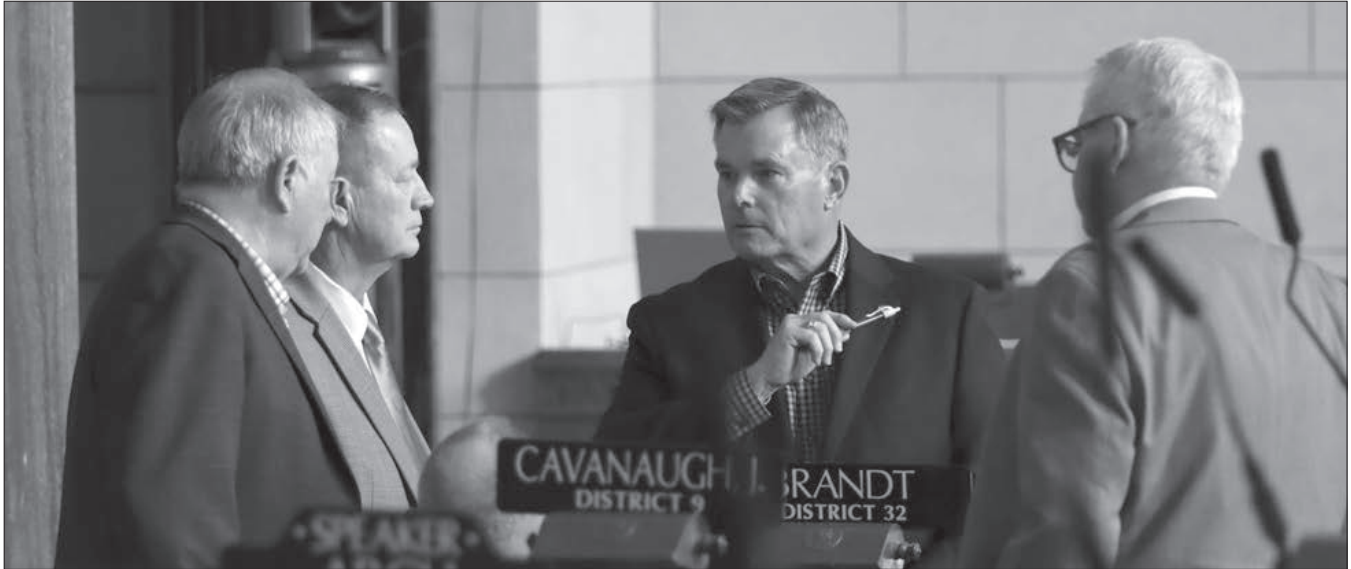


Revenue omnibus advanced to second round



Sen. R. Brad von Gillern (second from right) confers with fellow senators during debate on LB901.

Lawmakers gave first-round approval March 6 to a package of measures intended to increase state revenue.

The Revenue Committee introduced LB901 as a shell bill. A committee amendment, adopted 35-1, replaced the bill with provisions of four other proposals heard by the

committee this session.

Elkhorn Sen. R. Brad von Gillern, committee chairperson, said the measure would increase state revenue by approximately \$26 million annually.

The amended provisions of LB890, sponsored by Sen. Stan Clouse of Kearney, would update the Mechanical Amusement Device Tax Act. The

proposal would increase the application fee for a cash device from \$500 to \$650 and the annual decal fee from \$250 to \$350, beginning in 2027.



Sen. Stan Clouse

(continued page 2)

Work comp injury report confidentiality amended, advanced

After approximately six hours of debate spanning three days, lawmakers reached a compromise March 3 and advanced a bill that would make workers' compensation first injury reports confidential.

Currently, employers or insurers are required to file a first injury report with the Workers' Compensation Court for any injury resulting in death, lost time, loss of consciousness or medical treatment beyond first aid. Such reports are considered public records and can be accessed through a public records request.

LB455, as introduced last session by Syracuse Sen. Bob Hallstrom, would require those reports be confidential by default and closed to public inspection except as necessary

for the court to administer and enforce other provisions of the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act.

Under the bill, report access would be restricted to the involved parties and their legal counsel and insurers, state and federal agencies for investigations or statistical research and nonprofit organizations that provide services to the families of deceased employees. An injured employee also could waive confidentiality.

Hallstrom said the measure would offset the "avalanche" of solicitations that injured employees receive from attorneys once a first injury report is filed and made public.

"The communications by lawyers pursuant to infor-

(continued page 3)

Revenue omnibus advanced to second round

(continued from front page)

Clouse said the measure also would increase the occupation tax on mechanical amusement devices that are not cash devices, such as pool tables and pinball machines, from \$35 to \$70.

Occupation taxes collected under the act currently are directed to the General Fund. Under Clouse's proposal, 20% would be credited to the Department of Revenue Enforcement Fund, and 80% would be allocated to the General Fund.

Beginning in 2028, the department would adjust the fees and occupation tax for inflation annually.

The proposal also would increase the tax on cash devices from 5% of net operating revenue to 10% and change how the tax is distributed.

Currently, 40% of the proceeds are credited to the Property Tax Credit Cash Fund. The committee amendment would eliminate that distribution and increase the amount credited to the General Fund from 2.5% to 71.75%.

Von Gillern offered an amendment, adopted 33-0, that instead would distribute 6.5% to the Property Tax Credit Cash Fund and 65.25% to

the General Fund.

Current law limits the number of cash devices permitted at a retail establishment to either four or the number of devices it takes to generate 40% of the establishment's gross operating revenue, whichever is less.

Von Gillern offered another amendment, adopted 31-0, that would increase the number to five except in establishments located in a qualified census tract.

His amendment also would require the department to replace a cash device decal without an additional fee in certain circumstances.

Sen. Ashlei Spivey of Omaha supported the committee amendment, saying it includes certain provisions from her LB920 that are intended to prevent the advertising of cash devices to minors.

Another provision would prohibit operators from making a cash device available for play at a retail establishment unless an attendant is physically present and capable of actively super-

vising play by visually confirming the player's age and intervening to prevent play by anyone under 21.

The amended provisions of LB1109, introduced by von Gillern at the request of Gov. Jim Pillen, would repeal several sales and use tax exemptions.

As introduced, the bill would have eliminated a sales and use tax exemption for purchases made by Wyuka Cemetery in Lincoln. The committee amendment would leave the exemption in place.

Von Gillern said the provisions of his LB1110 would expand the allowable uses of the Department of Revenue Enforcement Fund. They would require the department to use money in the fund for the administration and enforcement of any activity or function administered by the state tax commissioner.

Beginning no later than Oct. 31, the measure also would require the state Department of Revenue and the state Department of Health and Human Services to share confidential information about persons, businesses and state and local subdivisions with



Sen. Ashlei Spivey

UNICAMERAL UPDATE

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the other agency for the purpose of properly administering the law.

Von Gillern said the proposal also would require the state Department of Revenue to add a collection fee to delinquent tax claims as well as the actual costs incurred by the department in collecting the taxes. Fees and costs would be credited to the Department of Revenue Enforcement Fund.

The amended provisions of

LB1131, sponsored by Lincoln Sen. Eliot Bostar, would require the state Department of Revenue to distribute \$3 million annually in refundable, transferable state income tax credits to nonprofits that provide services to victims of domestic violence



Sen. Eliot Bostar

and human trafficking.

To fund the credits, Bostar said, the measure would repeal personal property and sales and use tax exemptions related to the assembly of certain data center equipment for use outside the state. Approximately \$3 million per year would be returned to the General Fund, he said.

LB901 advanced to select file on a vote of 33-1. ■

Work comp injury report confidentiality amended, advanced

(continued from front page)

mation contained within the first injury report produce unnecessary conflict and needless litigation,” Hallstrom said, “thereby increasing the cost of [the] workers’ compensation system and reducing the net benefits received by an injured employee.”

A Business and Labor Committee amendment would replace the bill with a modified proposal that would clarify the manner in which entities could access the report and allow access to a treating physician who provided care to the injured employee.

The amendment also includes provisions of a measure heard by the committee last session that would update the distribution structure for subrogation claims, which allow an employer or their insurer to seek reimbursement from a third party that is liable for an employee’s work-related injury.

Currently, the court determines a “fair and equitable” distribution of a subrogation settlement proceeds in cases in which a prior written agreement was not obtained.

The amended provisions of LB313, sponsored by Sumner Sen. Teresa Ibach, instead would distribute subrogation settlement proceeds based on a statutory formula. After deducting the reasonable expenses of making a recovery, the employee would receive one-third of the remaining settlement.

The employer or workers’ compensation insurer would be reimbursed for payments already made and the employee would receive the remaining balance.

Ibach said the change would provide certainty to both employers and employees by implementing clear distribution standards.



Sen. Teresa Ibach



Sen. Bob Hallstrom said his proposal would increase efficiency in the workers’ compensation system.

“We’re just seeking to define what is fair and equitable,” Ibach said. “It shouldn’t adversely impact the workers at all.”

Sen. Jane Raybould of Lincoln offered an unsuccessful procedural motion to allow for extended debate on LB455. She noted that injured workers have several avenues to find and connect with attorneys beyond direct solicitation, including search engines, commercials, billboards and information hotlines.

“It’s not like we’re restricting access to any legal counsel,” Raybould said. “The majority of workers’ compensation cases are resolved amicably between the employer and the employees.”

Omaha Sen. Megan Hunt opposed the bill and committee amendment, saying the proposal would make it

(continued page 4)

Work comp injury report confidentiality amended, advanced

(continued from page 3)

more difficult for injured Nebraskans to access and understand their legal options. She said litigation does not occur simply due to attorney involvement, but rather because a claim was denied, delayed or disputed.

The amount of litigation won't be reduced by preventing attorney outreach, she said, but by ensuring that claims are processed correctly, efficiently and transparently.

"That first injury report can be the only moment when outreach happens ... to ensure these people understand their options before deadlines pass or mistakes are made," Hunt said. "This bill asks us to believe that reducing legal resources for injured workers will somehow produce better outcomes for them."

Speaking in opposition to LB455 and the committee amendment, Lincoln Sen. Danielle Conrad said privatization of first injury reports would serve as a "problematic shield" against identifying unsafe patterns and practices that result in recurrent workplace injuries.

She also questioned the benefit of moving to a subrogation reimbursement formula that would not account for the unique circumstances of each workers' compensation case.

"Uniformity and certainty isn't always fair and equitable," Conrad said. "A change from a fair and equitable rule ... ensures that there will be less fairness and less equity in these complex issues that require a fact specific case-by-case determination."

Sen. John Cavanaugh of Omaha also opposed the proposal. He said the subrogation change in the committee amendment would allow an employer to seek reimbursement through an injured employee's insurance if the

third party at fault for the injury were uninsured or underinsured.

"This bill ... hurts working people and asks them to pay for insurance companies to have less loss," Cavanaugh said. "It's more money out of the pockets of working people to cover big insurance companies so they have less risk."

The Legislature adjourned for the week Feb. 27 without voting on LB455. When debate resumed March 3, Hallstrom offered an amendment to the committee amendment that he said would address concerns from the opposition and replace the measure with a modified proposal.

The Hallstrom amendment would remove the provisions of LB313 from the committee amendment and maintain the current "fair and equitable" distribution standard for subrogation claims in workers' compensation cases.

It also would require first injury reports be confidential for 60 days after a report is filed. The workers' compensation court would be required to send a letter to the injured employee notifying them of their right to seek legal advice and representation.

Conrad supported the Hallstrom amendment, calling it a "straight-forward" compromise. The 60-day "cooling off period" still would allow injured workers to get the information they need, she said, and the amendment would ensure that workers receive a fair and equitable recovery in subrogation cases.

Finally, the Hallstrom amendment includes provisions from Plymouth Sen. Tom Brandt's LB1077.

Those provisions would update how workers' compensation claims data is reported to the National Council on Compensation Insur-

ance for purposes of calculating the experience modification factors used to set a business's insurance premium based on its workers' compensation claim history compared to the industry average.

Under the amendment, Nebraska businesses could use a net reporting system rather than a gross reporting system to allow for the exclusion of deductible payments in the determination of their experience modification factor.

Brandt said approximately 43% of states that utilize NCCI services — including Colorado, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri — operate on a net reporting system. He said Nebraska businesses currently are at a disadvantage with competitors with lower EMF scores due to their ability to subtract deductible amounts from their losses.

"This legislation would level the playing field with our neighboring states and give businesses a means to control their [EMF and reduce] premiums," Brandt said.

Lawmakers voted 37-1 to adopt the Hallstrom amendment before adopting the committee amendment 37-0. LB455 then was advanced to select file on a 36-1 vote. ■



Sen. Tom Brandt

AGRICULTURE



Ag cleanup bill amended, advanced to final round

A bill intended to modernize regulatory language and update certain agriculture-related fees was amended March 5 to extend the termination date of a state law related to poultry producers.

Among other provisions, LB948, introduced by the Agriculture Committee, would repeal the Nebraska Poultry and Egg Resources Act. The act is an industry-funded commodity program established to promote markets for Nebraska turkey and egg producers and is administered by the Poultry and Egg Division of the state Department of Agriculture.

Niobrara Sen. Barry DeKay, committee chairperson, offered an amendment during select file debate to remove the repeal provision and replace it with a termination date of Dec. 31, 2027. He said the repeal originally was brought to the committee by the department based on indications from the poultry industry that it was pursuing other avenues of promotion.

DeKay said following the public hearing, at which some parts of the industry expressed opposition, he worked with stakeholders to reach a compromise to delay repeal of the act by one year. Doing so would allow the department and the industry to meet over the interim to determine the value of the program and any possible changes that might improve it, he said.

“Unfortunately, we are legislating with mixed signals,” DeKay said, “and I believe this amendment will be a chance to get clarity from the industry before we make a final decision.”

Following the 27-0 adoption of DeKay’s amendment, LB948 was advanced to final reading by voice vote.

BANKING, COMMERCE & INSURANCE



Expanded affordable housing proposal clears first round

Lawmakers amended and advanced a bill March 6 intended to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the state’s efforts to increase affordable housing.

LB768, sponsored by Norfolk Sen. Robert Dover, would make a number of changes to the powers of the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, the Rural Workforce Housing Investment Act and the Middle Income Workforce Housing Investment Act.



Sen. Robert Dover

Dover said the proposal would ensure that Nebraska’s housing and investment programs have the right structure and accountability to meet the state’s growing housing demand.

“Housing shortages across the state are affecting workforce growth, community stability and economic opportunity,” Dover said. “It’s imperative that we, as the Legislature, do what we can to responsibly accelerate housing development while remaining fiscally conservative and careful with taxpayer dollars.”

He said the bill would allow the state Department of Economic Development to contract with NIFA, the entity already responsible for administer-

ing federal housing tax credits, bond financing and home-buyer programs, to oversee key housing functions — allowing DED to focus on its core function of economic development.

Under the proposal, NIFA would gain additional powers to establish and own nonprofit subsidiaries that further housing goals and would not be held responsible for the debts, liabilities and obligations of any nonprofit subsidiary it creates.

The bill also would dissolve the Housing Authority Committee and grant DED the power to contract with statewide nonprofits to serve as agents for workforce and middle income housing programs. Among other provisions, it also would:

- shorten the NIFA grant and loan application period from 90 to 60 days;
- allow funds held in any escrow account to be recaptured by DED;
- include interest earned on awards recouped by DED to also be recouped;
- provide that any building constructed or repaired using state grant funds that will not, however, be owned or managed by the state, would not be subject to state energy code compliance and mandatory plan reviews.

A Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee amendment, adopted 36-0, would add provisions of LB1246, also introduced by Dover.

Those provisions would require NIFA to record all instances of revenue, fund balance and expenditure within a formal accounting system and submit, at least 20 days before the start of each legislative session, a report on the condition of all public funds for grants or loan programs involving public funds pursuant to an agreement with a state agency.

NIFA also would be required to provide monthly accountings of all such transactions and detailed annual reports, beginning July 1, 2027.

Dover said the proposal would strengthen oversight and ensure that state housing dollars are subject to clear reporting requirements and monitoring.

Syracuse Sen. Bob Hallstrom offered an amendment to the committee amendment, adopted 35-0, to add provisions of his LB819 to the measure. Currently, the Rural Workforce Housing Investment Act is set to end July 1, 2027, and the Middle Income Workforce Housing Investment Act is set to sunset July 1, 2029.

As introduced, LB819 would have extending both programs through July 1, 2037. Under Hallstrom's amendment, the programs instead would sunset July 1, 2032. The provisions also would change definitions in the Middle Income Workforce Housing Investment Act to include construction cost in determining a property's value.

Finally, the amendment would increase the construction cap on owner-occupied housing units under the Rural Workforce Housing Program from no more than \$325,000 to \$375,000 and on rental units from no more than \$250,000 to \$300,000.

Hallstrom said both programs have provided an excellent return on investment in the state's effort to provide more affordable housing options.

Following the 36-0 adoption of a cleanup amendment from Dover, senators advanced LB768 to select file on a 40-0 vote.



Sen. Bob Hallstrom

Omnibus consumer protection measure advanced to second round

A bill meant to strengthen banking protections for vulnerable consumers was amended to become an omnibus proposal and advanced from general file March 5.

LB838, sponsored by Sen. Mike Jacobson of North Platte, would authorize an optional program for financial institutions under which a vulnerable or senior adult could designate an "authorized contact" to be notified by a financial institution in the event of an emergency, loss of contact with the customer or suspected financial exploitation.

Financial institutions would be shielded from liability regarding the administration of such programs or the actions of authorized contacts, including if a financial institution refuses to communicate with an authorized contact because they suspect that the person is involved in the exploitation or is not acting in the victim's best interest.

It also would offer legal protection to the authorized contact person, ensuring they cannot be sued or prosecuted for cooperating in good faith with the financial institution or law enforcement.

"[The bill] provides clarity and reasonable protections for financial institutions that are often on the front lines of identifying suspicious activity," Jacobson said.

A Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee amendment would add provisions of Jacobson's LB837 to address what he referred to as the "reality of the disappearing penny."



Sen. Mike Jacobson

In 2025, the U.S. Mint stopped producing new pennies, which Jacobson said has left merchants and consumers in a "no man's land" when the price of goods and services does not end in a whole dollar amount.

"This [amendment] would provide guidance by establishing a uniform rounding standard for cash transactions," Jacobson said, adding that the measure would apply only to transactions involving physical currency and not to those involving checks, electronic funds transfers or credit or debit cards.

If the final digit of the transaction ends in 1, 2, 6 or 7, the amount would be rounded down to the nearest multiple of 5 cents. If the final digit of the transaction ends in 3, 4, 8 or 9, the amount would be rounded up to the nearest multiple of 5 cents. For transactions totaling only 1 or 2 cents, the amount would be rounded up to 5 cents.

Jacobson said the measure would ensure that, over time, gains and losses would balance out and that the proposal would bring "much-needed clarity" to consumers, businesses and financial institutions.

The committee amendment also includes amended provisions from the following bills:

- LB875, sponsored by Syracuse Sen. Bob Hallstrom, which would prohibit suppliers from including clauses in contracts that waive compliance with the Equipment Business Regulation Act or mandate that legal disputes be resolved in out-of-state forums or by other state laws;
- LB1160, also introduced by Hallstrom, which would modernize Nebraska's estate and trust laws by synchronizing the Uniform Probate Code with the Uniform Trust Code and

BUSINESS & LABOR

strengthening the rights of surviving families; and

- LB1063, sponsored by Sen. Eliot Bostar of Lincoln, which would modernize the Nebraska Money Transmitters Act to exclude influence from foreign adversaries and regulate informal transfer systems.



Sen. Eliot Bostar

Lincoln Sen. Carolyn Bosn offered

an amendment, adopted 35-1, to add the provisions of her LB1118 to the committee package. Those provisions would update the state's Uniform Deceptive Trade Practices Act to treat certain conduct by social media platforms that accept paid advertising as a deceptive trade practice.



Sen. Carolyn Bosn

A platform that knowingly permits fraudulent advertising or ignores credible reports would be guilty of a deceptive trade practice. A fraudulent advertisement is defined as one that misrepresents material facts or unlawfully impersonates another in order to induce a transaction or extract a benefit.

The measure also would require platforms, within seven days, to investigate and determine if a reported ad is fraudulent and remove it from the platform.

Bosn said social media platforms use sophisticated algorithms to target users, and those same systems easily could be used to target fraudulent advertisers.

Bosn's amendment also would incorporate provisions of her LB1119, which would update the Age-Appropriate Online Design Code Act passed by lawmakers last year. Among other

provisions, the amendment would:

- broaden the types of design features covered by the act;
- prohibit one-step privacy downgrades and repeated prompts to minors to reduce privacy protections; and
- require a clear tool for minors to request account deletion within 15 days.

Following the 34-2 adoption of the committee amendment, lawmakers advanced LB838 to select file 35-0.

Bill to require DED grant awards clears first round

A program aimed at benefitting Nebraska's small businesses would be required to award a minimum dollar amount of grant funds under a bill advanced from general file March 4.

Currently, the state Department of Economic Development has the option to distribute up to \$3 million in grants annually through the Microenterprise Assistance Program under the Business Innovation Act. LB1205, sponsored by Kearney Sen. Stan Clouse, would require DED to do so.

Clouse said the measure would ensure that of the \$15 million that will flow to the Business Innovation Cash Fund under another proposal moving through the Legislature, \$3 million will be allocated to the microenterprise program.

"I believe investing in Nebraska and promoting economic development are critical parts of our job as state senators," he said. "LB1205 is an example of both, enabling small businesses to ... thrive all across the state."

Lawmakers advanced LB1205 to select file 38-0.



Sen. Stan Clouse

Apprenticeship registry measure broadened, advanced

A bill that would create a registry for apprenticeships in Nebraska was broadened to become an omnibus business measure before being advanced to select file March 4.

LB847, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Kathleen Kauth, would create the Nebraska Office of Registered Apprenticeship within the state Department of Labor to serve as the state apprenticeship registry.



Sen. Kathleen Kauth

The office would be responsible for establishing standards to create a nationally recognized state credential for the completion of a registered apprenticeship program. Additionally, the office would be required to establish a plan to provide reciprocal approval for programs that are registered in other states.

Kauth said the bill would shift oversight of apprenticeship programs from the U.S. Department of Labor to the state Department of Labor. She said the change would give DOL the ability to determine the shape of future apprenticeship programs.

"While we have had that ability to create this office for many years, we've never done it," Kauth said, "and the time is right to move forward with the state guiding the workforce of Nebraska rather than the federal government."

The measure also would create the Nebraska Apprenticeship Council to advise the office and provide community outreach and education regarding

the benefits of apprenticeship.

Finally, LB847 would increase from 20% to 50% the amount of the unemployment combined tax rate that can be transferred to the Workforce Development Program Cash Fund to invest in workforce development initiatives.

Kauth said the State Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, commonly known as SUIT, currently has a balance of approximately \$584 million, which is far more than needed to provide unemployment benefits. SUIT is the repository for state unemployment taxes, which are paid by employers.

The Legislature lowered the unemployment tax rate last year, she said, but the fund continues to grow.

“No business will be paying more in taxes,” Kauth said, “some of the money will just be redirected to workforce development.”

A Business and Labor Committee amendment, adopted 39-0, replaced the bill with a modified version of the original proposal. Among other technical changes, the amendment would add definitions for small and large apprenticeship programs and expand the definition of an employee organization to include employee benefit plans and beneficiary associations.

It also would require that the governor-appointed apprenticeship council be composed of individuals with experience in small and large Nebraska apprenticeship programs.

The amendment would add provisions of four other measures considered by the committee this session, including LB747, sponsored by Elkhorn Sen. Tony Sorrentino.



Sen. Tony Sorrentino

Those provisions would establish

uniform enforcement authority across multiple programs managed by DOL, including changing youth employment certification procedures, removing an infraction for failure to provide a wage statement and expanding DOL subpoena powers.

Provisions of LB864, introduced by Sen. Jason Prokop of Lincoln, would transfer responsibility for awarding and disbursing grants under the InternNE program from the state Department of Economic Development to DOL.



Sen. Jason Prokop

The two remaining bills in the committee amendment seek to change how funds are expended within DOL.

The provisions of LB1015, sponsored by Sumner Sen. Teresa Ibach, would create the Business Innovation Cash Fund within DOL and establish a mechanism to provide funding for the Business Innovation Act from a percentage of SUIT funds.



Sen. Teresa Ibach

Under the proposal, the commissioner of labor would designate the percentage and proportion of the SUIT tax to be allocated to the Business Innovation Cash Fund. The measure also would add new reporting elements to improve the state’s ability to track outcomes.

“It establishes a stable, ongoing source of funding for two key areas of Nebraska’s economic strategy: workforce development and business innovation,” Ibach said.

Finally, the provisions of LB1173, introduced by Kauth, would change the name, filing fee and permitted uses of the Contractor and Professional

Employer Organization Registration Cash Fund.

Kauth said the proposal would provide DOL with a reliable funding source to enforce state labor laws and administer statutorily required programs rather than having to rely on federal dollars, which she said often are not received in a timely manner.

The department normally is 98% federally funded, she said, but during the last government shutdown, DOL had to use emergency funds from the pandemic just to meet payroll. The measure would allow the DOL to become largely self-funded, she said.

The provisions would allow the department to assess fees for all employers under the Employment Security Act annually on a graduated scale based on gross wages paid out in the previous year, not to exceed a total of \$15 million.

Kauth also offered an amendment to the committee amendment, adopted 25-0, to add the provisions of Prokop’s LB1044. Those provisions would require that at least \$4 million in annual grants be awarded annually under the Business Innovation Act, which supports innovators and startups across the state.

Prokop said the fund provides early-stage firms with access to capital, technical support and opportunities to develop and commercialize new technologies, helping to grow Nebraska’s economy from within.

Independent impact analysis has shown that BIA-funded businesses have created more than 2,300 new jobs with annual wages exceeding \$182 billion, he said.

“These results demonstrate not only a strong return on investment for Nebraska taxpayers, but also Nebraska’s growing competitiveness in attracting venture capital and commercial success for home-grown businesses,” Prokop said.

The provisions also state legislative intent to appropriate \$15 million in fiscal year 2026-27 for the grants. Prokop said those dollars would not be general funds, but would be distributed from the Business Innovation Cash Fund created by the provisions of Ibach's measure included in the committee amendment.

Omaha Sen. John Cavanaugh expressed some concern with the various redistributions of SUIF funds outlined in the proposal, even if the SUIF balance is far more than the department would ever need to pay out in unemployment benefits.

If SUIF is overfunded, he said, lawmakers should lower the unemployment tax rate charged to employers.

"If we're charging employers more than it takes to provide [unemployment benefits], then we shouldn't just use that as a slush fund to fund some other thing, no matter how meritorious," Cavanaugh said.

Following the 39-0 adoption of the committee amendment, senators voted 38-0 to advance LB847 to select file.

EDUCATION

School access for professional organizations amended, advanced

Lawmakers amended a bill March 6 aimed at ensuring that Nebraska school districts provide any professional employees' organization equal access to the district's employees.

LB429, introduced by Glenvil Sen. Dave Murman, would require



Sen. Dave Murman

school boards to provide equal access to physical and electronic mailboxes, meetings, events and recruitment opportunities when such access is granted to any professional employees' organization.

A professional employees' organization is defined as any organization that exists for the purpose of professional development or liability protection. Employees would include any administrative employee, student teacher, paraprofessional, teacher or administrator employed by a school board.

The bill also would require equal treatment with respect to signage and informational materials displayed on school property and prohibit school boards from naming or referring to any day or break in the school calendar using the name of a professional employees' organization.

During select file debate, Omaha Sen. John Cavanaugh offered an amendment that replaced the bill with a modified version of the proposal. He said the amendment represented a compromise that would more clearly define professional employees' organizations and ensure that access to teachers is limited to entities with whom schools and school districts have an established relationship.

The amendment also would specify that the bill does not apply to, modify or supersede the provisions of the Industrial Relations Act or any matters relating to collective bargaining.

Murman supported the amendment, saying his "ultimate goal" is to provide teachers with as much information as possible about their insurance options.

Following the 39-0 adoption of the Cavanaugh amendment, LB429 was advanced to final reading by voice vote.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Legislative oversight measure clears first round

Lawmakers amended and advanced a cleanup proposal March 4 related to legislative oversight.

LB1155, introduced by Adams Sen. Myron Dorn, would update and clarify legislative oversight changes that were enacted last session with passage of a bill that created the Legislative Oversight Committee.



Sen. Myron Dorn

Dorn said the proposal would make the process of legislative oversight more efficient and effective.

Among other provisions, the measure would:

- change provisions related to accessing juvenile probation records and timelines for requested information;
- modify due dates for annual reports;
- authorize secure remote access for audit purposes; and
- establish increased accountability for room confinement in juvenile facilities of longer than one hour in a 24-hour period.

An Executive Board amendment, adopted 36-0, would expand documentation requirements for room confinements longer than one hour to specify the duration of the confinement, facility staffing levels at the time and any incidents of self-harm or suicide committed by a juvenile while isolated.

The amendment also would require the Division of Legislative Oversight to review collected data, assess room confinement use and prepare an an-

nual report of findings to be delivered to the Legislature.

Omaha Sen. Ashlei Spivey supported the amendment, saying the state needs to do more to gather data on the use of restrictive and juvenile room confinement, given the mental health implications of the practice.

LB1155 advanced to select file on a 41-0 vote.

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Medical cannabis changes clear first round

A measure that would create registries for medical cannabis patients and caregivers was amended to instead provide structure for the implementation of medical cannabis regulations and given first-round approval March 4.

As introduced by the General Affairs Committee, LB1235 would amend the Nebraska Medical Cannabis Patient Protection Act to require the Nebraska Medical Cannabis Commission to establish and maintain a registry of those seeking to become qualified patients and registered caregivers.

A committee amendment, adopted 40-0, replaced the bill. The amended proposal would remove the registry requirements and instead reorganize the NMCC's structure and administration.

It would authorize the commission to establish a maximum fee of \$50,000 for license applications, registrations and renewals and require a finger-print based national criminal history background check for initial applicants.

The amendment also would create the Nebraska Medical Cannabis Commission Cash Fund to receive

fees, gifts, grants and other revenues to support administration and enforcement, including salaries, materials, equipment, education and training. Members of the commission would earn an annual salary of \$12,500.

Speaking in support of the committee amendment, Omaha Sen. John Cavanaugh said the proposal would ensure that the commission has adequate resources and provide important protections to both patients and caregivers by removing the commission's ability to maintain a registry.

He also noted that the measure does not give the commission more authority than was provided under the ballot initiative passed by 71% of Nebraska voters.

"It is ... a small step in the right direction," Cavanaugh said. "It is just creating a little bit more structure around the commission."

Also included in the committee amendment were provisions of LB1085, sponsored by Kearney Sen. Stan Clouse.

Those provisions would revise the definition of a "bottle club" under state law to clarify that alcohol may be consumed "in or upon" a premises. The provisions also would require the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission to consider if an applicant is delinquent in any federal, state or local taxes when determining licensure.

Finally, it would expand existing criminal penalties to apply to the unlicensed retail sale of alcoholic liquor, bringing those penalties in line with those for unlicensed manufacture of spirits.

Clouse said the current definition of a "bottle club" excludes establishments where individuals gather for

purposes other than consuming alcohol, such as card or strip clubs.

"The intent of this [proposal] is to clarify that if there is a private club that allows individuals to congregate and consume alcohol, then it needs to be licensed," he said.

The committee amendment also would add the amended provisions of LB1128, introduced by Sen. Robert Dover of Norfolk.

Those provisions would create a consumption-only option under state entertainment district licensure. Under the amendment, local governing bodies could designate areas within an entertainment district where alcohol could be consumed, but not sold, for a \$25 license fee. Such businesses would be required to comply with all applicable laws including prohibitions on underage drinking.

Sen. Rick Holdcroft of Bellevue, committee chairperson, said the comprehensive proposal would provide flexibility to local communities, strengthen compliance with liquor laws and clarify implementation of medical cannabis regulations.

"Together, these provisions promote regulatory clarity, public safety and responsible governance in areas that directly affect communities across Nebraska," Holdcroft said.

Following adoption of the committee amendment, senators voted to advance LB1235 to select file on a vote of 40-0.



Sen. Robert Dover



Sen. Stan Clouse

GOVERNMENT, MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS

Legal notice bill broadened, advanced

A measure that would change requirements governing legal notices in Nebraska was broadened March 5 to address open meeting and public records laws.

Currently, state law requires legal notices to be published in print newspapers. LB596, as introduced last session by Sen. Rita Sanders of Bellevue, would authorize digital news publication of legal notices as an alternative, if a digital news publication does not also have a print version.



Sen. Rita Sanders

The bill also would specify that such digital publication must run for the same amount of time as an equivalent newspaper notice.

Sanders said the existing legal notice requirements are “outdated” because most people now access information digitally.

“This [bill] ensures that these notices reach a broader, more diverse [audience] and in a timely and efficient manner,” Sanders said.

A Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee amendment, adopted 39-0, would clarify definitions of digital newspapers and electronic editions of print newspapers for purposes of legal notices.

It also would authorize the use of digital newspapers to give public notice under the Open Meetings Act in localities where no print edition or e-edition of a legal newspaper is published.

Hastings Sen. Dan Lonowski of-

ferred an amendment to add the provisions of his LB1159 to the proposal. Those provisions would require the induction of a living individual into the Nebraska Hall of Fame this year.



Sen. Dan Lonowski

Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission currently selects one inductee every five years and the honor is limited to individuals who have been dead for at least 35 years. Lonowski’s proposal, introduced at the request of Gov. Jim Pillen, would require that the commission name one living inductee before Jan. 1, 2027.

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 Coach Tom Osborne. He said Osborne has met and exceeded the standard to be inducted into the hall of fame, from leading the Huskers to three national championships to starting the TeamMates mentoring program and serving in the U.S. Congress.

“We should not wait,” Lonowski said.

Omaha Sen. Megan Hunt opposed the amendment, which she called “special legislation” to grant exclusive privileges or benefits to a specific group or individual – something the Nebraska Constitution prohibits.

Hunt said she had “no doubt” that Osborne will be in the hall of fame in

due time, but that it would “tarnish” the honor if lawmakers changed the rules in an attempt to induct him while he is still alive.

“I think the stars in our eyes and our admiration for this man have kind of blinded us to the fact that under our constitution we cannot actually do this,” Hunt said.

Sen. Danielle Conrad of Lincoln agreed. While Osborne is a hardworking and deserving candidate, she said, the constitution is “unambiguous” on its prohibition regarding special legislation.

Following a motion from Conrad to challenge the germaneness of attempting to add the proposal to the underlying bill, which deals with issues of governmental administration, Lonowski withdrew the amendment.

Lawmakers then adopted an amendment 32-0 from Niobrara Sen. Barry DeKay to add the amended provisions of his LB869, which relate to annual notice given by the state treasurer of individuals whose unclaimed property is in the office’s custody and eligible for return.



Sen. Barry DeKay

The provisions would require that the list be published in each legal newspaper of general circulation in every county, rather than only in local newspapers near an individual’s last known address. The measure also would require the annual notice to include information about how to search for unclaimed property held by the treasurer.

“This change will allow the state treasurer’s staff ... to reach more communities directly, especially out in parts of rural Nebraska where newspapers still play a key role in the dissemination of news,” DeKay said.

Another amendment, offered by Bellevue Sen. Victor Rountree and adopted 37-0, would reduce the notice requirements for a legal name change. Currently, an individual wishing to change their legal name must publish legal notice in their county newspaper for four consecutive weeks.



Sen. Victor Rountree

Rountree said the existing notice requirements add to the difficulty and expense of a legal name change. His amendment would reduce the requirement to two weeks.

The committee amendment also added provisions from the following five measures dealing with open meeting requirements and public records:

- LB896, sponsored by Lonowski, which would increase the marriage license fee from \$25 to \$50 and the cost of certified copies issued by county clerks from \$9 to \$16;
- LB898, also introduced by Lonowski, which would add three additional public bodies to the list of those authorized to hold virtual meetings: the Semiquincentennial Commission, the Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Historical Society and local foster care review boards;
- LB919, sponsored by Sanders, which would update four sections of state law governing the preservation of certain public records to allow the use of media other than microfilm or microfiche;
- LB923, introduced by Sen. Stan Clouse of Kearney, which contains a number of cleanup provisions related to the duties of county clerks; and

- LB1145, sponsored by Lonowski, which would require public bodies subject to open meetings requirements to provide reasonable advance notice by a method designated by the public body and recorded in its minutes.

Following adoption of the committee amendment, lawmakers advanced LB596 to select file 40-1.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Temporary event license approved for visiting body artists

A bill that creates a temporary event license for body artists visiting Nebraska from other states was given final approval March 6.

LB720, sponsored by Grand Island Sen. Dan Quick, requires the state Department of Health and Human Services to create a temporary, nonrenewable event license for body artists licensed in other states to practice for no more than seven consecutive days at a Nebraska licensed body art facility.



Sen. Dan Quick

The department also is authorized to conduct in-person inspections of the body art facility where an event will occur. A temporary event license applicant must provide a form of photo identification, a copy of their body art license and a sponsorship letter from the owner or operator of a licensed facility at which they will practice.

A temporary event license will cost

\$50 and a body artist may obtain up to two temporary event licenses in a 12-month period.

LB720 passed on a vote of 46-0 and takes effect immediately.

JUDICIARY

Guardianship requirements, client cap advanced

Lawmakers gave first-round approval March 4 to a proposal that seeks to improve Nebraska's guardianship system.

LB985, sponsored by Bennington Sen. Wendy DeBoer, would prohibit a private person from accepting appointment as a guardian or conservator if they already have 20 clients.



Sen. Wendy DeBoer

Under Nebraska law, a guardian is a court-appointed fiduciary responsible for making personal and medical decisions for a person who is unable to do so for themselves. A conservator is a court-appointed fiduciary responsible for managing a person's financial affairs and property.

DeBoer said the cap would mirror the one already in place for the state's Office of Public Guardian, which serves as guardian when no alternative is available.

In December of last year, she said, an alleged case of theft and abuse was made possible, in part, by the lack of a cap on how many clients a private guardian may serve.

"The person under a guardianship essentially has no rights over their life," DeBoer said. "The guardian determines where the ward lives, the

jobs they may or may not have [and] how to spend money, among other decisions. Putting someone under guardianship is an incredibly serious step and those under guardianship deserve some basic protections.”

A Judiciary Committee amendment, adopted 37-0, added provisions of LB1178, also introduced by DeBoer. Those provisions would:

- allow individuals under a guardianship or conservatorship to attend required hearings either virtually or in person;
- require guardians to make at least monthly monitoring visits, keep written records of those visits and maintain periodic contact with care providers; and
- authorize courts to award costs and reasonable attorney’s fees in specified proceedings, payable either from the trust involved or by another party.

Lincoln Sen. Carolyn Bosn, chairperson of the Judiciary Committee, spoke in favor of the bill and the amendment.

“[A] reasonable limitation on the number of wards ensures meaningful participation rights for wards and protected persons,” she said.

Following the 39-0 adoption of a DeBoer cleanup amendment, senators advanced LB985 to select file on a 39-0 vote.

Expansion of victims’ rights, law enforcement epinephrine access advanced

Senators amended and advanced from general file two Judiciary Committee measures March 5, including a bill that would expand legal protections and notification requirements for victims of certain crimes.

LB1181, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Carolyn Bosn, would broaden

the definition of a homicide victim and clarify victims’ rights to participate in court proceedings, particularly in cases involving homicide, domestic violence and post-conviction proceedings.



Sen. Carolyn Bosn

Currently, benefits and rights tied to homicide cases generally are limited to immediate family members. Under the bill, the definition would be expanded to include additional relatives and others with a close relationship to the victim, allowing more people affected by a homicide to access protections and services available under the Nebraska Crime Victim’s Reparations Act.

The measure also would clarify victims’ ability to participate in court proceedings by allowing them to submit written impact statements describing how the crime affected them. Courts could consider those statements during sentencing and other stages of a case and, in some instances, allow them to be read aloud at sentencing.

Finally, the bill would require prosecutors or other authorities to notify victims in domestic violence cases when a defendant requests a modification of bond conditions.

Bosn said victims and their families often are overlooked in criminal cases despite experiencing significant pain and loss from crimes such as homicide. LB1181 would help ensure they receive information about cases that affect them, she said, and provide more opportunities for them to be heard during sentencing.

“A violent homicide impacts families generationally and throughout communities across the state,” Bosn said. “By expanding this definition of homicide victim, we support all victims of crime and give a voice to

those who are grieving.”

A Judiciary Committee amendment, adopted 32-0, also would allow victims in domestic abuse cases to submit written statements during bond or bond-modification hearings and, subject to reasonable court limits, read their impact statements at sentencing or designate a representative to read them.

The amendment also would expand the definition of co-victims in homicide cases to include survivors who suffer severe emotional harm from the victim’s death, determined on a case-by-case basis.

Senators advanced LB1181 to select file on a 31-0 vote.

Senators also advanced LB727, introduced by Sen. Kathleen Kauth of Omaha, which would authorize law enforcement agencies — including municipal police departments, county sheriff’s offices and the Nebraska State Patrol — to obtain and maintain a supply of epinephrine for use when individuals experience severe allergic reactions.



Sen. Kathleen Kauth

Under the bill, the state Department of Health and Human Services, in consultation with law enforcement agencies, must approve one or more educational training programs. Officers would be required to complete an approved program and provide proof of training to their agency before administering epinephrine in the field.

Kauth said she introduced the measure after learning that law enforcement officers currently are not allowed to carry epinephrine devices, such as EpiPens, even though they often are first on the scene during severe allergic reactions. The bill would allow, but not require, officers to carry

and administer the medication after completing training, she said.

Senators adopted a committee amendment 28-0 authorizing the use of nasal epinephrine in addition to autoinjectors before advancing LB727 to select file on a 32-0 vote.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Game law update amended, advanced

A bill updating Nebraska's Game Law advanced to the final round of debate March 6 after it was amended to allow the state Game and Parks Commission to issue resident landowner limited permits to hunt mountain lions and award turkey permits via a draw.

LB979, introduced by Plymouth Sen. Tom Brandt, would increase fee caps for various hunting and fishing licenses, permits and applications, among several other changes.



Sen. Tom Brandt

Brandt introduced an amendment on select file that would authorize the commission to charge an application fee of no more than \$9 for turkey permits awarded on the basis of a random drawing.

He said the commission may need to use a draw system for nonresident turkey permits beginning next year after all 10,000 permits for 2026 sold out within two hours of being made available.

The amendment, adopted 34-0, also would increase fee caps for turkey permits and allow the commission to charge fees for the issuance of a preference point.

Sen. Paul Strommen of Sidney in-

roduced another amendment, adopted 34-0, to include provisions of his LB1232. They would allow the commission to issue limited permits to hunt mountain lions to qualifying landowners or leaseholders or a member of their immediate family.



Sen. Paul Strommen

Strommen said the measure is intended to help control mountain lion populations in certain areas, reducing livestock depredation that causes financial losses for farmers and ranchers.

Under the proposal, an applicant's qualifying farm or ranch land would have to be within a designated mountain lion management zone. The number of limited permits in any management unit could not exceed 75% of the regular permits authorized for that unit.

The application fee for the resident landowner limited permit could not exceed one-half the application fee for the regular mountain lion permit, and the number of applications for each farm or ranch would be capped based on certain acreage requirements.

After adoption of the amendments, lawmakers advanced LB979 to final reading by voice vote.

NEBRASKA RETIREMENT SYSTEMS

Changes to judges' retirement system clear first round

Lawmakers gave first-round approval March 5 to a measure that would make several changes to the Nebraska Retirement Fund for Judges.

As introduced by the Nebraska Retirement Systems Committee, LB1101

would reduce the state contribution from 5% to 4% of the total annual compensation of all members, beginning July 1.

Lincoln Sen. Beau Ballard, chairperson of the committee, said the change was recommended following an actuarial study that indicated the system was 105% funded as of July 1, 2025.

A committee amendment, adopted 37-0, replaced the bill with a series of changes to the Judges Retirement Act. Rather than lowering the state's contribution to the plan beginning July 1, the amendment would eliminate the state's contribution entirely.

Under the amendment, the state contribution would continue to be reviewed by the actuary employed by the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement System for possible adjustment in the future based on the funded ratio on the actuarial value of plan assets.

The amendment also would make two changes to member contributions. Beginning July 1, the contribution rate for all judges would be reduced from 10% to 9% of compensation. At 20 years of service credit, the contribution rate would reduce further to 5% of compensation.

Finally, the amendment would increase the maximum cost-of-living adjustment from 1% to 2.5% for judges who became plan members after July 1, 2015.

Ballard said the provisions would revert all judges' contribution rates and the maximum COLA rate to those that existed prior to 2015. The changes would provide savings to taxpayers and increase the state's ability to recruit and retain judges, he said.

In addition, Ballard said, the changes would put all judges on equal footing, making the plan easier for the NPERS to manage and administer.

Senators voted 37-0 to advance LB1101 to select file.

REVENUE



Deputy county assessor authorization amended, advanced

A bill intended to modernize county government processes advanced to final reading March 6 after lawmakers amended it to include a measure that would expedite the removal of abandoned mobile homes.

Sponsored by Omaha Sen. Kathleen Kauth, LB834 would allow a county assessor to appoint one or more deputies who would perform the assessor's duties in their absence.



Sen. Kathleen Kauth

Among several other technical updates, the bill also would eliminate a \$5 mobile home park permit fee and allow delinquent taxes on mobile homes, cabin trailers and manufactured homes to be extinguished after 15 years.

Sen. Paul Strommen of Sidney introduced an amendment on select file to include provisions of his LB1230. They would include mobile homes under the state's Disposition of Personal Property Landlord and Tenant Act, which governs how landlords handle abandoned personal property.

Under the bill, homes valued under \$2,000 could be disposed of at the landlord's discretion, while homes valued over \$2,000 could be sold at public auction. After completing the required steps, landlords could obtain a certificate of title from the state Department of Motor Vehicles, giving them legal control of the property.

After voting 28-0 to adopt Strommen's amendment, senators advanced LB834 to the final round of debate by voice vote.

Cigarette tax increase to offset Medicaid costs stalls on first round

A bill that would use additional cigarette tax revenue to help cover state Medicaid costs stalled on general file March 4 after a failed cloture motion.

LB1124, introduced by Omaha Sen. Tony Sorrentino, would increase the state excise tax on a package of cigarettes from 64 cents to \$1.64 beginning July 1.

The equivalent of 97 cents of the tax would be directed to the Nebraska Health Care Cash Fund to pay for state Medicaid expenses. The remaining 3 cents would be added to an existing distribution to the General Fund.

Although the proposal is not intended to generate significant general fund revenue, Sorrentino said, it would help lawmakers balance the state budget by partially offsetting \$80 million in annual state Medicaid costs incurred by smoking-related disease and illness.

"LB1124 is not an indictment of smokers or smoking," he said. "It's a reimbursement mechanism that aligns the source of revenue with one of the state's largest budget drivers."

The state Department of Revenue estimates that LB1124 would generate an additional \$45.6 million in total revenue in fiscal year 2026-27 and \$48.6 million in FY2027-28.

A Revenue Committee amendment, adopted 29-9, replaced the bill with a modified version of the original proposal. It instead would direct most of the additional proceeds to a new cash fund to be used for state Medicaid expenses.

Sen. John Arch of La Vista supported LB1124. He said the bill is not intended to penalize smokers but to

recognize that their behavior incurs a disproportionate cost to the state compared to nonsmokers.

Columbus Sen. Mike Moser also supported the measure, saying Nebraska's cigarette tax has not been increased in approximately two decades. He said the additional revenue would help senators manage a current \$125 million budget shortfall, possibly avoiding further cuts.

Also in support was Sen. Robert Clements of Elmwood, chairperson of the Appropriations Committee. He said passing LB1124 would allow lawmakers to amend the proposed state budget, reducing the General Fund appropriation to Medicaid by an amount equal to the estimated increase in cigarette tax revenue.

Several lawmakers, including David City Sen. Jared Storm, said they opposed LB1124 because the cigarette tax increase disproportionately would affect low-income Nebraskans. He said lawmakers instead should cut state spending to balance the budget.

"The No. 1 issue for people in the state right now is affordability," Storm said. "The last thing they need is us coming in here and raising their taxes."

Sen. Danielle Conrad of Lincoln also opposed the bill and offered a series of unsuccessful motions to extend debate. She said investing in public health programs would be more effective at reducing smoking rates than increasing a regressive tax.

"This isn't about good health care policy," she said. "This is about balancing the budget on the backs of those who can least afford it."

The committee amendment also includes amended provisions of LB712, introduced last session by Seward Sen. Jana Hughes. They would eliminate the current system that taxes electronic nicotine delivery systems based on the amount of con-



Sen. Tony Sorrentino

sumable material they contain.

Hughes said her proposal would tax all vaping products based on their wholesale price and increase the tax from 10% to 30%, rather than 40% as originally proposed. The measure would bring vaping and tobacco taxes closer to parity in terms of their nicotine content, she said.

Hughes later offered an amendment, adopted 33-9, to replace LB1124 with the amended provisions of LB712, omitting the proposed cigarette tax increase.

After eight hours of first-round debate over two days, Sorrentino filed a motion to invoke cloture, which ends debate and forces a vote on the bill and any pending amendments.

The motion failed on a vote of 31-10. Thirty-three votes were needed.

LB1124 is unlikely to be scheduled for further debate this session.

Strengthened clawback protection for ABLE accounts advanced

Lawmakers gave first-round approval March 5 to a measure intended to encourage participation in the state's Achieving a Better Life Experience program.

The ABLE program, administered by the state treasurer, provides tax-advantaged savings accounts used to pay for the qualified disability expenses of a designated beneficiary.

Current law prohibits the state from reclaiming money that remains in a beneficiary's account after their death to pay for medical assistance received by the beneficiary or their spouse or dependent under the state's Medicaid program.



Sen. Jana Hughes

LB1240, sponsored by Glenvil Sen. Dave Murman, would expand that prohibition, ensuring that funds distributed from an ABLE account upon a beneficiary's death could not be reclaimed.

Without that provision, Murman said, many families hesitate to open an account for fear that the state could "claw back" money they have contributed.

"LB1240 seeks to add a simple protection to ensure those accounts are protected so Nebraskans can have the assurance that their dollars invested are safe," he said.

The bill advanced to select file on a vote of 30-0.



Sen. Dave Murman

TRANSPORTATION & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Rideshare dynamic pricing measure approved

Senators passed a measure March 6 prohibiting rideshare companies from using dynamic pricing during a state of emergency that affects transportation.

Previously, transportation network companies such as Uber and Lyft were prohibited from using dynamic pricing statewide during any state of emergency declared by the governor.

LB771, sponsored by Lincoln Sen. Beau Ballard, prohibits dynamic pricing for seven days after the governor declares a state of emergency when



Sen. Beau Ballard

the emergency affects the transportation of people, goods or equipment.

The prohibition is confined to the areas outlined in the emergency proclamation, and the governor may further regulate dynamic pricing during a state of emergency through executive order.

LB771 passed on a vote of 44-2 and took effect immediately.

DMV cleanup measure amended, advanced

Lawmakers gave first-round approval March 5 to a state Department of Motor Vehicles cleanup bill after amending it to include several other transportation-related proposals.

Omaha Sen. John Fredrickson, sponsor of LB972, said the bill includes several technical changes requested by the department as well as updates intended to improve customer service and protect against fraud.



Sen. John Fredrickson

Among other changes, the bill would allow qualified licensees to renew their Class O or M license electronically or in person, require insurance companies to electronically transmit proof of liability coverage to the department and clarify requirements for the display of In Transit placards or stickers.

LB972 also would require the department to issue Choice Color Plates beginning in 2027. The license plates would have white characters on solid black, blue, green or red backgrounds.

The application fee would be \$70 and \$100 for alphanumeric and personalized message versions, respectively. Fees would be credited to the Department of Motor Vehicles Cash Fund.

A Transportation and Telecom-

munications Committee amendment, adopted 39-0, replaced the bill with a modified version of the original proposal as well as provisions of five other bills considered by the committee this session.

As introduced, LB972 would eliminate the requirement for an In Transit to be displayed on both the front and rear of a vehicle. Fredrickson said the amendment would require an In Transit to be displayed only on the rear of a vehicle beginning in 2029, to coincide with a license plate display requirement passed by the Legislature last session.

The provisions of LB738, introduced by Sen. Victor Rountree of Bellevue, would require the department to design and issue Honoring Women Veterans license plates beginning in 2027. The state Department of Veterans' Affairs would use the associated fees to fund events focused on women veterans.



Sen. Victor Rountree

The provisions of LB769, sponsored by Niobrara Sen. Barry DeKay, would require the department to issue University of Nebraska State Museum License Plates beginning the same year. The department would create no more than three license plate designs reflecting support for museums managed by the university, including Ashfall Fossil Beds, Morrill Hall and Trailside Museum.



Sen. Barry DeKay

The proposal would require the Board of Regents to use fees generated by the license plates to support research, public education and outreach at the museums.

The provisions of LB922, introduced by Sen. Tom Brandt of

Plymouth, would increase caps on application fees for various licenses issued by the Nebraska Motor Vehicle Industry Licensing Board.



Sen. Tom Brandt

The provisions of LB1104, sponsored by Norfolk Sen. Robert Dover, would authorize the DMV and the state Department of Revenue to make a determination that a resident owner of a motor vehicle or trailer is avoiding state motor vehicle taxes and fees, registration fees or sales or use taxes.



Sen. Robert Dover

Dover said he introduced the bill in response to constituent concerns that some Nebraskans avoid paying taxes by registering their vehicles in neighboring states.

A determination would be based on specific factors, such as whether the person does not own property or has not filed an income tax return in another state where the vehicle or trailer has been registered.

After making a determination, a department would be required to notify the presumed owner that they are required to register the motor vehicle or trailer and pay applicable taxes and fees. The presumed owner could appeal.

The amended provisions of LB1121, introduced by Sen. Beau Ballard of Lincoln, would regulate franchise agreements between manufacturers and dealers of recreational vehicles, which the bill defines as motor homes, travel trailers, fifth-wheel travel trailers, truck campers and folding camping trailers.

The measure would authorize the Nebraska Motor Vehicle Industry Licensing Board to regulate the issuance and revocation of licenses for dealers, manufacturers

and distributors of new RVs.

Beginning in 2027, a manufacturer or distributor could not sell a new RV in Nebraska to or through a dealer without entering into a manufacturer-dealer agreement specifying the parties' rights and responsibilities.

The measure also would add one licensed RV dealer and one licensed RV manufacturer to the board.

Blair Sen. Ben Hansen offered an amendment, adopted 38-0, to include amended provisions of his LB1099.



Sen. Ben Hansen

The amendment would eliminate the red Choice Color Plates option and instead require the DMV to design and issue Scarlet and Cream License Plates beginning in 2027. Fees would be directed to the Department of Motor Vehicles Cash Fund.

Under an amendment offered by Moser and adopted 35-1, Scarlet and Cream License Plates would be subject to the same application fees as Choice Color Plates.

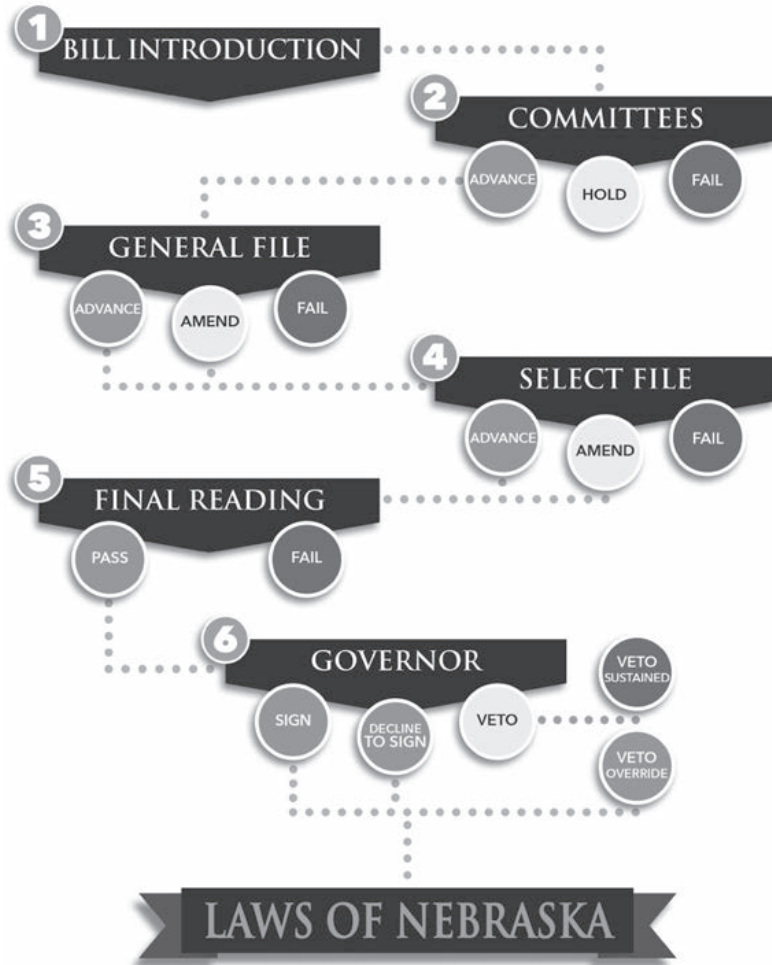
Sen. Rita Sanders of Bellevue also introduced an amendment, adopted 35-0, that includes provisions of her LB786. She said the proposal would direct some of the proceeds from Military Honor Plates to a new Military Department Aid Fund to be used by the Adjutant General to award need-based grants to Nebraska National Guard and Air National Guard members.



Sen. Rita Sanders

After adoption of the amendments, LB972 advanced to select file on a vote of 38-0. ■

HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW



COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Current hearing schedules at:
NebraskaLegislature.gov/calendar

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*)

Tuesday, March 10

Judiciary

Room 1524 - 12:00 p.m.

AM2396 (Hallstrom) Amending LB1139

Wednesday, March 11

Business & Labor

Room 1507 - 12:00 p.m.

AM2413 (Kauth) Amending LB1133



Unicameral Youth Legislature Registration Now Open

Learn what it's like to serve as a Nebraska state senator during the 2026 Unicameral Youth Legislature, June 7-12. In this legislative simulation, high school students from around the state have the opportunity to take on the role of lawmakers.

Student senators sponsor bills, conduct committee hearings, debate legislation and discover the unique process of the nation's only unicameral by learning directly from current state senators and staff.

The program is conducted by the Clerk of the Nebraska Legislature, through the Unicameral Information Office, in coordination with Big Red Summer Camps.

For information on registration, visit the Unicameral Youth Legislature page: NebraskaLegislature.gov/uyl. ■

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