Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts
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March 6, 2026

TO: NARD Board, NRD Managers and Conservation Partners
FROM: Dean E. Edson, NARD Executive Director
RE: March 6 NARD Update

Budget Debate Begins Next Week

This week, the Appropriations Committee voted to send the budget bills to the floor with proposed adjustments to Gov. Jim Pillen's mid-biennium budget plan.

The Legislature started the session with a $471 million budget deficit, a number that grew to $646 million after state forecasters projected $175 million less in tax revenue over the next two fiscal years.

The committee is proposing to come up with $500 million through cuts and cash transfers, including a $130 million transfer from the state's rainy-day fund and an $11.1 million transfer from the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund.

What is left to be determined by the full legislature is the remaining $125 million deficit to address. This could be more as the committee found one miscalculation on Medicare adding about $13.1 million. This takes the total deficit close to $140 million.

The committee must deliver its budget proposal to the floor by Day 40, which is March 9, and must pass the budget by day 50. By rule, the Legislature must pass the budget before Day 50, which is March 25.

A spreadsheet is on the last page with appropriation changes for natural resources. Key changes are:

- The Governor proposed to transfer $32,700,000 from the NETF to the Water Recreation Enhancement fund. The committee reduced this to $5,133,860.

- The Governor proposed to transfer $2 million from the NETF to the Nebraska Soil and Water Quality Fund. The committee eliminated this transfer.

- The Governor proposed to transfer $8 million from the NETF to the Water Resources Cash Fund. The committee reduced this transfer to $6 million.

- The Governor proposed to transfer $4.9 million from the Planning and Trial Coordination Fund to the General Fund. The committee reduced this transfer to $3,627,750.

- The Governor proposed transferring $5,747,931 from the Perkins County Canal Fund to the General Fund. The committee maintained this transfer. This amounts to the interest gained on the funds.

- The Governor proposed to transfer $5.0 million from the Surface Water Irrigation Infrastructure Fund to the General Fund. The committee increased this transfer to $5.1 million.

Cigarette Tax to Partially Fill the Deficit Fails

After the Appropriations Committee made the announcement on the budget, Senators began debate on LB 1124, from Sen. Tony Sorrentino, to raise Nebraska's sales tax by $1.00/pack of cigarettes and direct the new revenues into a special cash fund to offset smoking-related health care costs.

Under the proposal, the tax on a pack of cigarettes would have gone from 64 cents a pack to $1.64 per pack. The amount directed to the general fund would have been 3 cents and the remaining 97 cents would have been directed to a newly created Medicaid Expense Offset Cash Fund. The fiscal note estimated the tax would generate $45.5 million, with roughly $43.4 million going to the health care fund and the remaining $2.1 million to the general fund.

Later in the debate, Sen. Jana Hughes offered an amendment to eliminate the cigarette tax increase and impose a 30% sales tax increase on all vapor products. The amendment was adopted on a 33-9 vote.

Debate on the bill ran the full eight-hour clock on cloture and fell two votes short of the 33 votes needed to advance further Discussion of other ideas to fill the $140 million gap will be discussed on the floor in the remaining days.

Governor Action

LB 807 - Change the administration of the Noxious Weed Control Act from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment and change provisions of the Noxious Weed Control Act and the Water Resources Cash Fund. Ibach.

Governor Pillen signed LB 807 on March 4, 2026. The measure will become law 90 days following adjournment of the Legislature. The Legislature passed LB 807 on Feb. 27, 2026, by a 39-9-1 vote.

Previously, the Legislature advanced LB 807 to Final Reading on Feb. 19, 2026, on a voice vote.

The Legislature advanced LB 807 to Select File on Feb. 4, 2026, on a 33-0 vote, after adopting the committee amendment, AM 1828, on a 31-0 vote. The bill was reported to General File on January 29, 2026, on an 8-0 committee vote after adopting committee amendment AM 1828.

The committee amendment (AM 1828) strikes the original sections and becomes the bill. The amendment retains administration of the Noxious Weed Control Act with the Department of Agriculture rather than transferring it to DWEE as the original bill proposed. The measure repeals authorization for the Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force and transfers authority for grant funding of state aid assistance to riparian vegetation management projects to DWEE.

The amendment establishes riparian vegetation management projects as eligible activities for state aid grant assistance through the Water Resources Cash Fund administered by DWEE. The amendment authorizes eligible uses of grant funds to include riparian vegetation removal that improves streamflow conveyance and the acquisition of equipment related to that purpose. Entities eligible to apply for a grant through DWEE include natural resources districts, weed control authorities, and other weed management entities. No later than January 1, 2027, the department shall prescribe the form for application. Priority in awarding grants under this program is given to applicants for projects within streams subject to an interstate compact or decree.

The original bill also included intent language to increase annual appropriation from $3 million to $6 million. These provisions were eliminated with the committee amendment, AM 1828.

The Agriculture Committee held the hearing for LB 807 on Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2026.

In her opening, Senator Ibach introduced LB 807 and AM 1757, a white copy amendment that would become the bill. Comments were limited to the amendment, which has been a collaborative effort between the Department of Agriculture (NDA) and the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment (DWEE).

AM 1757 keeps administration of the Noxious Weed Act with the Department of Agriculture but amends the Water Resources Cash Fund to expand its uses to provide grants to weed management entities. Priority will be given to entities involved in interstate compacts, such as the Republican River and the Platte River.

Senator Ibach suggested that DWEE supports LB 807 and this change will address the issue long term, as proponents will no longer have to seek general appropriation for these funds.

Proponents

John Thorburn, Tri-Basin NRD General Manager, testified in support. The Tri-Basin Natural Resources District, along with most of Nebraska's NRDs, is an active participant in and strong supporter of managing invasive vegetation in riparian areas to reduce flooding potential by ensuring that stream channel capacity is maintained. Controlling invasive species also protects critical riparian wildlife habitat and reduces non-beneficial water consumption during drought.

Tri-Basin NRD is responsible for protecting the soil and water resources of Gosper, Phelps and Kearney counties in South-Central Nebraska. Our NRD helped organize both the Platte Valley and Twin Valleys Weed Management Areas. NRD staff work with these entities, helping to identify areas that need treatment and making contact with affected district landowners to secure their cooperation with Phragmites control efforts on their properties. We have also budgeted $20,000 of our local funds annually for the past 15 years to support Platte Valley Weed Management Area. Tri-Basin isn't exceptional in this respect. Overall, Nebraska's NRDs spent more than $ 500,000 of local funds and over 3,000 hours of staff time controlling noxious and invasive weeds in FY 2024-25.

Over the past 15 years, Weed Management Areas (WMAs) have received modest, but steady funding from several sources and have utilized those dollars extremely effectively, keeping invasive riparian plants under control in our river systems. Steady, predictable funding is key to effective management of invasive plants. This can't be an on again/off again process. Missing even one spray season could unravel the progress that we've achieved over the past 15 years. We don't expect the

state to pay all the cost of managing invasive riparian plants, but we do need a reliable, predictable partner.

Because phragmites control is so closely related to flood control efforts, we believe that the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment is a good choice to administer Riparian Weed Management grant funds. Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts work closely with DWEE on a variety of issues. Adding this program increases opportunities for collaboration on flood control efforts.

Jon Cannon, NACO, stated that their interest is in the Water Management Cash Fund and ensuring its uses can be directed toward issues tied to water management, particularly those related to the Republican River Compact. He highlighted the U.S. Supreme Court case involving the Republican River, noting the significant return on investment—avoiding a potential $100 million lawsuit and resolving it for approximately $7 million, especially given that Kansas was likely to prevail. This was a case against the State, and the Constitution provides that no property tax shall be levied for a state purpose. Instead, the approach has been to allow weed management areas to handle activities such as spraying for phragmites. These associations are primarily funded by property taxes. By funding these efforts through the Cash Fund, NACO believes their purposes can be accomplished more effectively.

Brent Meyer, Noxious Weed Superintendent for Lancaster County, testified in support on behalf of several weed management organizations. He noted that Nebraska has seen significant improvements in weed management, helping the state meet its water obligations to Kansas. Ensuring compliance with interstate compacts is a state responsibility.

Meyer stated that LB 807 makes practical improvements by strengthening funding, clarifying eligibility, and ensuring resources are directed toward effective, science-based weed management. He emphasized that the bill is a strong fit for the Water Resources Cash Fund, as improving streamflow conveyance supports flood mitigation, water management, and protection of public infrastructure. Nothing in the bill changes existing responsibilities; rather, it provides additional tools and partnerships to address statewide challenges.

Mike Reed, representing the Governor's Riparian Task Force and the Nebraska Weed Control Association, testified that the bill is critical for three reasons: 1) It helps maintain water conveyance for Nebraska's interstate water compacts; 2) DWEE intends to continue the work of the Riparian Task Force to improve and maintain streamflow, channel conveyance, riparian areas, ecosystem health, and water availability; and 3) Moving this effort to the Water Resources Cash Fund identifies a much-needed and appropriate funding source for water management. He concluded that it is good legislation that makes sense.

John Hansen, President of the Nebraska Farmers Union, stated that the amendment changed their position on the bill. He referenced the historical perspective shared by Jon Cannon, noting that this has long been a significant problem for the State of Nebraska, but one the state has tackled with substantial progress. He emphasized that this is a never-ending job and one where it pays to stay at it year after year. The work these groups are doing is saving Nebraska a tremendous amount of money, making it a sound investment.

There was no opponent testimony.

Neutral

Sherry Vinton, Director of the Department of Agriculture, testified that the Department would be concerned with the bill as originally introduced, as it removes the Department's responsibilities under the Noxious Weed Control Act and transfers them to DWEE. These responsibilities have been performed by the Department of Agriculture since 1989.

She stated that if LB 807 is amended to keep the program within the Department of Agriculture, the Department would support the bill. The Department is in favor of repealing the Riparian Task Force and supports the new language allowing the Water Resources Cash Fund to be used for riparian management purposes.

In closing, Senator Ibach addressed the earlier question regarding funding. Previously, the program was funded 50/50 with NET and General Funds; it is now funded 100 percent through NET. With this measure the program can return to the $5 million request level, allowing more remediation to occur in a shorter amount of time. As noted in testimony, this is a long-standing issue, and these changes will help reduce future litigation while ensuring Nebraska can deliver the required amounts of water.

With the amendment, the fiscal note is eliminated. Senator Ibach emphasized that the intent is not to move noxious weeds out of the Department of Agriculture. Noxious weeds will remain with the Department of Agriculture, while invasive species responsibilities will move to DWEE.

Letters of support were submitted by five proponents.

Select File

LB 759 - Change provisions relating to water wells, the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment, the Perkins County Canal Project Act, and the Nebraska Litter Reduction and Recycling Fund. Brandt. Natural Resources Committee Priority.

The Legislature advanced LB 759 to Final Reading on March 5, 2026, on a voice vote after adoption of FA 1025 on a 29-0 vote. FA 1025 made technical corrections to the bill.

Previously, the Legislature advanced LB 759 to Select File on Feb. 19, 2026, on a 26-5 vote after adopting the committee amendment (AM 1939) on a 26-1 vote, and AM 2182 on a 26-2 vote.

The Natural Resources Committee advanced LB 759 to General File on Feb. 11, 2026, on a 7-1 vote after adopting a committee amendment (AM 1939). The measure was declared as the committee's 2026 priority measure. AM 1939 incorporates provisions of three other bills, including LB 760, LB 761, and LB 1076. AM 2182 made technical corrections to the bill.

- ***LB 759 - Change provisions relating to water wells, the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment, the Perkins County Canal Project Act, and the Nebraska Litter Reduction and Recycling Fund.***

  First, the bill corrects several department title references from legacy DNR and DEE to the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment.

  The bill strikes the requirement that the council annually determine percentage amounts for allocation and distribution of funds from the Nebraska Litter Reduction and Recycling fund.

The bill adds the Chief Water Officer, or his or her designated representative, as a new seat to the Water Well Standards and Contractors' Licensing Board.

Additionally, the bill clarifies Department authorities under the Perkins County Project Act. These include the authority to enter upon any property to make surveys, examinations, investigations, studies, geological soil borings, and tests and to acquire other necessary and relevant data when in contemplation of:

(i) establishing the location of the Perkins County Canal Project,
(ii) acquiring land, property, permits, and construction materials for the Perkins County Canal Project, or
(iii) performing other operations or activities incident to the Perkins County Canal Project and pursuant to the Perkins County Canal Project Act.

Entry upon any property shall not be considered to be a legal trespass and no damages shall be recoverable on that account alone. In the case of any actual or demonstrable damage to the property, the department shall pay the owner of the property the amount of the damages.

- ***LB 760 - Change and eliminate provisions of the Environmental Safety Act. Brandt.***

The bill shifts rulemaking authority, inspections, permit requests, violations, enforcement measures, and penalties for swimming pools, mobile home parks, and recreation camps under the Environmental Safety Act from DWEE to the local government entity with jurisdiction.

Local government is defined as a county, city, or village or a local public health department. In setting health and safety standards governing these areas, the local government must meet or exceed the minimum sanitary and safety requirements adopted and made available to it by DWEE. Local governments are authorized to set, collect, and enforce fees to cover their costs.

- ***LB 761 - Create a fund and change provisions relating to water well fees, use of funds, and powers and duties of the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment. Brandt.***

The bill as amended with the committee amendment proposes increasing the registration fee for all water wells from $40 to $200. It specifies that collected fees shall be used to cover both direct and indirect costs associated with administering the well registration program.

The bill as amended also proposes changes to National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit fees. For large, concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), the bill would require the Department to ensure that permit fees recover at least 30 percent of program costs from the previous fiscal year, an increase from the current 20 percent requirement. The original bill, prior to the committee amendment, required 40 percent of program costs to be recovered.

In addition, the bill creates the Water Quality and Quantity Cash Fund. The fund would be used to pay reasonable direct and indirect costs to develop and administer programs regulating discharges under Section 402 of the federal Clean Water Act.

Beginning July 1, 2027, each application for an NPDES permit or a pretreatment permit must be accompanied by an application fee set by the Department. The fee may not exceed the amount necessary to reimburse the Department for the cost of administering the application. Applications for animal feeding operations or construction and operating permits for livestock waste control facilities shall be exempt from this application fee.

The bill also proposes that beginning July 1, 2027, the Department shall charge an annual fee to each holder of an NPDES or pretreatment permit. The annual fee may not exceed the actual cost of services provided. Permits for animal feeding operations or construction and operating permits for livestock waste control facilities shall be exempt from the annual fee.

- ***LB 1076 - Change penalty provisions relating to the Nebraska Geologic Storage of Carbon Dioxide Act. Brandt.***

  The bill codifies the Oil and Gas Conservation Commission's authority to take administrative action and impose penalty sanctions when violations occur or are threatened.

The Natural Resources Committee held the hearing for LB 759 on Wednesday, January 21, 2026.

Sen. Brandt opened the hearing noting the bill addresses technical cleanups following the agency merger. Additionally, the bill authorizes access for investigating and examining locations for purposes of Perkins County Canal project. Lastly, the bill updates procedures for allocating and distributing funds of Nebraska Litter Reduction and Recycling fund.

During questioning, Sen. Raybould requested the addition of a requirement for proper notification. Sen. Brandt noted there are other examples of where notification can create issues.

Proponents

Jesse Bradley, Director of DWEE, testified in support. Bradley noted this is a cleanup bill following the agency merger, with a majority of changes addressing technical corrections consistent with the intent of the merger. Additionally, the bill grants limited authority for actions necessary for narrow purposes of the Perkins County Canal project design. The authority is modeled directly off authorities utilized by the Department of Transportation. This measure will reduce costs for the state by preventing costly access agreements. The bill provides protections for landowners by authorizing reimbursements of costs for damages. Bradley also discussed the bill reinstates a member to the well licensing board that was inadvertently removed. The bill has no fiscal impact.

During questioning, Sen. Conrad asked why existing provisions for land surveying are not sufficient - Bradley responded that given the linear nature of the project and certain unique geotechnical and soil boring work that is required, they want to make sure the authority is clear. Currently, these efforts are done through access agreements and while many have worked just fine, there can be challenges regarding fees for access.

Sen. Conrad asked about the scope of support or opposition – Bradley said they have had broad support, and only a couple of challenges, and those were likely driven by opportunistic pursuit of fees for access.

Sen. Conrad and Raybould raised questions about the transfer of funds from the project proposed in the Governor's budget – Bradley reiterated that the Department continues to be committed to moving the project forward and progress continues moving the project forward on schedule. At a

subsequent hearing before the committee, Bradley reiterated that the proposed transfer is consistent with prior language of only transferring interest from the fund and is not an additional transfer.

No opponents and no neutral testimony were provided.

Letters for the record were submitted by two proponents and one opponent.

LB 823 - Change provisions relating to burning permits and the statewide open burning ban. Wordekemper.

The Legislature advanced LB 823 to Final Reading on March 6, 2026, on a voice vote.

Previously, the Legislature advanced LB 823 to Select File on Feb. 11, 2026, on a 30-0 vote.

The Natural Resources Committee reported the bill to General File on Feb. 3, 2026, on an 8-0 committee vote.

The bill adds two requirements for the issuance of burn permits for the local fire chief of a local fire department. These include:

1) Whether the land-management burning is to be a prescribed burning or a controlled burning.
2) The approximate number of acres to be burned.

The bill adds the following definitions for burning:

a. Controlled burning means a nonbroadcast burn primarily to clean up or remove debris or vegetation from a debris pile, ditch, or other condition where the spread of fire is limited to a small area;
b. Land-management burning consists of controlled burning and prescribed burning; and
c. Prescribed burning means a form of controlled burning that includes planning for the systematic application of fire to manage vegetation on land utilized for grazing, pasture, forests, or grassland, control weeds, pests, insects, and disease, prevent wildland fires, manage watersheds, benefit wildlife, care for windbreaks, and conduct scientific research.

The Natural Resources Committee held the hearing for LB 823 on Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026.

Senator Wordekemper opened the hearing noting the bill modernizes statute definitions. Changes appear modest, but with new definitions and new permit requirements it will have a profound impact. The interim study (LR 235) demonstrated that prescribed fire is not just a land management tool but is the best available tool for managing grasslands and preventing wildfires. Current statute provides only one definition that encompasses everything from burning a small pile or ditch, to large land management burn. Control burning would be small burn piles and ditches - prescribed burning is different and entails a systematic approach that requires planning, weather monitoring, and experience. This bill ensures that everyone across the state uses the same terminology, improves data collection, and will provide the state with a better understanding of the scale and use of burning.

The bill does not change the structure of maintaining local control for the burn permitting process. It does not add new fees and doesn't change when and how burns are permitted. Senator Wordekemper noted the bill is a product of extensive collaboration and he thanked several partners including the NRDs.

During questioning, Senator Wordekemper discussed that this measure may allow for future steps to assist with quantifying the scope of prescribed fire use across the state.

Proponents

Bill Hiatt, Central Platte NRD, testified in support noting their Fire Program began in 2004 due to landowner demand for help with burning their land. It assists landowners in planning, preparing, and implementing prescribed burns through different means: education and training, cost-share, advice, or contracting.

Fire is a natural and important process of rejuvenation, especially in grasslands. For too long, fire has been excluded from environments that need it to thrive. Prescribed burning brings that process back but under conditions that allow for targeted application. It is vital in our state's fight against woody encroachment and for healthy, resilient grasslands.

The changes made by this Bill may seem semantic but will have a big impact. In my 26 years of experience, the differences between controlled versus prescribed burning has consistently been a topic of misconceptions and confusion. Differentiating between the two in statute and on a plan will cut down on the time it takes to explain the process of prescribed fire and allow for clearer communication with fire departments and to the public.

While it is already standard practice for most, having acreage required in statute will also add an important detail that will allow local fire chiefs to get a fuller picture of the burn they are providing a permit for. On the data side, this small change will make for more efficient reporting, collection, and research. Overall, these small changes are a positive step to encouraging more reporting while also not changing any current burning practices and respecting the privacy of individuals.

Hiatt provided the committee with a thorough overview of the process a burn boss follows for developing a prescription for a prescribed fire. He highlighted the work the district does to support local landowners and local burn associations.

Brian Bruckner, Lower Elkhorn NRD, provided written testimony in support of the bill. The Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources Districts works to provide conservation assistance to landowners in northeast Nebraska and has used prescribed burns on some of our District owned and managed properties, to fight woody encroachment and non-native grass species with great success.

The changes proposed by this legislation will help to clarify issues that have, in the past, created misconceptions and confusion regarding the differences between controlled and prescribed burning. These changes will be helpful for local fire personnel who are responsible for reviewing and issuing burn permits. It also preserves the current system of local control as it pertains to the issuance of those permits, leaving that process in the hands of local fire departments.

An additional benefit of the enactment of this legislation would be the requirement to list the number of acres that would be impacted by a proposed burn. While this practice has already been a standard practice for some, making it a requirement will make it clear to a local fire chief on the number of acres of land that would be impacted, which could be a deciding variable on their decision whether to issue a permit. Requiring the number of acres will also be beneficial for future research and practice evaluation activities.

Ryan McIntosh, Nebraska State Firefighters Association, testified in support. He noted they executed a survey of fire chiefs on the processes being followed for the issuance of burn permits. They received over 200 responses, which demonstrated that permits are handled differently and the process for tracking varies across the state. Definitions provided by the bill will enable better data collection in the future. Fire chiefs maintain a log of permits issued, but those details are not collected or compiled. This would be the first step toward allowing that data to be aggregated and collected.

Ed Hubbs, Nebraska Audubon, testified in support. He noted fire is a natural part of grassland ecosystems. Prescribed fire provides environmental and fire protection benefits. Components of prescriptions for prescribed fire are well understood and recognized in state law.

Senator Wordekemper closed reiterating this effort is just trying to get consistent definitions in place.

In addition to Lower Elkhorn NRD, seven proponents submitted letters in support. There was no opposition or neutral testimony.

General File

LB 596 - Change requirements for legal publications and notices required by law. Sanders. Government Committee Priority.

The Legislature advanced LB 596 to Select File on March 5, 2026, on a 40-1 vote after adopting the committee amendment, AM 2282, on a 39-0 vote.

The Government Committee reported the bill to General File on March 3, 2026, following a 7-0-1 vote. The bill included a committee amendment (AM 2282) which makes substantive changes to the provisions of LB 596 and also adds provisions from five other bills: LB 896, LB 898, LB 919, LB 923, and LB 1145. LB 898 and LB 1145 were measures followed by NARD.

- ***LB 596 - Change requirements for legal publications and notices required by law. Sanders.***

  The bill defines "digital newspaper" and "E-edition," and further provides that E-editions of legal newspapers shall be considered legal newspapers under certain circumstances. These sections also provide for the use of digital newspapers for purposes of giving public notice under the open meetings act in localities where no print edition or e-edition of a legal newspaper are published.

  Digital Newspapers is defined as: (i)Employs staff in the county from which the digital newspaper is published online; (ii) Has at least three hundred paid subscribers if located in a city of the metropolitan class or city of the primary class; (iii) Has at least two hundred paid subscribers if located in a city of the first class, city of the second class, or village; (iv) Publishes exclusively online; (v) Has updated its news at least once each week for at least one year prior to the publication of a notice; and (vi) Reports on events and governmental activities of local interest;

E-Edition is defined as a digital facsimile of a newspaper's print edition that is accessible from such newspaper's website and is substantially the same in both format and content as the print edition of such newspaper.

- ***LB 896 - Change fees related to marriage licenses and records. Lonowski.***

  The bill changes fees relating to marriage licenses and marriage records.

- ***LB 898 - Change which political subdivisions may use virtual conferencing for meetings under the Open Meetings Act and change related requirements. Lonowski.***

  The original bill proposed to expand the authority to conduct meetings under the Open Meetings Act by means of virtual conferencing to all public bodies. Current law only provides the authority to specific public bodies. NRDs are currently allowed to use virtual conferencing.

  The amended version included in LB 596 expands the list to include: the Semiquincentennial Commission; the board of trustees of the Nebraska State Historical Society; or any local foster care review board.

- ***LB 919 - Allow for the use of durable accessible mediums for public records. Sanders.***

  The bill harmonizes the use of the term "accessible durable medium."

- ***LB 923 - Change and eliminate provisions relating to county records. Clouse.***

  The bill changes provisions relating to county record keeping.

- ***LB 1145 - Change provisions relating to notice requirements for a meeting of a public body under the Open Meetings Act. Lonowski.***

  Original provisions of LB 1145 were amended and the bill now requires governing bodies of all political subdivisions to provide notice at least four times a year of the regular meeting schedule, location, and the method designated by the public body to provide reasonable advance notice of each meeting, such notice shall be in a legal newspaper of general circulation within the jurisdiction.

  Exempts a city of the second class or village, and a rural or suburban fire protection district, or any public body that only meets intermittently and is not required to hold regular meetings. The bill outlines that failure to comply with such notice requirement shall not void any action of a public body. Strikes existing notice and publication requirements.

The Government Committee held the hearing on LB 596 on March 13, 2025.

Opening on the bill, Sen. Sanders noted this is an update to the outdated statute since most Nebraskans no longer access their news via a paper newspaper. Rather than being limited to print,

legal notices can be published online. It does not take away the option to print in the newspaper but opens up more avenues for publishing with a goal of reaching a broader, more diverse audience

Proponents

Colby Coash testified in support on behalf of the Nebraska Association of School Boards. He noted that updating and modernizing the provisions that school and political subdivisions are subject to is important to keep the public informed. Many newspapers are no longer there, and some areas are having to access newspapers that are several counties away. This concept can assist those small districts that are in those media deserts. We need to find a path forward to discuss how these notices can be updated to meet the current demand for how people are consuming news. He noted that schools want the public to be engaged in the budget process and discussion, so there needs to be alternative ways to ensure the public is aware of these meetings.

Beth Bazyn Ferrell, Nebraska Association of Conty Officials, testified in support. She noted county officials get nervous when they a newspaper closes or even if there is rumor that one is closing. Counties have many legal notices that must be published, so if the local paper is no longer available it is difficult for the county to decide where to go with that information.

Opponents

Dennis DeRossett, Nebraska Press Association, testified in opposition. He noted they were opposed to the bill as it is currently worded, but wanted to the get the bill to a place where all can agree. He noted that 1/3 of Nebraska newspapers have seen increases in readership and that newspapers still reach 50% of Nebraskans. He suggested that interested parties take the next 6-8 months to come up with an agreed upon bill for the next session.

He noted that out of 138 Nebraska newspapers, only 22 newspapers don't have a website and those are some of the most rural areas. DeRossett noted that he understands we are moving toward a digital era, but it should be clarified what digital platforms qualify to publish legal notices. He noted that legal notices are not an advertisement, they are legal affidavits that are notarized by newspapers.

In closing, Sen. Sanders noted this wasn't the first time this bill has been brought, and it was previously suggested to have an amendment, but one was never brought. She said waiting another 6-8 months just delays this process until next year.

Letters submitted for the record included 10 proponents and two opponents.

Committee Action

LR 298CA - Constitutional amendment to create requirements for the use of the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund (NETF). Brandt.

The Natural Resources Committee reported the measure to General File on March 5, 2026, on a 8-0 vote with Committee Amendment (AM 2400). The Committee Amendment makes two changes as follows:

1) Strikes language in the original proposal that grants could only be awarded to tax-exempt entities, political subdivisions, or state agencies.

2) Changes the fifty-percent matching funds requirement for state agency projects. The original language was deleted that the 50% match for state agencies had to be provided by a political subdivision, the federal government, or private donors. The new language proposed requires that the funds must come from sources other than the NETF, Nebraska state income or sales tax, or funds sourced or derived from such taxes.

The proposed constitutional amendment would add language to clarify the funds provided to the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund are to be used exclusively by the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

The Natural Resources Committee held the hearing for LR 298CA on Thursday, Feb. 19, 2026.

Sen. Brandt introduced LR 298CA stating it is grounded in a simple principle: the people of Nebraska were told that lottery dollars would support our natural resources. Of those proceeds, 44.5 percent was allocated to the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET). Over time, however, transfers have also been made out of the Trust, raising concerns about long-term stability and voter intent.

We recognize there are technical issues with the current draft of the bill, and we are actively working on an amendment to address those concerns. The goal is to provide long-term certainty and protection for Trust funds. Ensuring that these dollars remain dedicated to their intended purpose is a priority for Senator Brandt.

"Why is reaffirmation necessary if the law is already in place?" The answer is clarity and certainty. This proposal seeks clear constitutional affirmation that these funds cannot be swept or redirected in a way that undermines the intent of Nebraska voters.
LR 298CA is about honoring that commitment and protecting funding for our state's natural resources.

Proponents

Brian Bruckner, General Manager for the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District, submitted written testimony in support on behalf of the LENRD.

The LENRD serves 15 counties in northeast Nebraska and has leveraged more than $2.6 million from the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) since 1994. Without these funds, we would have been forced to increase our property tax requirement to support innovative projects benefiting our residents.

Proposed transfers from the NET in Governor Pillen's mid-biennium budget have drawn significant public concern. Nebraskans are engaging at hearings, contacting senators, and expressing worry about protecting the Trust and maintaining confidence in government decision-making. When voters supported dedicating lottery proceeds to the NET, they agreed that these funds should be allocated to qualified applicants and eligible projects—not redirected for general operating expenses of state agencies or ceded to executive or legislative control. Yet these types of transfers have occurred before and are once again being proposed in the current budget debate.

Since 1994, the LENRD has leveraged $2,628,758 in NET funding, matched by nearly $5 million in local funds. These dollars have supported major projects, including:

• Aerial Electromagnetic Mapping to define aquifer boundaries and improve groundwater quantity management.

• The Bazile Groundwater Management Area Project, the first groundwater management plan authorized to use EPA Section 319 funds to address nitrate contamination.

• The Skyview Lake Wetlands Project in Norfolk, constructed to provide flood protection and now a valued community recreation area for fishing, kayaking, and trail use.

Current NET-funded projects include the LENRD Flow Meter Telemetry Project, which incentivizes real-time groundwater-use monitoring and supports compliance with groundwater allocation requirements, and the LENRD Groundwater for Public Health Project, which is collecting water quality samples from nearly 600 locations to study connections between groundwater chemistry and human health.

Additionally, the LENRD was recently informed of an award of $545,490 for the Observing Water and Nutrient Mobility in the Vadose Zone Project, a three-year effort aimed at improving groundwater quality monitoring and identifying agricultural practices beneficial for protecting water resources. We are concerned that continued or future transfers from the NET may jeopardize funding availability throughout the project's duration.

These examples demonstrate that NET funding has allowed us to maximize locally raised dollars. Continued diversion of NET funds to state agency budgets would hinder our ability to fulfill our statutory responsibilities and force increased reliance on property taxes. Furthermore, NET grant contracts impose rigorous reporting requirements on recipients, yet it remains unclear whether state agencies benefiting from these transfers will be held to the same accountability standards.

On behalf of the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District, I encourage you to make this measure a committee priority and to provide your unwavering support for the adoption of the resolution by the Nebraska Unicameral.

David Potter, General Manager Lower Platte South NRD, submitted written testimony in support on behalf of the LPSNRD.

I respectfully urge you to support LR298CA, introduced by Senator Brandt, to strengthen constitutional protections for the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

Since 1994, the Trust has operated as a competitive, statewide program, providing benefits to every legislative district and every Natural Resources District (NRD). This structure promotes fairness, accountability, and responsible stewardship of public funds.

Through this competitive process, the Lower Platte South NRD has received more than $3.36 million, allowing us to implement critical conservation and water management projects without increasing property taxes. These funds have helped us meet local needs while protecting taxpayers. Lower Platte South NRD currently has an approved NET project that is critical to the flood reduction effort on Deadman's Run in Lincoln between 48th Street and Cornhusker Highway. The approved $687,000 of Trust funds are key to designing and constructing a wetlands complex and detention basin on UNL's East Campus necessary for the overall 30-million-dollar Deadman's Run Flood Reduction Project which will remove nearly 480 properties from the mapped floodplain and benefit public safety.

The Nebraska Environmental Trust was enshrined in the Nebraska Constitution by Nebraska voters. Diverting Trust dollars disregards voter intent, undermines confidence in constitutionally protected programs, and breaks down the trust of the voters of Nebraska.

We urge your support for LR298CA to ensure the Nebraska Environmental Trust remains stable and protected. Uncertainty weakens the Trust and limits the ability of NRDs, local governments, and nonprofit partners to carry out cost-effective conservation work across Nebraska.

The Nebraska Environmental Trust is working as intended. It should be protected—not raided. We encourage you to protect the Trust now and into the future.

NARD submitted written testimony in support of the measure. Nebraska's NRDs have used the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) funds extensively since its inception. These funds have helped protect natural resource projects across Nebraska.

The trust funding has also filled gaps when state budgets have been reduced. It is our preference that all water and soil conservation funds would be fully funded, as well as NET. Recent proposals put the NRDs in a precarious position of either choosing to leave excess funds in the NET and receiving no general fund dollars in the Water Resources Cash Fund, Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund and Water Sustainability Fund.

This uncertainty limits the ability for NRDs to implement cost share and other programs to protect and enhance natural resource projects. It is our understanding that the grants approved this past year are going to be fully funded and after the transfers proposed by Governor Pillen, there will be more than $20 million still available.

We hope that stabilizing the NETF with LR 298 CA will assist in securing funding for grant projects. We would also encourage support for funding other dedicated funds for the Water Resources Cash Fund, Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund and Water Sustainability Fund.

Anne DeVries testified in support of protecting the NET. She noted that NET has funded countless projects protecting Nebraska's natural resources. She volunteered for many years as an engineer reviewer and has seen the Trust's impact firsthand. She expressed concern about recent transfers from the Trust and urged stronger protections to ensure funds remain dedicated to their original purpose.

Tracy Bruckner, National Audubon Society, testified that LR 298CA would codify and protect the voter-approved grant process. NET was created to support community-led conservation, including vital Platte River projects that protect threatened and endangered species. She noted that her organization has leveraged $3.3 million in NET funding to secure $6.6 million in partner funding, with 72% of matching dollars coming from private donors. Continued transfers threaten those private investments. She emphasized that NET has historically enjoyed bipartisan support and argued that agency operations should be funded through the general budget rather than through Trust sweeps.

Katie Torpy, The Nature Conservancy, urged reaffirmation and protection of NET. She stated that the Trust is increasingly being treated as a budget-balancing mechanism. Over the past three years, $29 million has been transferred from the Trust without required matching funds. She noted that lottery revenue was voter-directed and should remain protected, including interest earnings currently directed to the General Fund.

John Bender, Friends of the Nebraska Environmental Trust, strongly supported LR 298CA. He reminded the committee that Nebraska voters approved lottery funding for NET in 1992 to support habitat protection, water quality improvements, and conservation projects statewide. NET grants

allow local organizations to implement projects beyond the scope of routine state operations. He warned that continued transfers undermine the Trust and erode voter intent. He emphasized that voters should retain a voice in how these funds are used.

Dan Kloock, Nebraska Ducks Unlimited, testified that many Ducks Unlimited wetland conservation projects depend on NET funding. When NET grants are secured, DU brings technical expertise and additional funding to enhance wetlands across Nebraska. He emphasized the importance of maintaining stable Trust funding.

Matthew Grundorad, Nebraska Wildlife Society, stated that LR 298CA is necessary in light of recent and proposed sweeps of NET funds in the Governor's budget. Trust dollars support community-driven projects with measurable environmental benefits. He emphasized that NET funds attract additional outside investment into Nebraska and should not be used to balance the state budget. The Trust is constitutionally directed and should remain protected.

Alex McKener, Robinette Farms, testified that NET has made significant environmental investments across nearly every county in Nebraska. He expressed concern about new contract language allowing grants to be canceled at any time, creating uncertainty for reimbursement-based grants. He noted that applicants must secure matching funds and compete statewide, and without funding certainty, projects become financially risky. He argued that even if all NET funds were redirected to property tax relief, the impact on individual tax bills would be minimal.

Russ Souchek, Nebraska Wildlife Federation, shared firsthand examples of NET's effectiveness as a conservation tool. He warned that repeated fund sweeps create a precedent that could ultimately gut the Trust, override voter intent, and destabilize long-term conservation efforts.

Carmen Miller, Ducks Unlimited – Great Plains Region, emphasized Nebraska's leadership in committing lottery funding to conservation and encouraged protecting that commitment.

Al Davis, Sierra Club, spoke in support of preserving NET funding as originally structured by voters.

Katie Lampke, Conservation Biologist, testified in support of protecting the Trust to ensure continued conservation and environmental benefits statewide.

Opponents

There was no opposition testimony.

Neutral

Shelly Kelly, a rancher from Broken Bow and Executive Director of the Sandhills Task Force, testified in a neutral capacity while expressing strong support for preserving the NET program. She stated that it is not appropriate to restrict who may apply for funding, noting that applications are carefully reviewed and monitored through an established process. She encouraged the removal of any restrictive list limiting eligible applicants.

Kelly highlighted the work supported through NET funding, including management of eastern red cedar encroachment, restoration of degraded streams and wetlands, protection of grasslands, and placement of approximately 13 interns annually through an internship and apprenticeship program. Her organization employs four full-time staff members, and approximately 30% of its budget is

derived from NET grants. She explained that the loss of NET funding would not only eliminate direct financial support but also jeopardize leveraged funding from other sources, which could ultimately force the organization to cease operations.

In closing, Sen. Brandt said it is worth noting that many of the online opponents ultimately expressed support for LR 298CA but raised questions about eligibility and who may apply for funds. We recognize the concern raised by the neutral testifier regarding applicant qualifications, and that is an issue he is actively working to clarify.

Brandt also reviewed several recipients of Nebraska Environmental Trust funding and highlighted the significant matching dollars those grants have leveraged. NET funding consistently brings additional private and partner investment into Nebraska, multiplying its impact across the state. The Nebraska Environmental Trust is widely regarded as a model program and is truly the envy of the Midwest. LR 298CA ensures we protect that legacy and honor the intent of Nebraska voters.

Written testimony was submitted by 110 proponents, 10 opponents, and two neutral.

Special Hearing on AM 2313 to LB 1096

LB 1096 - Adopt the Preventing Lethal Agricultural and National Threats Act and the Critical Infrastructure Protection Act, authorize the withholding of records relating to critical water infrastructure, and provide civil and criminal penalties. Bostar, at the request of the Governor.

The Judiciary Committee held a special hearing over the noon hour on March 5, to discuss AM 2313 offered by Senator Bostar. The amendment is a replacement to the original bill and is narrowed down in scope. For those of you that have or operate rural water systems, the latest amendment for LB 1096 may affect you. The original version was much broader.

The original version defined critical infrastructure to include gas and oil production, storage, or delivery systems; water supply, refinement, storage, or delivery systems; telecommunications networks; electrical power delivery systems; emergency services; transportation services; and personal data storage systems including cybersecurity.

The proposed definition of critical infrastructure in the amendment means a communication infrastructure system, cybersecurity system, electric grid, hazardous waste treatment system, or water treatment facility.

The amendment would require a company or other entity constructing, repairing, operating, or otherwise having significant access to critical infrastructure shall not enter into a contract or other agreement relating to critical infrastructure in this state with a foreign principal if the agreement would allow the foreign principal to directly or remotely access or control critical infrastructure in this state.

Foreign principal is defined as the government or any official of the government of a foreign adversary.

Under the proposal, a governmental entity shall not enter into a contract or other agreement relating to critical infrastructure in this state with a company that is a foreign principal if the agreement

would allow the foreign principal to directly or remotely access or control critical infrastructure in this state.

A governmental entity is defined as any agency, department, board, commission, or political subdivision of the state that owns, operates, manages, or provides oversight for critical infrastructure.

Notwithstanding the restrictions listed above, a company or other entity may enter into a contract or agreement relating to critical infrastructure with a foreign principal if all the following apply:

1. There is no other reasonable option for addressing the need relevant to state critical infrastructure; and
2. Not entering into such contract or agreement would pose a greater threat to the state than the threat associated with entering into the contract.

The amendment also requires that beginning November 1, 2026, in addition to other penalties and relief provided by law, the Attorney General shall assess a civil penalty of up to ten thousand dollars per day against any communications provider that fails to submit the annual certification required under the bill or is unable to certify that its network is free of covered communications equipment and services deemed to pose a threat to national security identified in federal laws and regulations.

At the hearing, Senator Bostar noted the proposed changes are like laws in Texas and Florida. He also noted several other states are considering adopting similar language.

Proponents of the amendment included Kenny Zoller, representing Governor Pillen, and the Omaha Chamber.

Opponents included several telephone and wireless phone companies. All objected to the mandatory $10,000 a day fine. They repeatedly pointed out that a clerical error in a report would be subject to the fine. They all urged for permissive fine system that would take into consideration minor violations that could be easily fixed.

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce presented neutral testimony and raised concern about the fines.

The committee did not report any action on the amendment.

3/6/2022		2025 1st Session Adopted Biennium Budget		Governor's LB 1071 & LB 1072 Proposed Changes		Appropraitons Committee AM 2165 & AM 2162 Proposed Changes	
Agency 84 - Department of Water, Energy, Enivronment		**FY 25-26**	**FY 26-27**	**FY 25-26**	**FY 26-27**	**FY 25-26**	**FY 26-27**
Program 513, 586, 587, 588 - NDEE Operations	General Fund	$ 5,593,323	$ 5,593,323	$ 5,250,060	$ 5,250,060	$ 5,250,060	$ 5,250,060
	Cash Fund	$ 42,816,431	$ 43,115,996	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Federal Fund est.	$ 45,798,301	$ 46,175,320	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Program Total	$ 94,208,055	$ 94,884,639	$ 93,864,792	$ 94,541,376	$ 93,864,792	$ 94,541,376
	Salary Limit	$ 18,821,791	$ 19,216,295	$ 18,561,743	$ 18,956,247	$ 18,561,743	$ 18,956,247
There is included in the amount shown for FY2026-27 $38,000,000 is subject to a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit and that has experienced documented increases in industrial wastewater load resulting in treatment capacity or compliance challenges due to a calcium caseinate food ingredient manufacturing facility.	Federal Funds for the purpose of awarding a grant to a city of the first class which operates a publicly owned wastewater treatment facility that						
Program 334 - Soil & Water Conservation (General Operations)	General Fund	$ 10,708,426	$ 10,758,426	$ 9,645,854	$ 10,170,854	$ 9,645,854	$ 10,170,854
	Cash Fund	$ 9,573,272	$ 9,614,357	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Federal Fund est.	$ 2,207,789	$ 2,273,709	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Program Total	$ 22,489,487	$ 22,646,492	$ 21,426,915	$ 22,058,920	$ 21,426,915	$ 22,058,920
	Salary Limit	$ 8,618,370	$ 8,639,688	$ 8,201,870	$ 8,223,188	$ 8,201,870	$ 8,223,188
Unexpended GF and CF appropriation balances existing on June 30, 2025, allocated to budget subprograms 19, 20, 21, and 24 of Program 334 are reappropriated. There is included in the appropriation to this program for both FY $7,450,000 Cash Funds plus any reappropriated amounts and $5,000 Federal Funds estimate, for state aid, which shall only be used for such purpose. There is included in the amount shown as state aid for FY2026-27, $353,000 Cash Funds for the removal of riparian vegetation as part of a vegetation management program, if such vegetation management program is being conducted for the primary objective of improving the conveyance of streamflow in natural streams.							
Water Resources Cash Fund	General Fund Transfer	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	NETF Transfer	$ 3,000,000	$ -	$ -	$ 8,000,000	$ -	$ 6,000,000
Surface Water Irrigation Infrastructure Fund	General Fund Transfer	$ -	$ -	$ (5,000,000)	$ -	$ (5,100,000)	$ -
Program 303 - Small Watersheds	Cash Fund	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Program Total	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
State Treasurer shall transfer the remaining balance from the Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund to the General Fund before June 30, 2026							
Program 304 - Nebraska Soil & Water Conservation Fund	General Fund	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Cash Fund	$ 2,050,000	$ 2,050,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Program Total	$ 2,050,000	$ 2,050,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	NET Fund Transfer	$ 2,000,000	$ 2,000,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Program 306 - Water Well Decommissioning	Cash Fund	$ 70,000	$ 70,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Program Total	$ 70,000	$ 70,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Program 309 - Natural Resources Water Quality Fund	Cash Fund	$ 1,187,500	$ 1,187,500	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Program Total	$ 1,187,500	$ 1,187,500	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Program 313 - Water Sustainability Fund	Cash Fund	$ -	$ -	$ 5,172,364	$ -	$ 5,172,364	$ -
	General FundTransfer	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	NET Fund Transfer	$ 8,000,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Inlcudes Cash Funds plus any reappropriated amounts.							
Program 314 - Critical Infrastructure Facilities	Cash Fund	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	General Fund Transfer	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Program 319 - Water Projects *	Cash Fund	$ 65,300,000	$ 62,800,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Federal Fund	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Program Total	$ 65,300,000	$ 62,800,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
There is included in the appropriation to this program for FY2025-26 $2,500,000 Cash Funds from the Jobs and Economic Development Initiative Fund.							
Perkins County Canal Project Fund	General Fund Transfer	$ -	$ -	$ (5,747,931)	$ -	$ -	$ (5,747,931)
Beginning July 1, 2025, any investment earnings from investment of money in the fund shall be credited to the General Fund. Language added Transfers may be made from the fund to the General Fund and the State Settlement Cash Fund at the direction of the Legislature.							
Program 523 - Wastewater Loan Fund*	Cash Fund	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Federal Fund est.	$ 9,089,000	$ 9,089,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Program Total	$ 9,089,000	$ 9,089,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
*Grants to small communities shall not be commingled with funds deposited in the Wastewater Treatment Facilities Construction Loan Fund							
Program 528 - Drinking Water Facilities Loan Fund	Cash Fund	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Federal Fund est.	$ 12,990,000	$ 12,990,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Program Total	$ 12,990,000	$ 12,990,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Program 106 - Energy Office Administration	Cash Fund	$ 1,096,962	$ 1,099,821	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Federal Fund est.	$ 13,639,412	$ 13,685,125	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Program Total	$ 14,736,374	$ 14,784,946	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Salary Limit	$ 1,502,581	$ 1,531,909	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

Agency 33 - Game & Parks Commission		**FY 25-26**	**FY 26-27**	**FY 25-26**	**FY 26-27**	**FY 25-26**	**FY 26-27**
Progam 162 - Environmental Trust	Cash Fund	$ 26,602,651	$ 26,622,563	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Program Total	$ 26,602,651	$ 26,622,563	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Salary Limit	$ 362,301	$ 373,707	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Includes $8,000,000 transfer in FY 25-26 to Water Sustainability Fund. Includes $2,000,000 transfer in FY 25-26 and 26-27 to Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund.							
Program 965 - Water Recreation Enhancement Fund	Cash Fund	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	General Fund Transfer	$ -	$ -	$ (50,700,000)	$ -	$ (6,130,000)	$ -
	NETF Transfer	$ -	$ -	$ 32,700,000	$ -	$ 5,133,860	$ -
The State Treasurer shall transfer $5,133,860 from the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund to the Water Recreation Enhancement Fund before June 30, 2026. The State Treasurer shall transfer $6,130,000 from							
Program 338 - Niobrara Council	General Fund	$ 52,500	$ 52,500	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Cash Fund	$ 1,000	$ 1,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Federal Fund est.	$ 125,000	$ 125,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Program Total	$ 178,500	$ 178,500	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
The State Treasurer shall transfer the remaining balance of the Niobrara Council Fund to the General Fund before June 30, 2026							
Program 550 - Planning & Trails Coordination *	General Fund	$ 559,668	$ 559,668	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Cash Fund	$ 2,394,449	$ 1,789,895	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Federal Fund est.	$ 111,172	$ 111,172	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Program Total	$ 3,065,289	$ 2,460,735	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Salary Limit	$ 1,231,050	$ 1,292,121	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	General Fund Transfer	$ (3,350,000)	$ -	$ (4,900,000)	$ -	$ (3,627,750)	$ -
The unexpended Cash Fund appropriation balance existing on June 30, 2025, is hereby reappropriated for $1,400,000 to fund the MOPAC trail.							

Agency 11 - Attorney General		**FY 25-26**	**FY 26-27**	**FY 25-26**	**FY 26-27**	**FY 25-26**	**FY 26-27**
Program 496 Interstate Water	General Fund	$ 300,000	$ 300,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	0
	Cash Fund	$ 200,000	$ 200,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 500,000
	Program Total	$ 500,000	$ 500,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

Bill, LR or CA	Description	Sponsor(s)	Priority	NARD POSITION	Committee	Hearing Date	Status	Amendments/Notes
LR 12CA	Constitutional amendment to impose a limit on ad valorem taxes for real property, provide a new method of valuing real property for tax purposes, provide certain exceptions, and eliminate conflicting constitutional provisions	Kauth	Andersen (2025)	Oppose	Revenue	2/28/2025		MO 126, 127, 128, AM 1101 - Pending
LR 16CA	Constitutional amendment to require the Legislature to reimburse political subdivisions	Urban Affairs Committee		Support	Government	2/27/2025		
LR 18CA	Constitutional amendment to require the Legislature to reimburse political subdivisions	Government Committee		Support	Government	2/27/2025	General File - Failed to advance (23-20)	AM 1727 - Withdrawn
LR 22CA	Constitutional amendment to provide the right to a clean and healthy natural environment and that the state and political subdivisions serve as trustee of the natural resources of Nebraska	Dungan		Oppose	Natural Resources	2/26/2025		
LR 27CA	Constitutional amendment to change legislative term limits to three consecutive terms	Hunt	Planning Committee (2025)	Support	Executive Board	2/27/2025		
LB 86e	Appropriate funds to the Department of Natural Resources	Dorn		Support	Appropriations	3/18/2025		
LB 145	Require the Director of Agriculture to administer a grant program relating to noxious weeds and restate intent regarding appropriations for vegetation management	Ibach		Support	Agriculture	1/28/2025		
LB 147	Change provisions relating to approval and regulation of adding fluoride to the water supply of certain political subdivisions	Hansen		Monitor	Health & Human Services	3/12/2025		
LB 163	Create the Office of Climate Action	Spivey		Monitor	Natural Resources	1/30/2025		
LB 242	Change the Property Tax Growth Limitation Act and the School District Property Tax Relief Act and change provisions relating to budget limitations, municipal occupation taxes, and property tax statements	Riepe		Monitor	Revenue	3/5/2025		Provisions Amended into LB 647 via AM 994 - divided into AM 1202 - Adopted & Passed.
LB 309	Adopt the Safe Battery Collection and Recycling Act	Hughes		Monitor	Natural Resources	2/12/2025		Provisions Amended into LB 36 via AM 635 - Adopted & Passed.
LB 384	Require a majority of the elected members of the governing bodies of participating political subdivisions to attend joint public hearings under the Property Tax Request Act	Storer		Monitor	Revenue	2/13/2025	Passed 49-0	Approved by Governor on February 9, 2026
LB 393	Eliminate obsolete transfers relating to the Cash Reserve Fund	Clements	Appropriations (2025)	Monitor	Appropriations	3/12/2025		
LB 403	Create the Office of Grants and provide duties	Spivey		Monitor	Government	2/13/2025		
LB 424	Limit increases in property tax bills	Andersen		Monitor - See Policy Statement 2025-1	Revenue	2/27/2025		
LB 525	Adopt the Agricultural Data Privacy Act	Jacobson, at the request of the Governor	Jacobson (2026)	Oppose - See Policy Statement 2025-3	Banking, Commerce and Insurance	2/17/2026	General File	AM 2076, 1710, 2221, 2284 - Filed
LB 546e	Change provisions relating to proclamations for disasters, emergencies, and civil defense emergencies made by the Governor	Rountree		Support	Government	3/12/2025		
LB 565e	Provide and change requirements relating to agency guidance documents	Quick		Monitor	Government	2/12/2025		AM 239 - Pending
LB 575e	Change provisions relating to the Property Tax Request Act and property tax levy limits	Hallstrom		Oppose - See Policy Statement 2025-1	Revenue	2/20/2025		
LB 579	Prohibit charging a fee for public records requests by members of the Legislature	Cavanaugh, M.		Monitor	Executive Board	2/18/2025		
LB 596	Change requirements for legal publications and notices required by law	Sanders	Government Committee (2026)	Support	Government	3/13/2025	Select File	AM 2282, 2428, FA 1027 - Adopted; AM 2405 - Withdrawn

LB 607	Adopt the Environmental Stewardship of Batteries Act, the Extended Producer Responsibility Data Collection Act, and the Minimum Recycled Content Act, and change provisions relating to the Integrated Solid Waste Management Act, the Environmental Protection Act, and the Waste Reduction and Recycling Incentive Fund	Bostar		Monitor	Natural Resources	2/27/2025		
LB 638e	Change provisions of the Nitrogen Reduction Incentive Act	Ibach		Support - w/ Compensation for Admin.	Agriculture	2/25/2025		
LB 673e	Change provisions relating to the Perkins County Canal Project and provide for a transfer from the Perkins County Canal Project Fund	Raybould		Oppose	Appropriations	3/18/2025		
LB 674e	Change provisions relating to the Perkins County Canal Project and provide for a transfer from the Perkins County Canal Project Fund	Raybould		Oppose	Appropriations	3/18/2025		
LB 683	Change provisions relating to duties of county assessors regarding notification of real property assessments and eliminate and change provisions of the Property Tax Request Act	Raybould		Monitor	Revenue	3/20/2025		
LB 695	Require the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District to construct a dam and provide for flood control measures	Dover		Oppose	Natural Resources	3/5/2025		MO 42 - Prevailed
LB 759	Change provisions relating to water wells, the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment, the Perkins County Canal Project Act, and the Nebraska Litter Reduction and Recycling Fund	Brandt	Natural Resources Committee (2026)	Support	Natural Resources	1/21/2026	Final Reading	AM 1939, 2182, FA 1025 - Adopted.
LB 761	Create a fund and change provisions relating to water well fees, use of funds, and powers and duties of the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment	Brandt		Support	Natural Resources	1/21/2026		Provisions amended into LB 759 via AM 1939
LB 770	Authorize fees for the collection of certain taxes of reclamation districts and county agricultural societies and change the distribution of the nameplate capacity tax	DeKay		Monitor	Revenue	1/21/2026		FA399 Filed - Kauth
LB 772	Eliminate provisions allowing certain transfers of funds	Cavanaugh, M.		Monitor	Appropriations	2/2/2026		FA401 Filed - Kauth
LB 794	Change powers and duties of the Department of Agriculture and eliminate provisions relating to the Healthy Soils Task Force and obsolete fund transfers	DeKay		Monitor	Agriculture	1/20/2026	Passed 48-0-1	Approved by Governor on February 24, 2026
LB 807	Change the administration of the Noxious Weed Control Act from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment and change provisions of the Noxious Weed Control Act and the Water Resources Cash Fund	Ibach		Support	Agriculture	1/27/2026	Passed 39-9-1	Approved by Governor on March 4, 2026
LB 814	Change provisions related to the valuation of agriculture land and horticulture land	Brandt		See Policy Statement 2025-1	Revenue	1/28/2026		FA443 Filed - Kauth
LB 823	Change provisions relating to burning permits and the statewide open burning ban	Wordekemper		Support	Natural Resources	1/22/2026	Final Reading	
LB 827	Provide for natural resources districts to create soil and water programs	DeKay		Support	Natural Resources	1/28/2026	General File	Provisions amended into LB 794 via AM 2019 - Passed & Approved by Governor on February 24, 2026
LB 898	Change which political subdivisions may use virtual conferencing for meetings under the Open Meetings Act and change related requirements	Lonowski		Support	Government	2/5/2026		Provisions Amended into LB 596 via AM 2282
LB 935	Provide for the award of costs and attorney's fees in certain actions involving political subdivisions	Bosn	Judiciary (2026)	Support	Judiciary	2/18/2026		FA594 Filed - Kauth
LB 947	Change fees under the Plant Protection and Plant Pest Act and the Pesticide Act, change, eliminate and and terminate certain funds	Agriculture Committee		Support	Agriculture	1/27/2026		Provisions Amended into LB 948 via AM 1976
LB 964	Adopt the Nebraska Public Property Disclosure Act	Bostar		Oppose	Government	2/5/2026		FA620 Filed - Kauth
LB 1028	Provide requirements for nutrient management plans and the application of livestock waste or litter	Jaurez		Oppose	Natural Resources	2/19/2026		FA684 Filed - Kauth
LB 1048	Change and eliminate reporting requirements for certain government agencies and preparation of the state executive budget and eliminate the Small Business Advisory Council, the Suggestion Award Board, and the state employee suggestion system	Arch, at the Request of Governor	Speaker (2026)	Support	Government	2/6/2026	General File	AM 1957, FA707 (Kauth) - Filed

LB 1049	**Require the Legislative Fiscal Analyst to prepare economic impact reports for regulatory actions**	**Ibach**		**Monitor**	**Executive Board**	**2/12/2026**		**FA708 Filed - Kauth**
LB 1071	**Provide, change, and eliminate provisions related to appropriations for the expenses of Nebraska State Government for the biennium ending June 30, 2027**	**Arch, at the Request of Governor**	**Speaker Major Proposal**	**See Policy Statement 2025-1**	**Appropriations**	**2/2/2026**	**General File**	**AM 2162, FA 945, 730 - Filed**
LB 1072	**Provide for and change transfers from the Cash Reserve Fund and provide, change, and eliminate provisions relating to fees, funds, fund transfers, agency powers and duties, and various statutory programs**	**Arch, at the Request of Governor**	**Speaker Major Proposal**	**See Policy Statement 2025-1**	**Appropriations**	**2/2/2026**	**General File**	**AM 2165, FA731 - Filed**
LB 1081	**Require state agencies and political subdivisions to purchase flags made in the United States**	**Meyer, G.**		**Support**	**Government**	**2/26/2026**		**FA740 Filed - Kauth**
LB 1096	**Adopt the Preventing Lethal Agricultural and National Threats Act and the Critical Infrastructure Protection Act, authorize the withholding of records relating to critical water infrastructure, and provide civil and criminal penalties**	**Bostar, at the request of the Governor**	**Bostar (2026)**	**Monitor**	**Judiciary**	**2/5/2026**		**AM 2313 - Filed**
LB 1130	**Adopt the Community Improvement District Act**	**Jacobson**		**Monitor**	**Urban Affairs**	**2/3/2026**		**Provisions Amended into LB 1114 via AM 2360**
LB 1136	**Require political subdivisions to identify authorized recipients of tort claims filed under the Political Subdivisions Tort Claims Act**	**Dungan**		**Oppose**	**Judiciary**	**2/19/2026**		**FA 796 Filed - Kauth**
LB 1145	**Change provisions relating to notice requirements for a meeting of a public body under the Open Meetings Act**	**Lonowski**		**Support**	**Government**	**2/5/2026**		**Provisions Amended into LB 596 via AM 2282**
LB 1179	**Change provisions relating to the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee of the Legislature, the Transportation Committee of the Legislature, and the Telecommunications and Technology Committee of the Legislature**	**DeBoer**	**Planning Committee (2026)**	**Oppose**	**Executive Board**	**2/12/2026**		**FA 839 Filed - Kauth**
LB 1183	**Change provisions relating to valuation of property**	**Lippincott**		**See Policy Statement 2025-1**	**Revenue**	**2/5/2026**		**FA 843 Filed - Kauth**
LB 1215	**Adopt the Political Subdivision Contracting Transparency Act**	**McKinney**		**Oppose**	**Government**	**2/26/2026**		**FA 875 Filed - Kauth**
LB 1219	**Limit the amount of property taxes that may be levied by a political subdivision**	**Brandt**	**Hansen (2026)**	**See Policy Statement 2025-1**	**Revenue**	**2/5/2026**	**General File**	**FA 879 , 999 - Filed**
LB 1256	**Redefine a term under the Emergency Management Act**	**Cavanaugh, J.**		**Support**	**Government**	**2/26/2026**		**FA 916 Filed - Kauth**
LR 292CA	**Constitutional amendment to provide a new method of valuing real property for property tax purposes, provide a limit on property tax increases, provide certain exceptions, provide requirements for declared emergencies, provide for emergency bond levies, and eliminate conflicting constitutional provisions**	**Andersen**	**Andersen (2026)**	**Oppose**	**Revenue**	**2/12/2026**		**FA343 Filed - Andersen**
LR 298CA	**Constitutional amendment to create requirements for the use of the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund**	**Brandt**	**Brandt (2026)**	**Support**	**Natural Resources**	**2/19/2026**	**General File**	**AM 2400 - Filed**
LR 317CA	**Constitutional amendment to limit the annual growth in the amount of property taxes levied by political subdivisions**	**Brandt**		**Oppose**	**Revenue**	**2/5/2026**		

NARD Policy Statement 2025-1 - We will work with the Legislature and Governor Pillen on reasonable property tax reform measures. We support reforms that reduce property tax reliance and provide adequate funding for both rural and urban areas. We oppose restrictions on local budgets that harm the ability of local governments: 1) To implement programs and projects to meet federal and state mandated programs; 2) Make local annual adjustments to meet the needs of the local citizens; 3) Adequately fund both rural and urban needs; and 4) Provide local funding for efficient natural resources programs that protect water quality, water quantity, soil, property and the economy.

NARD Policy Statement 2025-3 – We support with an amendment to exclude NRD data request for water quality and quantity management.