

However, he said, the increased use of masks and concealed identities has made it more difficult to verify whether someone claiming to be an officer actually is one. Transparency is essential to accountability, he added, noting that public officials openly identify themselves when conducting official business and law enforcement officers should be held to the same standard.

Maria Arriaga supported both measures on behalf of the Nebraska Commission on Latino-Americans, saying the tactics of masked law enforcement disproportionately affect Latino communities. Requiring visible identification and limiting routine face coverings would reduce racial profiling concerns and deter impersonators, she said.

Also supporting both bills was Nick Grandgenett, a staff attorney with Nebraska Appleseed. He said immigrant community members increasingly face enforcement actions despite not having criminal records.

“[The bills] recognize the need for responsible guardrails and that the current no-holds-barred approach to immigration enforcement indiscriminately targets people and undermines

the ability of law enforcement to build trust in Nebraska,” Grandgenett said.

No one testified in opposition to either bill and the committee took no immediate action on LB854 or LB906.

Changes proposed to involuntary commitment process

A bill that would allow concerned individuals to seek court-ordered mental health commitments in Nebraska was considered by the Judiciary Committee Feb. 25.

LB1040, introduced by Omaha Sen. Kathleen Kauth, would amend the Nebraska Mental Health Commitment Act to allow “interested parties” – including a spouse, parent, sibling, adult child, close adult friend, guardian, conservator or another person acting in the individual’s best interests – to file a petition directly with a court alleging that someone is mentally ill and dangerous.



Sen. Kathleen Kauth

Currently, such concerns must be routed through a county attorney.

Petitioners would be required to provide detailed allegations describing specific behaviors, acts or threats and sign the petition under penalty of perjury. Filing a petition in bad faith would be a Class IV felony, punishable by up to two years in prison and 12 months of post-release supervision, a \$10,000 fine or both.

The bill also would expand the definition of “mentally ill and dangerous” to include not only those who pose a substantial risk of serious harm to themselves or others, but also those exhibiting signs of recent physical or mental deterioration or who have demonstrated that they pose a substantial and immediate risk of significantly

damaging another person’s property.

Kauth described LB1040 as an effort to modernize Nebraska’s mental health commitment laws so that families and law enforcement may intervene before a tragedy occurs.

Current law requires proof of imminent harm or violence, she said, leaving families and law enforcement powerless when a person clearly is unable to care for themselves or is exhibiting escalating destructive behavior.

“By expanding the grounds for commitment to include a profound failure to meet basic human needs and allowing interested parties to petition for help, we are providing a lifeline before a crisis becomes a catastrophe,” Kauth said.

Chris Sharp testified in support of the measure on behalf of Cicero Action. He said data shows a rising number of unsheltered people with mental illness or addiction, fewer available psychiatric beds and more individuals with mental illness in jails and forensic facilities.

The bill would allow earlier intervention, he said, and help people access treatment before cycling deeper into homelessness, incarceration or crisis.

“LB1040 reopens the door to meaningful treatment options for the seriously mentally ill and chronically addicted by recognizing both psychiatric deterioration and property damage as a measure of dangerousness to create a true continuum of care,” Sharp said.

Dave Miers, senior director of Behavioral Services at Bryan Medical Center, opposed the measure on behalf of Bryan Medical Center, the Nebraska Association of Behavioral Health Organizations and the Nebraska Hospital Association. Miers said the bill could result in unnecessary loss of liberty for people whose behavior stems from developmental disabilities, trauma or substance use

rather than psychiatric crisis.

Additionally, he said, the proposal could allow civil commitment to be based on relationship status or proximity rather than clinical evaluation by licensed professionals and established judicial safeguards, which would place hospitals and providers in a difficult position.

“[LB1040] puts clinicians in the middle of family conflicts, forces providers to navigate competing obligations and exposes hospitals and behavioral health providers to heightened legal and ethical risks, without improving access to care or expanding system capacity,” Miers said.

Daniel Zak testified in opposition on behalf of the Stephen Center, an Omaha nonprofit that provides emergency shelter, addiction treatment and transitional housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, poverty and addiction.

Involuntary commitment can be highly traumatic and can damage trust, he said, which may leave individuals unwilling to seek voluntary help in the future.

Representing the Nebraska Association of County Officials, Elaine Menzel also opposed the measure, citing funding and system capacity concerns. While counties support efforts to address mental health needs, she said, LB1040 could strain courts, regional behavioral health systems and county infrastructure without providing additional resources.

The committee took no immediate action on the measure.

Protections considered for faith-based child services agencies

The Judiciary Committee heard testimony Feb. 25 on a measure that would bar the state from penalizing

faith-based child placement agencies for declining to provide services that conflict with their religious beliefs.

LB1060, introduced by Glenvil Sen. Dave Murman, would prohibit state government, agencies and political subdivisions from taking adverse action against such an agency for declining services. Prohibited adverse actions would include:



Sen. Dave Murman

- denying or canceling funding, contracts or licenses;
- initiating enforcement actions; or
- altering terms of participation in government programs.

An agency that alleges a violation of the prohibition against discrimination could raise the claim as a defense in an administrative or judicial proceeding.

Under the bill, agencies that decline to provide a child-placement service would be required to provide the requester with contact information for other agencies or a link to a state website listing providers that can offer the service.

Murman said that while he is not aware of any current conflicts in Nebraska, disputes in other states have demonstrated a need for statutory protections. He said a Christian adoption agency in New York was threatened with closure for placing children with married, opposite-sex couples only.

When governments pressure agencies out of existence, he said, it leaves fewer placement options overall and places greater strain on other agencies.

“The more child-placing agencies we have, both religious and nonreligious, there is less pressure on any individual agency,” Murman said, “which ultimately allows the system

as a whole to thrive.”

Lance Kinzer testified in support of the bill on behalf of the 1st Amendment Partnership, saying Nebraska has more than 30 child-placement agencies, including about 10 that are faith-based. Maintaining that mix strengthens the overall system by encouraging broader community participation and expanding the pool of families available for foster care and adoption placements, Kinzer said.

Representing the Nebraska Catholic Conference, Tom Venzor also supported the measure. He said the state should value and honor the mission of faith-based foster care and adoption agencies so that they can continue serving children without fear of discrimination or costly litigation.

“LB1060 provides important, up-front statutory protection ... so Nebraska can continue to rely on a diverse array of service providers to meet the demanding needs of serving Nebraska’s children,” Venzor said.

Katie Nungesser opposed the bill on behalf of Voices for Children in Nebraska. Child welfare policy should prioritize children’s best interests, safety, stability and timely permanency, she said, rather than protections for agencies.

Additionally, she said, LB1060 lacks safeguards to prevent placement delays or discrimination, which could reduce options for vulnerable children – including LGBTQ youth and those in rural areas – and prolong the time that more than 4,000 Nebraska children already spend in out-of-home care.

“Children are going to pay the price when adult belief systems limit the pool of safe and loving homes available to them,” Nungesser said. “Fewer placement options mean longer waits, greater instability and higher risk of disruption.”

The committee took no immediate action on the proposal.

Bill would require vape child safety locks

Electronic smoking devices sold in Nebraska would be required to include built-in child safety features under a bill considered by the Judiciary Committee Feb. 26.

Under LB1254, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Eliot Bostar, selling devices manufactured after the bill's effective date without such features would be unlawful and classified as a Class IV misdemeanor, punishable by up to a \$500 fine.



Sen. Eliot Bostar

Bostar said young children can easily activate unprotected vape devices by inhaling from them, exposing themselves to nicotine and other toxic chemicals. The measure would not ban vaping products or change age limits, he said, but would require basic child-safety protections similar to those used for other products such as medications, cleaning products and lighters.

"If these products are going to be sold in our state, they should incorporate basic mechanical safeguards to prevent unintended use by young children," Bostar said.

Lancaster County Commissioner Matt Schulte testified in support of the proposal, saying the county supports policies that promote community health and reduce long-term government costs.

The Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, the Lancaster County Sheriff's Office and the Lincoln Police Department conduct annual compliance checks to prevent the sale of tobacco and vape products to minors, Schulte said, describing LB1254 as a logical extension of those efforts.

Brooke Fullerton also testified in support of the proposal, speaking as a

parent, foster parent and professional who works with pregnant and parenting teens and supervises family visitations.

Fullerton said many vape products are sold in child-resistant packaging, but most disposable devices lack built-in safety locks. Additionally, she said, many devices are brightly colored, flavored and designed with lights or screens that can appeal to children, increasing the likelihood that they will pick them up and mimic how adults use the devices.

Stacy Alexander, owner of E-Titan Vapors, testified in opposition to the bill.

Alexander said his business has long worked to keep vape products out of minors' hands, implementing ID policies before they were required and supporting creation of the state's electronic nicotine delivery systems registry, which took effect Jan. 1.

The industry is still adjusting to that system and undergoing audits, he said, and LB1254 could create confusion regarding compliance, force manufacturers to seek reapproval for products already on the registry and further disrupt retail operations.

"It would probably be more appropriate for the [U.S.] Food and Drug Administration to develop standards for manufacturers on the federal level, rather than [creating] a state-to-state patchwork of regulations," Alexander said.

The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

to industrial-scale users under a measure approved by lawmakers Feb. 27.

LB548, introduced last session by Central City Sen. Loren Lippincott, allows first or second class cities or villages that own natural gas systems to enter into a contract to sell natural gas to certain large industrial consum-



Sen. Loren Lippincott

ers whose facilities are located in Nebraska and within 100 miles of the city or village.

The industrial consumer may not be a consumer of any competitive natural gas provider and may not have received gas service from any investor-owned or governmentally owned gas system within five years prior to the contract's execution.

Before entering into a contract with an industrial consumer, the governing body of a city or village must adopt a resolution stating that the contract does not pose an unreasonable financial risk to the city or village or its taxpayers.

The bill allows parties to enter into a contract on or before Jan. 1, 2027.

LB548 passed on a vote of 47-1.

TRANSPORTATION & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Rideshare dynamic pricing measure narrowed, returned to final round

A bill on final reading that would prohibit rideshare companies from using dynamic pricing during a state of emergency was returned to select file Feb. 27 and amended to apply

NATURAL RESOURCES

Municipal natural gas sales authorized

Certain Nebraska cities and villages may make tax-exempt natural gas sales

only when the emergency affects transportation.

Current law prohibits transportation network companies such as Uber and Lyft from using dynamic pricing statewide during any state of emergency declared by the governor.

As amended on general file, LB771, sponsored by Lincoln Sen. Beau Ballard, would prohibit dynamic pricing for seven days after the governor declares a state of emergency.



Sen. Beau Ballard

Senators voted to return the bill to select file to consider an amendment offered by Sen. John Fredrickson of Omaha. It instead would prohibit dynamic pricing for seven days after an emergency declaration when the emergency affects the transportation of people, goods or equipment.

After adopting Fredrickson’s amendment on a vote of 46-0, lawmakers advanced LB771 to final reading by voice vote.

ies’ efforts to address the availability of and incentives for affordable housing through zoning, ordinances and regulations.

LB839, introduced by Bellevue Sen. Victor Rountree, also would require cities to report the number of multifamily housing units that have been designed and built within city limits in accordance with the federal Fair Housing Act’s accessibility requirements.



Sen. Victor Rountree

Rountree said many of the approximately 13% of Nebraskans with disabilities are living in housing that does not meet their needs.

“By adding this requirement,” he said, “we ensure that we have accurate information about the needs in communities and will be better able to respond accordingly.”

An Urban Affairs Committee amendment, adopted 27-0, would require cities to report the number

of accessible multifamily housing units built since Jan. 1, 2021, rather than March 13, 1991, as originally proposed.

Rountree said the amendment is a compromise with cities intended to make it easier for them to gather the required information.

Sen. Bob Andersen of Omaha opposed LB839, saying the additional requirement would impose an unfunded mandate on cities when the need for accessible housing is unclear.

Omaha Sen. Terrell McKinney, chairperson of the committee, supported the bill and the amendment, saying the shorter lookback period would minimize any financial burden on cities.

He said the additional information would help developers better understand which communities lack accessible housing, improving the use of state funds already dedicated to affordable housing programs.

LB839 advanced to select file on a vote of 29-1. ■

URBAN AFFAIRS

Accessible housing reporting requirement advanced

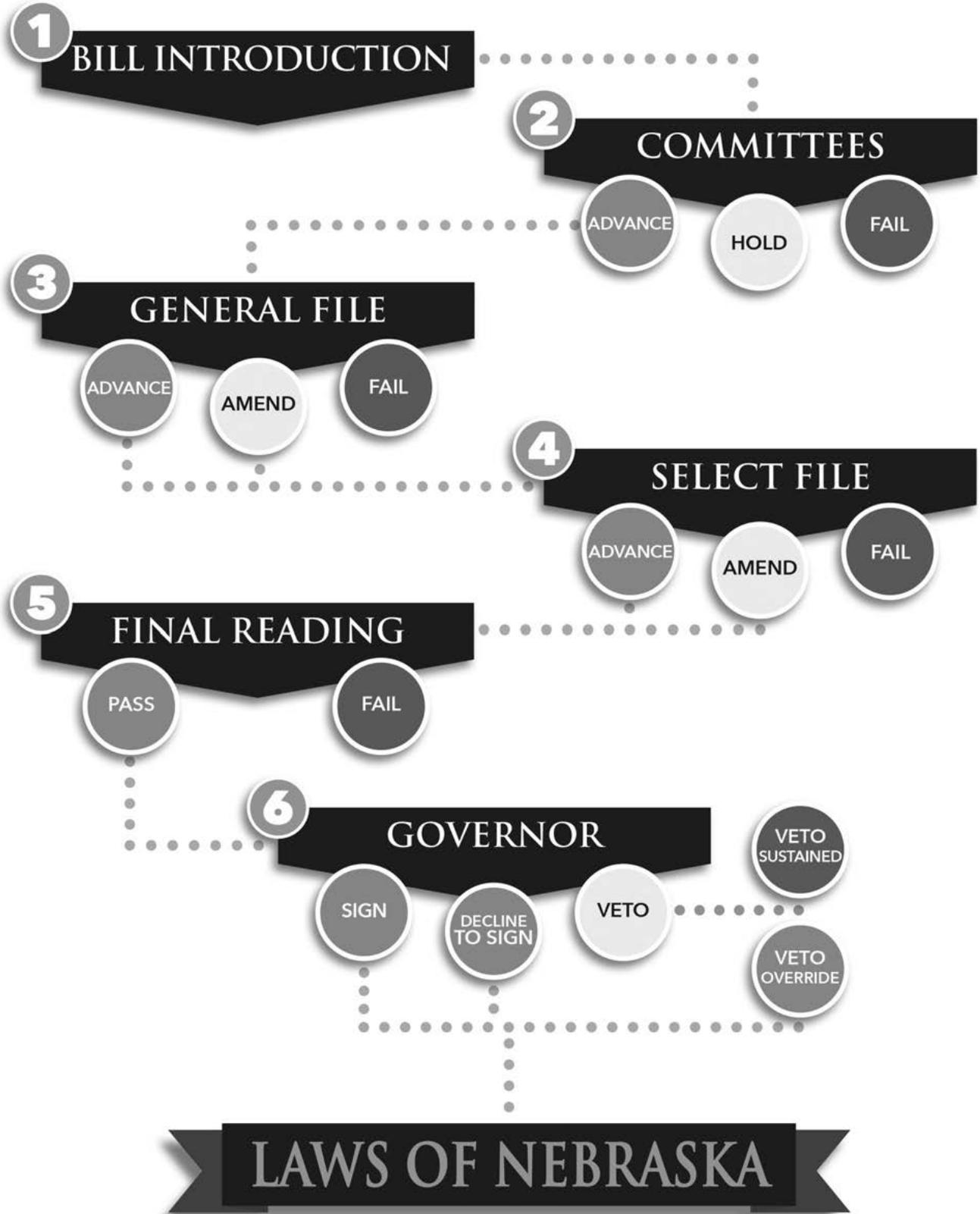
Senators gave first-round approval Feb. 24 to a measure intended to help policymakers determine the number of accessible multifamily housing units in Nebraska.

Under the Municipal Density and Missing Middle Housing Act, metropolitan, primary, and first class cities with a population of at least 20,000 are required to submit biennial reports to the Urban Affairs Committee.

The reports provide details on cit-



HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW



2026 Legislative Session*

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

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

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

April						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
			DAY 54	DAY 55	RECESS	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	RECESS	DAY 56	DAY 57	DAY 58	DAY 59	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	RECESS	RECESS	RECESS	RECESS	DAY 60	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Federal & State Holidays

January 19 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
 February 16 – Presidents' Day

Legislative Recess Days

February 13
 March 2, 13, 16, 27
 April 3, 6, 13, 14, 15, 16

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

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