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Nebraska News Service

• **LB407:** This bill that would adjust the formula for state aid to public schools advanced with a vote of 42 to 0. The bill would slow the growth rate of state aid to schools to 6.3 percent for the upcoming school year, down from the current projected rate of 10.3 percent.

The following year the growth rate would slow further to 5.1 percent. State aid to schools currently makes up about one-third of the state budget, or just under \$1 billion a year. The aid formula calculates a school district's needs and subtracts its resources—revenue from property taxes and other sources—to determine how much state funds the district should receive.

Four percent of the state's school districts educate about 50 percent of the state's students and receive 60 percent of the aid, according to Sen. Kate Sullivan of Cedar Rapids, the bill's sponsor. Sullivan said one of her colleagues told her, "When you think you're losing, perhaps you should redefine what winning is."

• **LB306:** Nebraska lawmakers amended and advanced a bill that would extend an increase in Nebraska judges' retirement contribution rates. Sen. Steve Lathrop of Omaha offered an amendment, adopted 29-4, which would increase the salary of Nebraska Supreme Court justices.

Sen. Russ Karpisek of Wilbur was against the bill because he said he believed judges violated the Nebraska constitution by lobbying for a pay raise with this bill. Sen. Dave Bloomfield of Hoskins was on same side as Karpisek, but for a different reason. He didn't want to give them more money than he had to, he said.

• **LB423:** Nebraska senators amended and advanced a bill that would establish a protocol for taking care of livestock with trichomoniasis, a sexually transmitted disease in cattle.

Under an amendment that was adopted 29-0, any person who owns a beef or dairy breeding bull infected with bovine trichomoniasis would be prohibited from selling or transporting the animal except for slaughter.

The owner would also have to report the diagnosis to the Department of Agriculture within five days after the diagnosis and would be liable for telling neighbors about the disease within 14 days.

• **LB104:** LB104 advanced through the Nebraska Legislature with a 30-0 vote April 24. The bill would give tax incentives to companies producing renewable energy for export including wind, solar, geothermal, hydroelectric, biomass and transmutation of elements.

Sen. Steve Lathrop of Omaha introduced the bill that he said would help boost Nebraska's economy. Sen. Beau McCoy of Omaha opposed the bill saying that it was not a priority because it was too expensive.

"When we ask Nebraska to wait on tax relief, I question whether now is the time to vote on LB104," he said. LB104 is an amendment to the Nebraska Advantage Act.

• **LB583:** Sen. Ken Haar of Malcolm proposed this bill to require a long-range climate change report from the Climate Assessment Response Committee, which advanced with a 35-0 vote Tuesday.

Opponents worried that the bill focused too much on global warming. Senators amended it to represent the extreme hot and cold weather changes Nebraska experiences by requiring the committee to report on "cyclical" climate changes.

• **LB522:** This bill, sponsored by Sen. Mark Christensen of Imperial, would reimburse farmers

in irrigation districts for the surface water to which the state denies them access. It advanced with a 27-0 vote with amendments, but senators plan to revise it before it moves to select file.

Christensen brought the bill to the floor after the residents of the Republican River Basin irrigation district experienced a significant loss in their surface water with the dry year.

The bill would use general funds to compensate these farmers for the lost water, and set a cap of \$10 million dollars to be paid any fiscal year.

- **LB561:** This bill that would require a reexamination of the role of youth rehabilitation treatment centers in the juvenile justice system advanced with a vote of 29 to 0.

The bill would also appropriate \$10 million annually to the County Juvenile Services Aid Program to promote community-based rehabilitation programs. Sen. Brad Ashford of Omaha said the bill would make it easier to monitor juveniles in the system and provide probation officers with greater access to community resources and data.