

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

KELLY: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the George W. Norris Legislative Chamber for the forty-second day of the One Hundred Ninth Legislature, First Session. Our chaplain for today is Kat-- Kat-- Kaitlin Reece, St. Andrews Episcopal Church, Omaha, in Senator Fredrickson's district. Please rise.

KAITLIN REECE: Let us pray. Good, gracious, and loving God, we give you thanks for this new day and for the opportunity for those gathered here to seek your wisdom, justice, and mercy. We ask you to guide and bless the senators and staff who work in this building. Give them wisdom to discern the right path forward for the people of this great state. Grant them courage as they work for justice and encouragement to remain faithful to your call for mercy and love. All this we ask in your name. Amen.

KELLY: I recognize Senator DeKay for the pledge.

DeKAY: Please join me for the Pledge of Allegiance. I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

KELLY: Thank you. I call to order the forty-second day of the One Hundred Ninth Legislature, First Session. Senators, please record your presence. Roll call. Mr. Clerk, please record.

ASSISTANT CLERK: There's a quorum present, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Are there any corrections for the Journal?

ASSISTANT CLERK: I have no corrections for the Journal.

KELLY: Are there any messages, reports, or announcements?

ASSISTANT CLERK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. President. Communication from the governor. Dear Clerk Metzler, engrossed LB10, LB21, LB42, LB59, LB98, LB118, LB139, LB160, LB180, LB187, LB196, LB197, LB231, LB240, LB250, LB251, LB296, LB296A, LB335, LB357, LB362, LB609, and LB609 [SIC-- LB609A] were received by my office on March 6, 2025 and signed on March 11, 2025. These bills were delivered to the Secretary of State on March 11, 2025. Sincerely, Jim Pillen, Governor. Second communication from the governor. Dear Clerk Metzler, engrossed LB229 was received by-- in my office on March 10, 2025 and signed on March 11, 2025. These bills were delivered to the Secretary of State on March 11, 2025. Sincerely, Jim Pillen, Governor. Mr. President, Senator McKinney would designate-- the Urban Affairs Committee would designate LB287 as a committee

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Floor Debate March 12, 2025

priority bill. Senator Jacobson-- or-- excuse me-- Senor-- the Banking Committee would designate LB198 as one of the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee bills. LR67, introduced by Senator McKinney. That will be laid over. Legislative-- LR68, introduced by Senator McKinney. That will also be laid over. That's, that's all that I have, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. While the Legislature is in session and capable of transacting business, I propose to sign and do hereby sign LR61, LR62, and LR63. Senator Meyer would like to recognize the physician of the day: Dr. Angela McLaughlin of Wayne, Nebraska. Please stand and be recognized by the Nebraska Legislature. Mr. Clerk, please proceed to the first item on the agenda.

ASSISTANT CLERK: LB527A, introduced by Senator Jacobson. A bill for an act relating to appropriations: to appropriate funds to aid in carrying out the provisions of LB527, One Hundred Ninth Legislature, First Session, 2025; and to declare an emergency. Bill was read for the-- oh. Just an A bill.

KELLY: Senator Jacobson, you're recognized to open.

JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. President. LB527A, of course, is the A bill for LB527. As a refresh, LB527 is referred to as the Medicaid Access and Quality Act. Many of you recall that, last year, we passed LB1087. LB1087 was set up to where it would be a tax, if you will, on all of the hospital providers in the state. They would pay into it, pay essentially a tax to the state to go into this fund. And then if approved by the federal government for the program, which it's still-- we're still working on final approval from, from CMA, our, our, our-- excuse-- from the-- Medicaid. Once that's approved, we would end up receiving about \$2.19 for every dollar that goes in in the form of a tax. That would produce over a billion dollars in new Medicaid funding to the state of Nebraska. That would be used to pay for Medicaid treatments by hospital providers across the state. This was a huge deal last year. We passed the bill almost unanimously in the, in the Legislature. And now we're waiting for final CMS approval. This year, I brought LB527. LB527 is designed to assist doctors, nurses, nursing homes, others that are-- that, that are not at the hospital level because LB1087. Those dollars were simply-- all went to hospitals, and hospitals paid into the fund. Under this arrangement, the CMOs would actually pay a 6% premium into this fund at the state level, and they would pay into that fund as a premium tax on any premium written for this particular-- for insurance. Those, those dollars would then be matched by the federal government, bring dollars back to the state,

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Floor Debate March 12, 2025

and, and provide additional Medicaid funding. This-- the-- these dollars would come in and also provide additional funding to the state of Nebraska and our Medicaid within DHHS. It's a complicated formula to follow, but I would tell you that the net effect of this is-- once this is approved, the revenues coming in would come in from taxes collected by the CMOs. And then there would be federal funds coming in. And some of those dollars would then go back out to fund doctors and, and providers that are utilizing this program. And, and then the, the state would end up with about \$117 million on-- in the first full year as additional dollars going into their Medicaid account. There is no taxpayer-- state taxpayer dollars. This all would be coming from the federal government, which some of you are asking the question, gee, is that going to flow? We don't know. There's a lot of discussion going on right now with Medicaid. I would say that when it comes to LB1087, about 2/3 of the states are in this program today. So if LB1087 doesn't get approved, which we fo-- which we passed here last year, there will be a lot of pressure, obviously, from all of those states to provide-- restore some kind of funding to that program. This bill, LB527, there are 18 other states that are utilizing this program today. I will tell you, many of them in the southeastern part of the United States, they use LB1087 funding to fully fund their state Medicaid expenses. So there would be a lot of pushback if the program were to go away. So again, we're moving LB527 forward. And LB520-- and I, I still believe we want to pass LB527, get our, get our-- get in line. And if there's going to be approvals, whatever they would approve, we want to make sure we're approved to get our share of that. LB527A, again, is the fu-- is the A bill. But the A bill-- keep in mind as you follow-- and it, and it's complicated to follow this-- and I know I had fun in committee explaining this as well. But like most fiscal notes, they don't always make sense. But I think the thing to understand is that state of Nebraska would end up with net new dollars coming into the Medicaid accounts. And there would be dollars that would be more than the cost of premiums collected that would go out to our various doctors and providers that are providing treatment to Medicaid patients. So with that, I'm going to pause, and I would accept any-- if anybody's got questions, I would certainly try to answer them for them. But I would encourage your green vote on LB527A. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Jacobson. Senator Hansen, you're recognized to speak.

HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. I was hoping Senator Jacobson would yield to a question, please.

KELLY: Senator Jacobson, would you yield to questions?

JACOBSON: Yes, I would.

HANSEN: Thank you. Colleagues, I'm going to continue to voice my concern about LB1087 that we had-- that I voiced last year, and it's pretty much about the same thing that I said last year about my concern about the funding of this program from the federal government, how quickly we can put programs into place, a large program such as this into place, with the total reliance that the federal government is going to follow through on its word, and-- which I usually have severe doubts about. So Senator Jacobson, I know you, you kind of touched on this already about your con-- not, not so much your concern, but, you know, OK, what's going to happen with the federal government? And then maybe is the, the funding for this program going to be there? I wouldn't say how confident, but-- I don't, I don't know if you can expound on that maybe a little bit more about if you have a concern about, will the federal government all of a sudden cut this? And then will the state of Nebraska or the hospitals be on the hook for any of this? Or does the program just end? Or have hospitals already put things into place that ultimately is going to cost them money down the road if this doesn't get funded?

JACOBSON: Well, I appreciate the question, and it's an excellent question. I would tell you, I don't-- I can't really handicap what the federal government's going to do. I-- it could very well be that they could eliminate the program altogether. They could come in and reduce what they're going to do inside the programs. I think one of the problems right now at the federal level is that they haven't even gotten all the cabinet picks fully appointed and in place, and I think that's part of what's leading to delays in getting LB1087 finalized. So that's, that's part of the issue. I do believe that there will be tremendous pushback, particularly on LB1087-- the bill that we passed last year-- if it were done away with. And so I do believe that ultimately we will get approved by CMS. And I do believe that it will be significant funding. When it comes to this bill, LB527, there are only 18 states-- but still, it's 18 states. And, and some of them I-- as I said, that's their total Medicaid reliance. I think that there will be a real push-- pushback if this were to be done away with. And so I think we're-- we-- our timeline may be pushed back, but I do believe we need to approve it at the state level, get in line for approval with CMS. As it relates to who gets hurt if we don't, we unwind it if we don't, if we don't-- if the program would be done away with. In other words, the hospitals are paying in a percentage of their gross receipts to be able to get the, the matching from LB1087. The-- and they're paying in arrears. So they are going to get their dollars-- federal dollars that this program's approved before it's-- they're

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Floor Debate March 12, 2025

going to have to come out of pocket with their dollars. And that was one of the things we had to work through on the fiscal note last year on LB1087. As it relates to this bill, it's the MCOs. They're paying a percentage of the premiums. So they would-- that-- those premiums would not be paid into, into this fund unless we got approved by the federal government through CMS to implement the program. So at the end of the day, the worst-case scenario is we end up where we are today with nothing. If everything moves forward and we approve the bill, we've got a chance to tap into some significant federal dollars. And when we're starting to look at, at the FMAP dollars that we've lost, this would go a long ways to helping re-- re-- replace some of the FMAP dollars we're losing. We would still be net behind, but, but we would, we would close some of that gap. So I think the governor really would like to see this bill. I think it's, it's a net positive if it could be approved. If it isn't approved, we're not, we're not any further-- we're not any worse off than we are today.

HANSEN: All right. Thank you, Senator Jacobson. I, I, I, I believe-- and I trust Senator Jacobson because he's conscious of the fact that-- how quickly a carrot can become a stick. And I think that's what we have to also, as a body, be conscious of whenever bills come out that deal with FMAP, that have to deal with federal funding, that have to deal with grants. And so I think especially this year more than any other year, not just with how the executive branch or the, or the federal government is approaching their budget, but also with the economy, I think any bill that comes on the floor right now that has to deal with the reliance on the federal government funding it and then the potential that relying on that funding can hurt us down the road, I think we just want to make sure we're a little conscious of. And I believe Senator Jacobson is. I believe our body we can be. And I, I'm assuming the hospitals are as well, maybe not expecting this to be there, and then putting expenses forward with the intention this is going to be here. So thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senators Hansen and Jacobson. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

M. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Senator Hansen, I have shared your concerns about federal funding and, and the security of federal funding. But on Monday of this week, DHHS came into the Appropriations Committee and had their Appropriations hearing, agency hearing. And I asked them these questions, and they expressed zero concern over loss of federal funds. They feel that our federal funds are completely secure and that we will not see cuts to Medicaid or any of our federal funding, which I found to be

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

interesting. Reassuring, I, I suppose. It's good to know that there's some certainty in what's happening, though we still have not had the hospital assessment money come through. And so until that comes through, much like Senator Hansen, I will be cautiously optimistic that that happens, but want to prepare for what happens if it's not approved. But to that end, I will be supporting LB57-- LB527A and LB527. But I did just want to share that with the body, that DHHS feels fairly secure in our federal funding and they don't really have any concerns. They say that they're in communication with the federal government on all of these various programs that are funded through federal resources. So I suppose my concerns are unwarranted. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. Seeing no one else in the queue. Senator Jacobson, you're recognized to close. And waive. Members, the question is the advancement of LB527A to E&R Initial. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Has everyone voted who wishes to vote? Record, Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 39 ayes, 0 nays to advance LB527A to E&R Initial, Mr. President.

KELLY: LB527A advances to E&R Initial. Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President, Judiciary Committee would report on the appointment of Candice Batton, Shawn Eatherton, and David Nelson to the Crime Victim's Reparations Committee.

KELLY: Senator Bosn, you're recognized to open.

BOSN: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. The Judiciary Committee held a confirmation hearing on Candice Batton on February 28, who-- she was appointed to the Crime Victim's Reparations Committee to serve on a ter-- to serve a term from October 29, 2024 to July 16, 2028. Ms. Batton is from Waverly and has over 25 years experience as the faculty of the University of Nebraska-Omaha, currently serving as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the Associate Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice. She has served on the Nebraska Crime Commission since 2010 and was a member of the Nebraska Crime Victim's Reparations Committee from 2010 to 2012. She did appear in person at the hearing, and the committee voted 7-0-1, being one member present and not voting, to advance her confirmation. Next, we had Shawn Eatherton. We ha-- the Judiciary Committee held a confirmation hearing on February 21, 2025 to consider the gubernatorial appointee, Shawn Eatherton-- who is also a reappointment to the Crime Victim's Reparations Committee-- to serve a term from July 17, 2024 to

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

July 16, 2028. Mr. Eatherton is from Kearney, currently serves as the Buffalo County attorney, and did appear in person at the hi-- hearing. The committee voted 7-0-1-- one member present, not voting-- to advance his confirmation. Last, we have David Nelson. The Judiciary Committee held a confirmation hearing on February 21, 2025 to consider the gubernatorial appointee, David Nelson, as a reappointment to the Crime Victim's Reparations Committee to serve a term from July 17, 2024 to July 16, 2028. Mr. Nelson is from Gretna. He works as a project manager and did appear in person at the hearing, and the committee again voted 7-0-1-- one member present, not voting-- to advance his confirmation. Colleagues, I would ask for your support in confirming the appointment and reappointment of Candice Batton, Shawn Eatherton, and David Nelson to the Crime Victim's Reparations Committee. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Bosn. Seeing no one else in the queue. You're recognized to close. And waive closing. Members, the question is the adoption of the Judiciary Committee report. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Re-- record, Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 36 ayes, 0 nays on the adoption of the Judiciary Committee confirmation report, Mr. President.

KELLY: The committee report is adopted. Mr. Clerk for items.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Thank you, Mr. President. General Affairs Committee designates LB9 as a committee priority bill and LB66-- LB677 as a General Affairs Committee priority bill. Senator Quick would-- has selected LB257 as his com-- as his priority bill. LB148A, introduced by Senator Hansen. Bill for an act relating to appropriations; to appropriate funds to aid in carrying out the provisions of LB148, One Hundred Ninth Legislature, First Session, 2025. LB22A, introduced by Senator Dungan. Bill for an act relating to appropriations; to carry-- to appropriate funds to, to aid in carrying out the provisions of LB22, One Hundred Ninth Legislature, First Session, 2025. And LB41A, introduced by Senator Riepe. Bill for an act relating to appropriations; appropriate funds to aid in carrying out the provisions of LB41, One Hundred Ninth Legislature, First Session, 2025. I have a notice of committee hearings from the Nebraska Retirement Systems Committee. And LR69, introduced by Senator Holdcroft. That will be laid over. That's all that I have, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Please proceed to the next item on the agenda.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President: General File, LB135. Bill for an act relating to elections; to amend Section 10-702, 13-5-- 13-519, 13-2507, 79-1029, 79-1098, 79-10,105, 79-10,117, and 79-10,118, Re-- Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and Sections 13-809, 32-405, 32-559, 32-1203, and 77-3444, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024; to provide, change, and eliminate provisions relating to elections for certain purposes; to harmonize provisions; to repeal the original sections; and to outright repeal Section 10-703.01, Revised Statutes of Nebraska. The bill was read for the first time on January 13. Bill was referred to the Government Committee, who reports the bill to General File with committee amendments.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Holdcroft, you're recognized to open.

HOLDCROFT: Good morning, Mr. President. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss LB135. This bill was voted out of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee on February 13. LB135 is a reintroduction of a similar bill I brought last year, LB878, which was advanced by the Education Committee to General File during the 2024 session but was not able to advance due to the limited time in a short session. I am hopeful that this body will see the merits of moving this bill forward. When I ran for Legislature, like many of you, I knocked on thousands of doors in my district. Overwhelmingly, the constituents I talked to repeatedly told me stories about property taxes were-- how property taxes were rising, and significantly. Part of my platform as I ran for the Legislature was a commitment to work hard to find solutions to help lower the property tax burden facing Nebraskans. Issues of bonding and levy authority impact property tax bills. School districts in Nebraska rely heavily on special mail-in elections. In 2023, two schools in my district-- Papillion-La Vista School District and Millard School District-- utilized the special election process. Millard's special election for a levy override passed with only a 34.5% voter turnout. A Papillion-La Vista special election for a new bond passed with just a 33 voter turnout-- percent voter turnout. 13 days after the 2024 general election, the Millard Public School Board voted unanimously to put a bond question to a vote of the people through a special mail-in election that occurred on February the 11th of 2025. I can't help but ask, why couldn't they have proposed this sooner so that it could have been put to a vote of the people in November of 2024? There was a 53% turnout in Sarpy County for the November 2022 general election, general election and 78% voter turnout for the November 2024 general election. I think it's important that there is as much voter input as possible when it comes to proposed ballot questions impacting our tax bills. That's why I brought this bill. LB135 proposes that

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

schools and education service units seeking voter approval for the issuance of bonds and exceeding levy limits only do so in conjunction with a statewide primary or general election in even years or in conjunction with a political subdivision, primary, or general election in odd years. The second part of this, the odd years, is addressed in the committee amendment. When it comes to electing those who govern us, we strive to engage voters and encourage them to make their voices heard. Given the escalation in property valuations and the taxes we pay on those parcels, I think it's equally important to engage as many voters as possible on issues such as bonding and levy overrides, because they too impact the property taxes we pay. There is no fiscal note for this bill. Thank you, Chairwoman Sanders and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee for advancing LB135 to General File. Colleagues, I would appreciate your green vote. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Holdcroft. Senator Clouse would like to recognize some guests in the north balcony: Kearney High and Kearney Catholic High, Youth Leadership Kearney members, all here from Kearney today. Thank you. Please stand and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. As the Clerk indicated, there is a committee amendment. Senator Sanders, you're recognized to open.

SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. President. The Government Committee held its hearing on LB135 on January 22. We heard from a number of testifiers. Many of the testifiers in our hearing expressed concerns about the green copy of the bill not providing sufficient opportunities to go to the voter with a bond question during odd number of years. We discussed this bill and possible amendments several times in executive session. AM99 is the result of this conversation. It would allow two opportunities for special bond election in no-- odd-number years: one in May and one in November. Those special elections would occur at times of the year when voters are accustomed to voting. A majority of our committee members that believe this would be sufficient to allow school districts to proceed with necessary projects financed by bonding. Please vote green on AM99 and on the underlining bill. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Sanders. Going to the queue. Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning, colleagues. I do rise today I think opposed to AM99 and currently opposed to LB135, but I'm open to continuing conversations and looking forward to hearing a little bit more of the debate about this bill. I'm not on the committee

that this went through, and so I was kind of playing catch-up over the last week or two as this bill showed up on the agenda. And I had a chance to read through the committee statement and also look through some of the, the parts of the bill. And I, I just wanted to point out today on the mic a few concerns that I had and, and a few, few issues that kind of popped up in my mind as I was analyzing whether or not LB135 was truly necessary. As I've said before when I've talked on the mic, I-- oftentimes when I see a bill come up that I'm not as familiar with, I first ask myself, what, what is the problem that this is seeking to fix? And as far as I can tell from listening to some of the conversation so far this morning and also talking to some of my other colleagues, it seems to me that LB135 is very well-intentioned. I do think that it seeks to try to address this concern that there's not enough people, I guess, paying attention in the, the broader electorate to these school bond issues. And I want to take a step back and say, I absolutely agree, you know, with what Senator Holdcroft said earlier, that when you talk to constituents, property taxes are always one of the first things you hear about. And I think all of us here in the Legislature absolutely are trying to do everything we can to reduce property taxes and to ensure that the taxpayer dollars are being spent on services that are adequate and provide positive benefits to citizens but that we're also not overspending, and we want to make sure we're using money in a way that is responsible. I believe, fundamentally and in having talked to my constituents, I believe that my district also believes schools are one of the most important things that we as a government do for our citizens. When I also knocked doors for, for a long time, talking to people after people, all of them said to me that one of the most important things to them in northeast Lincoln are high-quality schools and ensuring that we have not just high-quality educators and people working in those schools but that the facilities in those schools are not just adequate but that they actually are, are beyond satisfactory, that they provide for students a, a healthy, happy learning environment. And so what we're talking about here today is ensuring that we have adequate funding to not just build new parts of schools or, or additional classroom sizes but that we maintain the ones that already exist. And I think that's important to note, is when we're talking about these, these bond elections, we're not just talking about building new schools or building new parts of schools. We're talking about maintaining the schools that already exist. And for those of you who have schools in your district that are getting on the older side of things, you know that it can be incredibly expensive to update or to maintain some of the different things that schools have, whether it's an HVAC system, an elevator system, what have you. Those costs can be pretty extraordinary, and I think it's incumbent upon our schools and

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

our school districts to make sure that they are being responsible with taxpayer dollars when they invest in that maintenance. We want to make sure they're getting the best bang for their buck. And I think that that's one of the things that jumped out at me first about LB135. I think it seeks to achieve a good goal, which is to save taxpayer dollars and to ensure that people are involved in these elections, but I don't think it actually achieves that goal. I believe that schools should be able to hold these special elections when they see fit-- not because they're trying to just do it whenever they want, willy-nilly, but because being able to have flexibility in these elections provides the taxpayers cost savings by ensuring that these elections happen at times where the schools can work it into their budget in an appropriate manner. And once the election has actually happened, if they negotiate, when these elections are happening at-- to the right time, as schools do, it allows them to reduce costs in contracting and bidding and the actual construction process. I know from looking at some of the data-- LPS, for example-- my school district-- conservatively estimated that in 2020 there was \$2 million in cost savings by having a special election on a bond issue. I see my time's about to run out, so I'm probably going to punch in here again. I do think this is a really important conversation, colleagues, so I do encourage you to listen and get involved in, in the debate here. And I want to thank Senator Holdcroft for bringing this bill. But I do respectfully stand in opposition to LB135. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Dungan. Senator DeBoer, you're recognized to speak.

DeBOER: Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, Nebraska. Colleagues, I interrupt your regularly scheduled debate to make a little announcement that I was going to ask the Speaker if I could make, but he-- I couldn't find him in time, so I just got in the queue. You have a beautiful aqua report on your desk that the pages have hand out-- handed out. This is the Planning Committee report for 2024. Yes, I should have had it out a month ago, but life got in the way. So I wanted to draw your attention to it. This last year, the Planning Committee looked at all things money, in that we looked at distribution of spending across the state geographically. We looked at distribution of appropriations within the budget to look at a period between 2003 and 2023 to see things-- see how things have changed over time. Last night, I was at an event with former Speaker of the House Gingrich, and he talked about the fact that a legislative body needs to have some group that thinks about what the future is going to be and what the future should look like and then tries to plan how to get there. He says it should maybe be a committee. And I thought, we have a committee

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

for that. It's the Planning Committee. So this is the report from last interim your Planning Committee put together to show and share with you our findings and, and the research that we did over the interim. And I think you'll find there's some very interesting factoids in there. The first page and a half is the summary that I put together. And then after that, you have all kinds of pictures. So don't be overwhelmed that it is a few pages long. There are lots of nice graphs and pictures to look at to illustrate the point. But I hope you will enjoy the Planning Committee report. And I can send a digital copy out to everyone as well so that you have it if you want to use it digitally for some reason or share it with someone else. And please ask me or any of the other committee members if you have any questions. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator DeBoer. Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Well, colleagues, I am-- I'm on the committee that voted this bill out and I was present, not voting on the bill when we kicked it out. And I, I don't remember. I might have voted to adopt the amendment. And one of the reasons the-- I mean, the amendment is generally, I think, better than the bill, but I didn't vote against it because I do understand where Senator Holdcroft is coming from about this bill. But I didn't vote for it because I do believe in local control and that our school districts can make their decisions. But I appreciate what he was saying about the low voter turnout. I actually have a bill to move the Omaha municipal elections-- which, for those of you who don't know, are happening right now. The ballots, I think, go out very soon. The primary election is April 1. The general election is in May. And, you know, the city elections have a very low turnout. So I brought a bill to move the city elections to the on-year elections to make sure that we have more participation, but it also saves money. The Omaha city elections in 2021 cost something like \$500,000 to the city. So could save the city money, save property taxpayers' money, not only in the results of elections but in holding the elections themselves. So that's why I brought that bill. But I, I understand what Senator Holdcroft is attempting to accomplish here. One of my problems with the bill is that it puts this artificial constraint and says, we do want to have some constraint on when these bond elections can be. And the amendment says that in the off-years-- so you can have a bond election on a, a primary-- regular primary election, and then you can have it on a regular general election in even years. So in 2026, 2028, there's two opportunities to have a bond election. The amendment then says you can have them on a similar time in 2027 and 2029 and, going forward, be able to have them in May and in November. And I understand what Senator Holdcroft's attempting to accomplish here

is to put some sort of constraints on it. I think there are other ways to accomplish that. I think perhaps putting-- extending the, you know, call-out or whatever you call it, freeze-out period, and say you can't have a, a special bond election like that within six months of an election. Might accomplish the same thing but still give flexibility to local school districts. Because for some districts, smaller ones in particular, I think, they might need the flexibility or might be in their best interest to have a bond election in June rather than May. And I don't think that that necessarily undermines Senator Holdcroft's intention. It might be better for them to have in June of 2027 as opposed to May of 2027. And so I think maybe some approach that's more flexible like that might accomplish the goal. But I do share his frustration with sort of these snap elections that allow people to-- I'm not-- I don't think it's necessarily gaming the system-- at least in school bonds-- but I had a frustration and thought about bringing a bill about good life districts. The city of Grand Island had a good life election in August for their good life district that passed as a special standalone election. And the city of Gretna was attempting to have their good life election in August but couldn't get their act together. And so rather than hold it in the general election in November, they just waited and had it in January. That was a purposeful evasion of the general election. And that was an intention, I think, to, to perpetrate or to achieve the goal that Senator Holdcroft is attempting to change here. So this bill doesn't address those specific things, but I-- I did-- when, when that happened in August-- that was on my list of 20 bills to bring this year. But then I realized by the time that I would have brought it, it wouldn't have effected any of those elections. But I think that this is-- ca-- thi-- as it's currently written, casts too wide of a, a swath and is too much of a constraint on school districts for when they hold these elections. I do think that having elections that more people participate in is a good thing. Making elections something we get the broad collection of voices participating and get the real intention-- if we're going to raise people's property taxes, the more people who participate and say they agree with that, the better. I think there was a bond election in Bennington that just concluded last night. And it looked like it got to 60% of the people voted in favor of the \$112 million bond. I don't know what the turnout was. I'll, I'll take a look at that, but-- so I think that there's a good intention here. I think that there's different ways to achieve this. So I'm still a-- at least a present, not voting, potentially a no at this point in time. But I'm interested in the conversation. Thank you, Mr. President.

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Floor Debate March 12, 2025

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. Senator Dorn, you're recognized to speak.

DORN: Thank, thank you, Mr. Lieutenant Governor. I-- a little-- thank you for the conversation today. In a minute, I'll-- I have some questions that I talked to Senator Holdcroft about it. I wanted to talk to him. But just-- Senator Cavanaugh there just mentioned that there's primary elections here, I think, on April 1 and the general elections is in May for this year. That's-- however, though, is only for certain counties, that I think is Lancaster, Douglas-- I think you have to be so big. And one of the questions I wanted to ask Senator Holdcroft-- generally, this concept of every six months I understand, but what happens in-- and will Senator Holdcroft yield to a question? Yup.

KELLY: Senator Holdcroft, will you yield?

HOLDCROFT: Yes.

DORN: Thank you, thank you much. What, what happens to-- for instance, there was just a bond issue in my school district. Vote by mail just got done here, I think, yesterday or today. But what happens as I read this and read the amendment-- I understand when we have the, I call it, the presidential elections or statewide elections. You have the primary and you have the general election. But in the odd-- basically the odd-numbered years when some of these-- it says in the language there for a political subdivision. What happens when that school district or that town or county doesn't have, in the odd-numbered years coming up, they don't have an election? Do they then still get to hold a special one? Or what-- can-- go through some of that process.

HOLDCROFT: Yeah, sure. I mean-- yes, that's probably going to happen quite often. I mean, the, the-- in the odd years, it is not usual for, you know, small political entities-- whether it's the county, whether it's the city-- to have-- to hold election. May-- it may, may work out great, but maybe not. In that case, the-- and, and, and the school wants to have a bond election or, or an override election, then they would approach the-- a county election commissioner and ask him or her to go ahead and schedule for that date. There are specific days. And I think it says second Tuesday after the first Monday or some language like that in May and in November. So the idea is we will set specific days in the odd years when an election will be held. So it's fixed. People can plan on that. They may or may not have an election, but if they do, then it's not showing up, you know, in June 13 or something along those lines. So it's, it's-- the idea is to have regular opportunities for the schools to, to have these special elections. But

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

it also gives the, the constituents, you know, a, a, a fixed-- a, a, a plan, a regimen, a routine that they can expect to see those kinds of elections.

DORN: Thank, thank you much for that explanation. Now, it, it, it-- yes, it does list in the bill-- on those odd-numbered years, it gives a certain date in May and a certain date in November. So that's when they would-- they couldn't hold-- like some of them are doing now in a March election, they would have to have on those two days. And I-- when I talked to you earlier about this bill, basically this, I call it, sets a date for an election for school bonds about every six months. Because one of the-- one-- thank you for-- I, I don't have any more questions. One of the-- one of the issues that the schools have brought up to me and, and also the, the people that build these schools, the contractors-- now, if you just had it at only a general election or a primary election, now you might have three, four, five, six of them pass and now all of a sudden you have all this work at one time. The way they sometimes lay these things out now is so that they spread out the difference in time where they can have people bid on the project or when they can have maybe them get done and that type of stuff. So very much-- I do appreciate that they did add the amendment now that it kind of-- it, it has certain set dates when you can have in the, the-- odd-numbered years and the even-numbered years now when you can have a school bond election. It doesn't make you skip a whole year or nine months before you can have another-- before you could have a bond election or whatever. It doesn't take that away in that odd-numbered year that you couldn't have any bond election. It lays out some timelines in there. And it also then I think, as I was reading the bill, it lays out some timeline. If one failed, you had to wait so long before you could bring back another one or whatever. So I do very much appreciate that too. Thank you, Senator Holdcroft. And thank you for the committee for doing the work on bringing an amendment that I am definitely for and probably will vote for LB135.

KELLY: Thank you, Senators Dorn and Holdcroft. Senator von Gillern, you're recognized to speak.

von GILLERN: Thank you, Mr. President. I rise-- I'm concerned about some things about the bill. I, I am yet undecided on whether to vote for or oppose the bill. But I just want to share some thoughts for consideration about, about some of the things that this will do. I do like the AM better than the bill. That makes some improvements that many of the districts can, can live with and is more, more of a reasonable outcome than the original bill. So generally, I think the amendment, AM99, is a positive, positive change. The reason that I,

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

that I like elements of the bill is that, is that it prevents districts from using a, a special election to achieve a desired outcome. Special elections tend to, to achieve a more positive outcome. It's a single vote that's taken on a single issue. It's not reflective of the entire impact of bond issues on a taxpayer. If bonds have to compete with one another on a general election, you might go to a general election, and you look at the ballot and there might be a bond for a fire engine and there might be a bond for street repairs and then there might be a bond for your school district. And I think taxpayers tend to take all of those into account on a bigger picture rather than looking at a single bond for, for a, a school district improvement. So I, I think it leads to-- what Senator Holdcroft's trying to do I agree with. It leads to a more informed decision on behalf of the voters, which I think is, is, is important and is a, is a benefit. The reason that I-- that I'm challenged with it is, coming from the construction industry-- and we built lots and lots and lots of schools over my career, just about every school district in eastern Nebraska. And it creates what we used to call a pig in the python problem. And that is that if all the projects come out at the same time, it, it, it creates a, a real problem with the resources that are available within the construction marketplace. In-- years ago, probably 20 years ago, when OPS came out with their big bond issues-- they had two big bond issues, \$300 million at one time. And they came out with a whole bunch of projects at one time. And the contractors-- the, the early projects had lots of interest, and they were very competitive. And they went-- the, the projects-- again, it achieved a lot of, of competition, which generally tends to drive the price down and increase the value for the district and for the taxpayers. The later projects, not so much. As, as contractors started to fill their workload and the resources became limited, the subcontractor resources became limited, the supplier resources became limited, the interest tin began to wane in those projects because people had their plates full. And the latter projects started to go for a higher price. There was less competition. And so it was simply a supply and demand issue that, that created not a good value necessarily for taxpayers. So there was a little bit of strategy in the marketplace about how to approach some of those projects. But again, I, I do like the concept of restricting when and how elections can occur. I think we've heard-- as, as those of us who've talked to our respective school districts, we-- some folks have said, well, you know, we don't always see a project coming. And we got to be nimble and we have to be able to put, you know, put a bond out for, for a vote when it's the best time for the project. Well, I'm sorry. I'm struggling a little bit to believe that you're not monitoring the populations in your school district and the number of children that are

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

coming in and increasing that might, that might cause a demand to build a new school building or you're not monitoring the maintenance of your facilities and you don't know that you've got deferred maintenance that needs to be taken care of. I-- again, the districts in, in my area generally do a really good job of watching those things and making sure that they're staying ahead. So, so to, to claim that, oh, my gosh, we're surprised all of a sudden we need a bond; we need a new school built-- school building, it rings a little bit hollow with me. So-- because, again, all the-- you have to hi-- you have to acquire property. You have to hire consultants and engineers and architects. All of that stuff takes a great deal of time. And all of that would lead up to a bond election in order for everything to, to occur beyond that. So those are my concerns. Again, I understand what Senator Holdcroft is, is desiring to do in the bill. He and I had conversations around this last year that I felt were very productive. And, and I, I stand encouraging him and what it is that he's trying to do this, but I think we do want to be very conscious of the fact that this may not represent the best value for taxpayers and that there, there could be higher expenses for the school districts. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator von Gillern. Senator Guereca, you're recognized to speak.

GUERECA: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, Nebraskans. So I was on the committee that, that heard LB135. And I-- will-- the first to admit that I walked in with certain preconceived notions that, you know, generally, a special election might give us that desired outcome. But we heard information and information was passed along to me that oftentimes that's not the case. I think in, in Iowa was a case where 60% of them-- 60% or 70% of the bond measures that went to a mail-in ballot were actually turned down by the voters. At the last Omaha general election, we had about four pages of ballots. And I believe the overwhelming number of those bond issues actually passed. And in my mind, I assumed that a mail-in ball-- election would have low voter turnout. But what we see in a lot of instances is actually higher turnout. [INAUDIBLE] Public Schools in their March 2024 bond election had 53% voter turnout. But in their primary election of May 2024, it was 26%. Now, I, I do share concerns about scheduling in a certain way to get the desired outcome. And I do believe Senator John Cavanaugh had a good point in having a cooling-off period to make sure that schools don't actually weaponize it. But at the end of the day, at the hearing what we heard from industries, concerns like the ones Senator von Gillern passed along, that if there is a rush to the bond market, it'll strain the-- it'll strain

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

industries' avail-- ability to give the best cost for the taxpayers. And ultimately, who will-- that-- the school districts that'll be most affected if there is a rush to the bond market are going to be our smaller rural schools. Adding a 10% increase to the cost of a project for a small school district can be detri-- detrimental and devastating. And that is what we heard in the committee hearing. We heard from the architects, from general contractors that said, if this passes, it's going to increase the cost of construction and ultimately it'll-- what these companies will do is take projects in our larger school districts and drive up the costs for our smaller rural schools. So colleagues, if what we're here-- if the purpose of this bill is to ensure that-- or if our reason here to be here today is to make sure that we protect our taxpayer dollars, we need to make sure that LB135, while well-intentioned, doesn't actually end up hurting the taxpayer and driving up costs, particularly our smaller rural schools. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Guereca. Senator Clouse, you're recognized to speak.

CLOUSE: Yes. Thank you, Mr. President. I rise in support of the, the amendment to this particular bill. The way the bill ori-- originally came out did not have my support. And I know the intent was to increase voter awareness. But I think with the, the compromises reached, I think that's a good compromise. We had two small rural districts just last night in Buffalo County, 15 minutes apart. Both had ballots approved for school-- for their school districts. And so if you're a voter in those areas and you didn't know that something was going on-- there are mail-in ballots. Everybody was made aware. I think it's on, on that-- those individuals if they weren't aware of it. But at the end of the day, with, with this amendment, I think it, it really provides our school districts with a date certain. And so they can back out. They can work with the contractors to back out. At least they have some, some dates certain that they can work with. And if they feel they have to have a bond or a special election, at least the-- here's the guidelines and the guidance. So they don't have to wait every two years to do it. If there's a pending need and they feel that they're ready to go, at least this gives them some opportunities on odd number of years to proceed with that. And I do agree with Senator von Gillern's-- or, Gillern's position on it, that, that it can be a bottleneck and it can have an impact on cost, but I think they need to keep all that in mind as they're making their preparations. These bond elections and these school decisions-- I, I wouldn't say that schools are nimble necessarily, but this tells them that if you're going to be doing this, here's your schedules. Here's what you have to meet. They can work with

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

their local contractors. It's a little different than when you're in the OPS and you have all these schools and multiple contracts going on at the same time. Out in our rural areas, they're very limited in, in scope generally and they have more time that they can work on them. So with that, I support LB135 with the amendments as presented. And I yield the rest of my time. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Clouse. Senator Holdcroft, you're recognized to speak.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Mr. President. I just wanted to address some of the comments that were made with some of, you know, the logic behind this, this bill. First, Senator Dungan talked about bonds for maintenance, essentially. You know, some of our older school districts are, are-- you know, need bonds to have-- deteriorating buildings, and they need, they need to have a bond to have money to, to do the repairs on those. And to me, bonds should be all about capital, capital improvements. It should be about new schools, whether they're high schools or elementary schools, but new buildings, not, not maintenance projects. To me, that should be part of your, your, your budget as a, as a school board, is to have a building amount that, that you have set aside every year for maintaining your buildings. You shouldn't have to have a bond every, every year or, or something for maintenance. The cost-- also the cost of a special election. We haven't really talked about that too much. But to do a special election in Lincoln-- recently, it was \$300,000. \$300,000 for a special election that decided one issue. OK? Now, obviously, there's, there's no fiscal note that goes with this bill because we are conducting the elections in conjunction with one that's already scheduled or has a date that's already scheduled. So we save money with, with moving these special elections to a fixed date. I think the, the-- OK. So we had the issues of construction workers, and, and as, as already been pointed out, the original LB135 was only allow these special elections would be held in even years in conjunction with the primary and general elections. I-- and, and, and we changed that. I mean, we recommended-- we worked with the committee to move one to every six months. And that was primarily in response to the construction companies that came in and says, you know, we can't plan out over a year ahead on these issues. But every six months, you would, you would expect that both the school boards and construction companies should be able to work, work, work these issues. As Senator von Gillern said, there's a lot that goes into these buildings. I mean, once-- you still have to acquire land. The land has to be prepared. You, you're going to have to do an RFP, a request for proposal. Companies are going to come in. You have to decide of-- you know, which bid you're going to take. Do you take the best-- the lowest

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

bid or do you take some, some other consideration on the bid and award of the contract? I mean, this takes more than six months, typically. And we have in this bill with the amendment the opportunity for, you know, a, a, a bond election every six months. So I think-- should be able to work out that. Even today, if you did a special election, there's probably no way you could hold it within, within three months. I would-- probably the earliest you could get a special election from the time you decide to the time you have is probably about three months. So we're talking about moving that date, that decision point up two months to have it in conjunction with a regularly scheduled, regularly scheduled election. And again, the whole idea behind the bill is to get more input from the constituents. The constituents probably may-- first of all, if they even know about whether or not it-- the, the bond-- there's a special bond issue here. They may or may not attend because it's only one issue. And why would they waste their time on that, that one issue? But-- and they may not even know about it. But when they go to a general election, primary election, or these other elections, it's going to be on, on the ballot, and they'll be making a decision about, about that bond issue. There's some comments-- some anecdotal comments about how special elections get higher turnouts than, than regularly planned elections. And just-- I mean, just common sense is that's-- that just doesn't-- it doesn't make sense. I mean, you're going to get more people coming to a, a fixed day where there are many issues on the ballot than coming to a special election or responding to a mail-in election for a, a specific issue. So that's, that's the comments in response to some of the comments that have been made. And I'm happy to answer any other questions. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Holdcroft. Senator Riepe, you're recognized to speak.

RIEPE: Thank you, Mr. President. I, I do applaud Senator Holdcroft's goal of greater voter engagement. Quite frankly, voter engagement is a problem both at general elections and at primaries. And I've-- I'm not sure whether this will up that or not. I also apologize. I was out of the Chamber for a bit. So if I-- if I'm redundant here, I apologize for that. My primary concern is in conversations with-- I've, I've had with some contractors is that all of a sudden all of the bids will pile up and come in virtually at the same time, which means some of the smaller projects that would not be worthwhile given a choice between a larger project and a small project. And so they might get discrimination, if you can use that term, against smaller projects that might not get done in this particular wave. That, that's my primary concern with it. I like the concept. I like-- I would definitely like to see more voter

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

engagement in this thing, and any way that we can do that is to be applauded. So thank you, Mr. President. I would yield the balance of my time back to Senator Holdcroft if he chooses. If not, I would yield it. So Senator, it's yours if you want it. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Riepe. Senator Holdcroft, 3 minutes, 30 seconds.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Mr. President. Yes. Thank you, Senator Riepe, for this additional time, because I did want to address something that you, you triggered, was the school construction schedule. So schools, they, they do have-- you know, it's, it's not like you're building a, a, a commercial building or a church or something like that where you really have a lot of flexibility. Year rou-- year, year round, you're doing the same schedule. With schools, obviously they start in the fall and they finish in May. And then you have the summertime, where you're going to try and do most of your construction. So the idea that, you know, all these projects are going to come out at the same time and the construction companies are going to have an issue with being able to handle all that, we already have that problem with schools because all of the schools are going to want to start their projects in-- you know, on the last day of school in May and have them finished by the first day of school in Au-- in August. And sometimes that's not possible, but they're going to work on that in a, in a yearly process. So maybe it's going to take two years for this school to be finished, or a year and a half. But they're going to still want to work on that schedule. So it's just natural in school construction to have these RFPs, these requests for proposals, these, these projects, you know, come out at the same time. Whether you have the election 6 months before or 12 months before, it really doesn't-- to me, doesn't impact when the, the, the award's going to be-- when the contract's going to be awarded and when the construction is actually going to be done. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Holdcroft. Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak. Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Well, I pushed my light again because I wanted to talk more about those off-year elections, which I think are interesting. I looked up-- so in 2021, Douglas County estimated that for the off-year Omaha city election, they were going to charge the city of Omaha between \$800,000 and \$1 million. So what they're charging them for is all the ballots that get mailed, you know, the postage, the folks working, people counting those ballots and those sorts of things. They ha-- Douglas County has to charge the city for

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

that. And they have a primary, which is the first Tuesday in April, which this year is April 1. And they have a general, which is the first Tuesday after the second Monday in May, which this year is May 13. And so they have those two standalone elections. The city of Omaha does have to pay when they have elections during the regular year. So when Omaha had bond initiatives that were on the ballot, I think during the primary last year in 2024 or they had city charter or ordinances that were on the ballot in the general election, they have to pay for that ballot space. They have to pay for that counting. But it's-- cost something like \$90,000 for just that portion, as opposed to the close to \$1 million for the standalone election. So that's one of the reasons I proposed my-- a bill that would change the election from that off-year to the on-year, is to save that between-- I guess it'd be between \$700,000 and \$900,000 for the city of Omaha. City of Lincoln pays Lancaster County-- it was estimated in 2021-- somewhere between \$250,000 and \$350,000. And here's the interesting thing: Lancaster-- or, Lincoln's elections for the off-year-- so they have actually two off-year cycles. They're up this year-- where their mayor is not up. And they have a, a mayoral election and the, the odd-year after the gubernatorial election. And so that, that in of itself is interesting. Omaha only has the one off-year. But the other interesting thing is Lincoln's elections are on the first Tuesday in April and then the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May, which means this year Lincoln is going to have an election on May 6. So Omaha's city elections will be on April 1 and May 13. Lincoln's will be on April 1 and May 6. This is one of the things-- reasons I brought my bill is it's silly that we have these elections so specifically proscribed in state statute that the city of Omaha and city of Lincoln have this sort of weird spot where they have two different general elections but the same primary. I don't know how to account for that or why we-- why the state statute says that differently. But again, Lincoln could save money by changing their elections as well. You could have higher turnout, more participation, which I think are all good things. But the reason it's relevant to this bill is that this bill allows for those off-year elections on those-- May general election and in November. But it-- I think, if I recall-- and I did check. I voted for the amendment. But I think if-- I recall, if I look at the amendment, it prescribes the first-- it, it-- for the off-year, if you have a-- it's either a city election or the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May, which would mean that Omaha potentially could have the option to have two elections in May under this bill. I'll double-check on that. And maybe I'll push my light if there's time to talk about it again. But it's-- that's one of the problems where we become overly prescriptive, is we start having these sort of anachronistic things in our statute that

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

then conflict with each other. And you have the possibility where we're intending to have fewer elections and we ha-- we create a scenario in which you could have more elections. And I think those are the things we need to be vigilant of. So again, I think that the idea of having certainty and increased participation, decreasing costs are all good. And so that's why I was present, not voting on this bill. But I do think that it maybe is overly prescriptive in telling the localities what to do and then we kind of get out over our skis and cause a problem. So that's where I'm at on this bill. But I do think we should move the Omaha city elections. And maybe I'll push my light again to talk about that some more because I really do think it's an interesting topic. And I will tell you, I brought the bill only to apply to Omaha. I have heard from people they would like it in-- to include Lincoln. I said I'd be glad to include Lincoln if that was something that Lincoln senators were interested in, in bringing forward. I have an amendment to that bill that I will-- happy to talk to the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee about to see if we can get that moving if people are of a like mind and wanting to see that bill move. So I'll push my light so I have a little more time to talk about it. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. Speaker Arch would like to recognize some guests in the north balcony: Girl Scouts from Lincoln, Nebraska, 6th through 12th grade. Please stand and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Senator Spivey, you're recognized to speak.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning, colleagues and folks that are watching online. I wanted to kind of uplift some comments. And I, I really appreciate the dialogue around this bill. And also just would be remiss if I did not say, hi, Grandma. I know you're watching. She's been watching me every day since I got elected and figured out how to watch it now on the TV versus her computer. And so she was looking for me. And so I just need to make sure I say hi to her before I continue. So I appreciate, as I mentioned, the dialogue around this bill, which I think is actually really important. And what I heard Senator Holdcroft say were really around two goals. The first goal to make sure that we're addressing the impacts of property taxes. And as a member of the Appropriations Committee-- again, every day we are eye deep into having conversations about our deficit, our priorities, what we fund, how we fund, what does that look like. And I can say that with the cuts that are being made and being proposed not only in our preliminary budget but as we move through our hearing schedule that the agencies and entities with levy authority will continue to leverage that. And so while I can appreciate that that was an intention of this bill, however, because of the conversations in

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

this body, of our executive branch, it is not going to solve for agencies using their levy power to address gaps in their funding for necessary-- necessary services and activities. The second goal that I heard stated by Senator Holdcroft was around voter engagement, which really gets me excited. I am a community organizer by trade, and so making sure that people have power and choice and are participatory in our democracy and engage and use their leadership in a way that makes sense for them and their families and their communities is im-- like, so important, is uber important when we're talking about the work that is in front of us. And so I appreciate that sentiment. However, we do have bills actually in this body introduced by Senator Holdcroft as well: LB541, which limits voter engagement. So that creates hardships and lessens accessibility around voting. And so we cannot say that we want people to be engaged and that they have access to voting and that they can make really informed decisions and then we le-- are introducing and are lessening what that accessibility looks like. I think there's also a piece of voter engagement around this that is not held through statute but the people that want to engage the public. So for example, if it is the school board that has a bond issue, if the city of Omaha has a bond issue, how are we ensuring that they put out information? In the 2024 election for the city of Omaha, there were a number of bond issues. And I can tell you from knocking doors and being a community organizer people were not clear around what those bond issues were. It felt like they just popped up on my ballot. I'm not sure. Where can I find information? Folks were looking on websites or trying to go to subjective-- or, objective-- excuse me-- third-party organizations that provide voting information around, like, how can I ensure that I'm making an informed decision? And what you typically see and hear is that people will skip over that part. And so while I can appreciate a goal of trying to have voter engagement, I don't think that rests, one, within the statute or the purview of what this bill works to achieve. A lot of that is on the entities that are wanting to pass the bond issue or engage the folks and the residents in that area. And so while I can appreciate the intention of this bill and the larger conversation at hand, I think addressing property taxes and levy power absolutely is important. Again, voter engagement absolutely is important. I don't think LB135 achieves that in practice and in policy. So I am currently not supportive of and not voting for LB135. And I can appreciate the amendments that were made to try to address some of the concerns that were heard, but I also would not be supporting AM99. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator. Senator Raybould, you're recognized to speak.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, fellow Nebraskans watching on TV. You know, I stand in opposition to LB135 and AM99. You know, we've heard from the schools. And it really boils down to a question of timing, local control, calculating the actual growth rate, and costs. So I want to go back to timing. And I've, I've heard Senator Holdcroft address this, but the reality is that-- I'll give an example. Let, let's start off with the election-- say it's in May-- for a school bond issue, and the school bond issue passes, which is great. But then they have to wait until their next budget cycle-- which is in the fall-- to discuss that this has been approved. And then they have to budget it in the fall, which means the likelihood is, if it gets approved in their budget, then they put it in the budget and then they have to go out for contractors, hopefully. So hopefully that work will actually get started one year later. One year later. Now, everybody knows that time is money, and these type of delays push it out further and further, which also has cost increases. And it depends if the-- say it's-- the vote is in the fall, it passes-- again, it's the same thing. If the vote passes in the fall, that school budget has to wait one full year before they can get it into the budget, get it approved, and then go out for bids. So we're talking additional delays. We could be talking about winter weather cost increases if the construction is there. Now I want to talk about the construction itself. You know, I think I've, I've heard enough that people are saying, you know, for these new buildings, these new structures. Well, you know, part of the bond issue is for the maintenance and major infrastructure improvements that are required in existing buildings. A good chunk of that goes to those projects, like heating and air conditioning systems, HVAC systems, parking lots, ballfields. All this stuff is part of these discussions. It's not just building new things. You have to maintain existing things. And so I think that, that component is somewhat lost in this discussion. You know, local control. The, the schools themselves understand the timing of when these things need to get implemented, and we want to make sure that students have high-quality spaces to learn. And the planning that goes into the bond issue itself, it takes a tremendous amount of time. But to put in those added delays of their process that have not been taken into consideration in this legislative bill is a concern. We all know that the schools are responsible for that special election. I know in-- I can speak for the city of Lincoln that every single school bond issue has passed. When we do the special election, it's a vote-by-mail process. There is a high participation rate because people have that opportunity to actually read what the bond is for. They have a chance to mull it over. They have a chance to reach out to their neighbors and ask questions about what the school bond issue is for. And resoundingly

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

in the city of Lincoln, we pass it. Why? Because we certainly trust our school board members and their calculations of cost and how important it is that we continue to fund improvements-- not just building new schools-- but fund existing improvements to improve the quality of our kids' education. The other thing is, in the language on AM477 on calculating growth, there is two requirements that I think may have been not the intention. But if you read it, it exempts school districts with an average of at least 3%-- then there is the word "and--" by at least 150 students over the preceding three years. So the preceding three years is 450 students. But you're saying "and." So it has to meet those two qualifications: increase of 3% and 450 students. It's not one or the other. Thank you, Mr. President. I'll, I'll sign back in.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Raybould. Senator Guereca, you're recognized to speak.

GUERECA: Thank you, Mr. President. So I just wanted to highlight some more numbers. And again, like I said, when I walked into this committee hearing, I had assumed that a mail-in ballot would provide lower voter turnout. But again, time and time again-- Twin Rivers Public Schools: September '23, mail-in bond election, 63% voter turnout. Palmer Public Schools, November 24 general election had 83% voter turnout. Broken Bow Public Schools: mail-in general election in November of '23, 59% voter turnout. In their primary countywide election of May '24, 29% voter turnout. Crofton Public Schools: bond mail-in election of March 2024, 71% voter turnout. May 2024, countywide for Crofton, their primary turnout was only 47%. A lot of examples of us seeing high voter turnout, actually, in mail-in elections because it is the only thing on the ballot. And folks do tend to pay attention and take into consideration their property taxes and what that bond would do to them because, like I said in Omaha, we had a four-page ballot. And I pulled up the election results to sort of see what was the election result for the-- several of the bond measures that we had in Omaha. Because I think we had-- it had five. So. City of Omaha, \$80 million street and highway transportation bond. "Yes" at 141,302 votes to "no," 50,543. City of Omaha special election, \$146 million public facilities bond: "yes" came in at 134,287; "no," 56,112. City of Omaha special election, \$10 million parks and recs bond: "yes," 142,829 to no's 47,838. City of Omaha's special election, \$72 million street preservation bond: "yes," 142,119 to no's 45,836. \$10 million public safety bond: "yes," 128,649; "no," 58,770. \$14.5 million environment sewer bond: "yes," 146,722 to "no," 42,761. General elections tend to bring out the average, everyday voter, the average, everyday citizen who oftentimes doesn't have time to research what these bonds do, what they're for, or, as Senator Spivey pointed out, don't know where to go to seek that information. So

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

the tendency's actually to vote yes. So if what we're trying to do is limit the amount of bonds to reduce the burden on our, on our property taxpayers by driving them towards our general elections where we see, you know, voters that don't have the time to do their due diligence because they're so overwhelmed with a four-page ballot, they'll be more likely just vote yes. So. Just wanted to pass along that data. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Guereca. Senator Storm would like to announce some guests seated in the north balcony: fourth graders from David City in Bellwood Elementary. Please stand to be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President. Colleagues, I do rise again opposed to LB135. I apologize for missing my time on the mic this last bit. I was speaking with some folks out in the Rotunda. So I wanted to make sure that I punched back in to talk a little bit more about some of the issues that I think have already been addressed on the floor by some, but I wanted to drill down into a couple of the problems that I, I continue to have with LB135. I want to start by reiterating what I, I think I said in my first time speaking, which is that I think Senator Holdcroft's intention with this bill is positive. Again, being fiscally responsible and ensuring taxpayer dollars are being spent in a way that makes sense and in a way that is efficient is always a good idea. But I think that this bill has the unintended consequence of actually costing taxpayers money. Part of the problem that I have is that these May and November elections, if they are in fact locked into those time periods, they're going to cost the districts more additional costs, which will ultimately be passed onto taxpayers. School districts don't have any other way to pay debt service on bonds except for property taxes. LPS overall-- I know-- as we all know, has been focused on reducing property tax burdens. And I've spoken with the officials from LPS and, and a number of other school districts, and I, I do believe that they are good actors who are doing everything they can to reduce property taxes and ensure that people can, can pay a little bit less each year. But part of the problem with locking these elections in on May and November-- May is problematic because the construction bidding season is ending and schools then face higher costs either by being at the end of the bidding cycle-- when contractors already have work planned-- or by the inflationary aspect of delaying prices. I think Senator von Gillern got up and spoke to, to that a little bit, and he has far more expertise in that area than myself. But I did look through the committee statement, and I noticed that we had a number of contractors and laborers come in and, and testify in opposition to this bill. That stood out to me at first because I hadn't thought through that aspect

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

of the impact that LB135 might have. So I went spoke with some of our friends who do that contracting, who do the actual work. And that was exactly what they said, is that if you're locked into a particular time period, it ultimately can result in these inflationary costs down the way having to delay projects. November is especially problematic because the school district budget and tax levy are set in September. And that means the levy to support a successful bond is going to have to wait a year in order to be implemented, and the revenue would come in to pay for the debt the following year. That means, ultimately, construction projects are delayed until the funds are available to pay the debt, which results in inflationary cost increases. Now, the alternative would be to capitalized bond payments and front-- and to front-load the funds, which is also very costly. So again, thinking through the nuance of how this bill actually impacts the bottom line is part of the issue that I think I take with it. In addition to that, there's a broader problem that I have, obviously, with taking away local control. And, and we have this debate on a regular basis when it comes to schools. And certainly, I think all of us agree that our schools are entities of the community. Here in Lincoln, LPS is integral to our, our city operating the way that it does and, and, and having the attraction that we have for people to move here. I'm, I'm a product of the Lincoln Public School system. It's a fantastic school system. But I also know that in many other counties outside of the more urban areas, the school is oftentimes the hub of the community. When I've traveled through places like Ord or, or Niobrara, other places like that, the schools are, are fantastic. And they've invested a lot of time, effort, and money into creating a facility and an environment that is not just a place that students want to go, but it's a place that then has all of the facilities and the ability to produce well-rounded and highly educated students. Oftentimes, those communities know what's best for their local school. And oftentimes, those communities understand why they may or may not have to have a special bond election in order to provide maintenance for one of those facilities or to try to add additional classroom space because maybe they've finally grown beyond what the original facility was going to provide. So what I don't want to do is overlegislate at the state level when these local communities can or cannot make determinations about funding their schools. So for that reason-- again, I, I do rise opposed to LB135. I think AM99 seeks to fix some of the problems, but I unfortunately don't think it goes far enough in addressing the underlying concerns that I have. So I would encourage my colleagues to vote no on LB135. And I might punch in one more time to just finish making a couple of the points that I had here today. Thank you, Mr. President.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Dungan. Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak. And this is your third time on the amendment.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Well, I wanted to continue my conversation about municipal elections in the city of Omaha and Lincoln. So I, I was-- misstated the amendment during my last time talking. So there is, in conjunction-- this is the amendment-- says, except as otherwise provided by subsection (c) of this section, the election shall be held in conjunction with statewide primary general election. So that is the even-number years. So next time will be 2026, May and November. And then in an odd-numbered year, in conjunction with a regularly scheduled general election of a political subdivision; in an odd-numbered year, on the first Tuesday after the second Monday in May-- so that's the day when Omaha has its city elections-- or, in an odd-numbered year on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. So that's the normal general election time. And so this is why I was talking about this, where it would actually be Lincoln that has an election-- so if, say, LPS wanted to do a bond initiative in 2027, they could do it on, you know, May 15, we'll say, and-- but the city elections would be on May 3, something like that. May 5. I don't know. Whatever the math would work out. But they would ha-- you'd have these sort of back-to-back elections if they were doing these bond elections that way. I think they would be able to do it on both of those days or either of those days. But I guess my concern in-- about the, the election there is we have this weird thing where Omaha and Lincoln have different elections, and now we're taking that step-- their general elections are di-- on off-years, and then they're on different days in May. And now we're putting into statute further this confusion or just this bifurcation of where we have the potential for two elections in May in Lincoln, and everywhere else would be that second Tuesday-- or, first Tuesday after the second Monday. So one of the ways to solve that, of course, would be to adopt my bill that eliminates city elections for the city of Omaha. Like I said, I'd be willing to extend it to Lincoln if there's such a groundswell of support in the city of Lincoln to do similar. We did have a testifier at the hearing who came and said that they're-- they were neutral on the bill because they wanted it to include Lincoln. I do have an amendment to that bill that, like I said, I'll talk to my cohorts on the Government Committee, that would actually not make it required. So it would, would not require the city of Omaha to move its election to even years. It would just put in statute that it, it is either on the first Tuesday in April and then the first Tuesday after the second Monday in May, or the city can, through a charter amendment, move the election to the even year. So making it permissive for the city of

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

Omaha to move their election. Because the city of Omaha did have a charter commin-- convention two years ago, I believe. If I remember right, actually, Senator Kauth might have been on the charter convention. I don't know if she heard me say that, but I think she might-- before she was in the Legislature was on the charter committee. But they voted to move the city election. And then they were told by the city legal department that they couldn't move the city election in the city charter because of the state's statutory change. So anyway, I think that we should move both city elections, but I only am proposing changing the one city election unless somebody from the city of Lincoln asked me-- a senator from the city of Lincoln asked me to include that. But I think we can do it in a compromise sort of way where we make it permissive. I have an amendment drafted for the city of Omaha to do that. I would be happy to have-- draft it to include the city of Lincoln for Lincoln senators. And we could make it permissive that if the city of Lincoln and the city of Omaha wanted, through charter amendment, to change their-- when-- timing of their elections, they would be able to do that, which then eliminates the hurdle. Clearly, there's a desire in Omaha to do this. But again, I don't know what's going on in Lincoln. And the reason for that is increased turnout, saving of hundreds of thousands of dollars every four years-- and in Lincoln, hundreds of thousand dollars every two years. So again, at the moment, I'm still not in favor of LB135 as is, but I do understand why Senator Holdcroft brought it and what the importance-- what intention it serves. So I'm out of times, but thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. Senator Raybould, you're recognized to speak.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. I want to clear up something. I misspoke earlier. I was reading it incorrectly. So the last time I was on the mic, we were talking about how they calculate the average number of students that would exempt the school because of the large increase. And so I'll read it correctly this time. It says, exempt school districts with an average of at least 3% and by at least 150 students over the preceding three years. So I had made a mistake on that. But I do want to jump back with Lincoln Public Schools. If we looked at just that 3% growth rate, that would mean it would be 1,100 students for the city of Lincoln. But in the AM477, it does talk about that and-- as one of the amendments. It doesn't solve the problem for growing large school districts because that 3% for Lincoln is 1,100, but they, they have that threshold of 1,200 students. So that certainly would be problematic for the city of Lincoln because Lincoln actually is one of the fastest growing school districts in our state of Nebraska and they would automatically be eliminated because of that number count. The one

thing I think is maybe forgotten in this discussion is that our school districts have been capped. They've been capped to the max. They have been capped with growth. They have been capped with their levy. They have been capped with their funding. And that is truly problematic in making sure that they have the funds needed to-- and I've said before, it's not just building new buildings and expanding existing buildings. It's actually maintaining buildings. Like a roof. Everyone knows how much a roof costs. But a commercial building, the roof costs are exorbitant. And these type of capital improvements need to be factored in as well into that bond issue. And like with the school bond issues in the city of Lincoln, they, they have overwhelmingly been supported by the population. And why is that? Because the Board of Education for Lincoln Public Schools does a phenomenal job of educating the public why this bond issue is important not only for providing safe, well-kept buildings to educate our children but to do it as cost-effectively as possible. So I'm really proud of the fact that they really make the case for why this, this funding is essential for the education of our children. And so for those school districts that have put forward bond issues-- and I have seen those bond issues fail-- it takes a huge, consorted team of advocates that are out there tirelessly working with the constituents that are voting on this to make sure they understand the complexities of this bond, the importance of this bond, the cost-effectiveness of this bond. And timing, again, is often essential to make sure that we hit not only the school budgets-- budget and timing but also the construction or the-- in many cases, for the capital improvements to existing facilities, to capture the right timing in the school year to get a lot of these project don-- projects done without facing those winter weather cost overruns. So for a number of reasons, I, I commend Senator Holdcroft of trying to rein this in. But again, I ask my colleagues to keep in mind that local control matters. Allowing local jurisdictions, political subdivisions to determine when is the appropriate time to get the elections scheduled, it should be up to them. It should be up to them. And why? Because they're paying for the special election. They're paying for the cost of it. So for these reasons, I cannot support LB135. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Raybould. Senator von Gillern, you're recognized to speak.

von GILLERN: Thank you, Mr. President. I made some comments earlier, and I want to just kind of follow up on a few of those. I am aware of some conversations that are going on that-- and some ideas that are being floated that may be, be able to smooth out some of the concerns that I expressed earlier. Therefore, I will vote to advance-- vote for

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

the amendment and vote to advance the bill in hopes that Senator Holdcroft and-- is able to work with some of those constituencies and improve, improve the bill and, again, kind of smooth out some of the concerns. I do want to share a couple of the-- a couple stories that led to my interest in the bill. Two years ago, there was a bond issue that-- in the metro area that was voted on. And-- Mr. President, can I get a gavel, please? Thank you. Two years ago, there was a bond issue that was voted on in the metro area. That was-- the bo-- the special election was held two weeks prior to a general election. And to me, that, that was-- to me, I felt that that was insulting. I felt that it was rigged. I felt that it was an attempt to achieve an outcome-- specific outcome for the district. And interestingly, the bond issue failed. But because it, it, it raised my interest in it, I reached out to the election commissioner and asked him-- the Douglas County election commissioner, asked him, what did they pay for a premium to hold that special election? And the response was, about \$17,000. Now, in a multimillion-dollar construction project, \$17,000 doesn't seem like a lot of money, but 17 grand's 17 grand. So it, it-- so that raised my concern and kind of generated my interest in Senator Holdcroft's bill. But I-- a couple of the things that were said I want to-- I want to add clarity to. Senator Dungan mentioned something about the construction bidding season. And there really-- and gently want to, want to push back on that. There really is no construction bidding season anymore. Contractors work through the winter. They plan on working through the winter. There is really no season in which proj-- projects come up for bid. Obviously, there are seasons where you can be more productive than others, but, but nobody stops working over the winter. It's, it's just not cost-effective nor productive. And the most you can get done during the summer on a school project might be refinishing the gym floor or new carpeting or some slight remodel, carp-- paint, those kinds of things, so. Most projects are multiphase. Some of the critical work might take place during the summer when students and staff are gone, but, but not all, so. Again, I will vote to advance the bill and give a chance to work out some of the bugs and improve the bill. But again, for me to advance it on Select will involve-- will have to come with some ways to kind of smooth out these workload issues because they do-- it's not just an issue for the construction industry. That isn't the point. The industry is supply and demand, and the lack of supply of workers and materials and contractors to do the work will result in a higher price for the school districts and for taxpayers. So that is the reason that, that I am concerned about that. So with that, thank you, Mr. President.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

KELLY: Thank you, von-- Senator von Gillern. Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak. This is your last time on the amendment.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President. I just wanted to rise again to finish some of the thoughts I had and also respond to some of the things that have happened. I do appreciate yet again Senator von Gillern's expertise in this area. And I appreciate the dialogue about the, the cost of the contracting bidding season and whether that still exists or not. That's not, obviously, an industry that I work in on a regular basis. But I will say in, in having the conversations that I've had with some of the folks who do work in that industry, that was one of the concerns they'd raised with me. And so I understand that, in the modern economy, things are probably a little bit more perpetual as opposed to on and off when it comes to summer and winter. But I guess my, my understanding from speaking with some other folks is that there is some back-and-forth on whether things get more or less expensive. But I, I do appreciate the, the input from Senator von Gillern, given that that is his history and background there. I, I still think that my objection to LB135, though-- even taking that issue and removing it but getting from a 30,000-foot view remains the concern that I have that-- I think there's this belief or this underpinning that these bond elections are being done in such a way to dupe voters, and, and I simply just don't think that's true. And I, I guess I would also respectfully push back on that idea. I think that the voters should be trusted. And what we've seen, whether it's bond elections or regular elections, general or primary or ballot initiatives, is voters have an opportunity to go to the polls and to make their voice heard or they have an opportunity to vote in a mail-in election and make their voice heard. And I think all too often here in the Legislature we respond by implying that voters don't know what they've done. And I think that's problematic because I do trust the voters of Nebraska. Even if I don't always agree with the direction that an election goes, be it a ballot initiative or a school bond or a candidate, I think that voters are people who are paying attention, who are listening, who are going to the polls and are making their voice heard. So when you look back at these, these bond elections that have happened, a lot of them pass. And I think that is indicative of the fact that voters want to continue to build into their schools and to maintain their schools because of how important that is to them. But some fail. And I think that, you know, Senator von Gillern mentioning the fact that this election, I think, happened, he said right before another election and that it failed is indicative of the fact that the voters can speak when they want to. And it's not incumbent upon us as a Legislature to, I guess, exert more top-down control, more government interference on these local elections

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

in an effort to try to curb, I guess, the, the outcome or, or change the way people vote. I, I was having a conversation off the mic with one of my colleagues about this bill, and I, I asked where they fall on it. And the conversation essentially-- where it wound up was, was me pointing out that there's really no upside to this bill, but there is a vast amount of potential downside. So if the whole idea or concept of this bill is that it's going to get more people involved in elections, I, I, I, I think the evidence is fairly clear that more people participate across the board in these special bond elections rather than participating on these issues when they're-- during the regular cycles. People have more time to pay attention to it. People have time to actually dig into the issue and understand what it is they're voting on. And the fact that more people tend to support these issues I think is indicative of the fact that they've actually paid attention to what they're voting on. If, for example, you are voting on a litany of things and you get to the last issue on your ballot, there are times that I think voters can maybe not have as much information when there's this deluge of candidates or issues they're voting on. When it's a single issue during a special election, it provides the opportunity for that issue to be in a spotlight. And I think it provides an opportunity for both proponents and opponents to make their voices heard. And so, big picture, colleagues, I think that the potential negative ramifications of LB135 far outweigh the benefits that we could potentially have by continuing to allow special elections. I certainly have not heard a clamoring of my constituents concerned about this. The thing that my constituents are concerned about, as I said in my first time talking, is ensuring that they have high-quality schools, well-paid teachers, and quality education that makes Nebraska, frankly, the incredible state for education that it is. So I want to continue to have the best schools we possibly can, and I think that we accomplish that by allowing voters to make their voices heard on one issue at a time to make sure they know exactly what they're voting for. With that, I would encourage your red vote on LB135. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Dungan. Senator Guereca, you're recognized to speak. And this is your final time on the amendment.

GUERECA: Thank you, Mr. President. I want to be clear: I rise in opposition to LB135, but certainly AM99 is a, a must if we-- if you plan on passing LB135. Without the amendment, it leaves our rural schools in greater Nebraska at a massive disadvantage compared to, to the metro areas. So just want to make sure that that is really clear, that passing LB135 without AM99 would be very detrimental to our communities in greater Nebraska. But again, just to highlight my, my concerns with the bill is certainly the increased cost that'll-- the

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

blunt of-- the, the, the majority of which will be borne by our communities out in, in greater Nebraska. And if our intention is to be good steward of taxpayer dollars, we need to make sure that the policies that we pass in this body don't contribute to increased property taxes, which we will if we see-- if we, if we're funneling the bond process to certain choke points, that's what we're going to see. That-- it was interesting to see both industry and labor come in in opposition to this bill. But that was their concern. That's what they highlighted. It was highlighted by the architects, by the contractors, by the electricians. This will lead to greater construction costs for our schools. That will affect the qual-- the, the-- what the students receive. It'll affect taxpayer dollars. And if we in this body want to grow the good life and provide a educative pro-- ed-- educational product to our children, then this does nothing but complicate measures. We love our public schools in this state. We support them. So let's make sure that they have the flexibility. They know their community. They, they know the contractors in their community. So let's give our schools-- let's make sure they have that flexibility to be able to plan out when. But again, I do hear the concerns of Senator Cavanaugh and, and others, certainly, that a cooling-off period around each general and primary election would be appropriate to make sure that, like Senator von Gillern said, we're not seeing a special election two weeks after a general election, so. Certainly-- do think I'm the last one on the mic, so we'll be taking a vote soon. But I hope conversations continue around this. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Guereca. Seeing no one else in the queue. Senator Holdcroft, you're recognized-- oh. Senator Sanders, you're recognized to close on the amendment. Waive. Members, the question is the adoption of AM99. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 30 ayes, 4 nays on the adoption of the Government Committee amendment, Mr. President.

KELLY: AM99 is adopted. Mr. Clerk for a, an amendment.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Holdcroft would move to amend with AM477.

KELLY: Senator Holdcroft, you're recognized to open.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Mr. President. OK. AM477 is kind of what Senator Raybould has been talking about, is to exempt fast-growing districts from a piece of LB135. So in Section 6(3) of the original bill, LB135,

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

school districts will be required to wait ten months after a failed bond election to schedule another election. So we've called that as a, a cooling-off period. It's been referred to as a couple times as a cooling-off period. So if you have a failed bond election, then you have to wait ten months. Well, what AM477 simply exerts-- for the fastest growing districts. And we've identified them by percentages of, of growth and also number of students by growth. The districts in the state from the-- exempts these districts from that requirement. It allows them to hold another election essentially within-- at the next six-month period. So these would be districts like Gretna, Elkhorn, Bennington, who hold a bond election that fails. But because they're going so fast, they really have this need. We're allowing them to then schedule at the next opportunity, which would be six months. So I'd appreciate your green vote on AM477 and then on LB135. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Holdcroft. Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President. Colleagues, I do rise in support of AM477. I think that this addresses one of the issues that a number of folks have had, which is, what do we do in these areas of rapid growth? I, I know that that's not happening in every jurisdiction, but certainly I think that we're seeing some pretty intense growth happening in areas like Bennington and other areas that have been talked about quite a bit. So I do appreciate that part of the conversation. And I do support your green vote on AM477. It still does not get me to a place where I think that I can be supportive of LB135. But there have been discussions, obviously, I think, here today about other changes that can be made. Senator von Gillern I know mentioned that there were some sort of conversations happening about potential changes to the bill. I was curious-- Senator Holdcroft, would you yield to just a brief couple of questions?

KELLY: Senator Holdcroft, would you yield?

HOLDCROFT: Yes.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Senator Holdcroft. I want to thank you again for being so open to some of these amendments. And I know that you've addressed a lot of the problems that have already come up. Just broadly speaking, are you open to continuing conversations between now and Select in order to continue talking about some of the problems both from a construction standpoint we've talked about and also from a

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

budgeting standpoint for the schools if we were to have those talks between now and the next round of debate?

HOLDCROFT: Absolutely.

DUNGAN: OK. And have you had any of those conversations, I guess, in the last day or so about some potential fixes that could happen? I, I'm not aware of any additional amendments at this point, so I'm curious if there's been any other proposed changes that have come up thus far.

HOLDCROFT: I don't have any specific-- I don't have an amendment standing by yet. But I think some, some points that Senator John Cavanaugh made about maybe a little more flexibility in the actual date. So if, if-- you know, if a city or a county has already got a fixed date for that, we, we can use that instead of having the fixed date as the second Tuesday of the first Monday in May and, and November. So certainly open to that and certainly willing to work with any issues that could relieve the pressure on construction schedules.

DUNGAN: I appreciate that. And I-- again, you've been very willing to work on this so far, so I appreciate that. Thank you for answering questions. I will say Senator John Cavanaugh looked very excited when you said that. And he's up in the queue after me, so I will let him get to his talk. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Sen-- Senator Storm would like to recognize some guests seated under the north balcony. They are Sally Grandgenett, Joanna Lindberg, Kathy Knowlton, Denise Jardine, all of Ashland. Please stand and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Well, I rise in support of AM477. I actually pushed my light to correct myself because I got an email from the Lancaster County Election Commission, and they pointed out that the Lincoln city primary is April 8. So-- and Omaha city primary is April 1. And so that's even-- I guess bolsters my argument about the fact that it's-- why are these elections on different dates? But also Lincoln-- then their city elections has two fewer weeks between the primary and the general than Omaha. I don't really get the point of that. But anyway, I-- so I just wanted to correct myself on that. I do support this amendment. I appreciate Senator Holdcroft willing to work on this. And I'm, of course, happy to help facilitate my suggestions on how to improve the bill. And I love it when people are taking my comments and listening. So at the moment, I'll be a yes on AM477. And, and I'm probably still a not voting on LB135, but I'm

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

going to keep listening and thinking about it. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. Senator Raybould, you're recognized to speak.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Senator Holdcroft, for correcting me. I've been popping in and out of the Rotunda, so I, I apologize for getting a little bit sidetracked. I just want to say that AM477, it really does not solve the problem for growing, large school districts. It does not solve the problem for Lincoln Public Schools. So a 3% average for Lincoln Public Schools would be 1,200 students a year. And LPS grows by about 600 students a year. And on some of those off-years that they have experienced, it has reached as high as 1,100 students. But that does not help Lincoln Public Schools. And I've be-- I've been reading through a few emails from constituents. And the question is, well, why aren't you putting repair and maintenance in annual budgets? And the answer is pretty standard. Repair and maintenance are always in the budget. However, I'm talking about capital investments, capital improvements that are extraordinary in costs, like roofs. We can talk about roofs. Roofs can be anywhere from \$389,000 to probably about \$589,000, depending upon the size of structure. You're replacing a roof. Those type of capital improvements, capital investments-- like repaving a, a parking lot-- can be up to, like, \$200,000. These types of improvements, capital improvements, capital investments are typically what Lincoln Public School uses and includes in a bond issue because any one of those major repairs would blow the annual repair and maintenance budget. And I'd also like to point out that most school districts are capped anyway. So when they have these huge capital investment, capital repair and maintenance budgets, they are forced to go out for a bond issue. And that has been traditionally what has happened in the city of Lincoln, that has traditionally been passed and approved by the people of the city of Lincoln because they care greatly about maintaining their schools. So I hope that answers that question on that. And I just want to reit-- reiterate about special elections. Lincoln Public School system has typically gone out for-- when they go out for a bond issue, it is not on an annual basis. I think they maybe have gone out for a bond issue every maybe five or six years, depending upon the critical infrastructure needs that the school has. They bundle those infrastructure needs. If there are, like, five or five schools, elementary schools or junior highs that haven't had their HVAC system upgraded to provide air conditioning so the temperature in your classroom is more convenient for-- and in-- for learning, they pu-- bundle three or four schools that still have their HVAC systems to be

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

upgraded, repaired to make sure air conditioning is provided. So that's how Lincoln Public Schools district does it, and I'm pretty sure it is not a lot differently than small or large schools have to budget, particularly those schools that might be at their cap or their limit. So for those reasons that-- this AM477 will not help Lincoln Public Schools, will not give them additional funding power that they need. But that is traditionally how they'd been able to provide for these more expensive-- they're called capital investments, capital improvements that exceed a certain threshold. So thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Raybould. Seeing no one else in the queue. Senator Holdcroft, you're recognized to close on your amendment.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Mr. President. Yes, AM477 is not really designed to help the larger school districts because I feel like they have enough flexibility. This really only applies when you have a failed bond effort. And then LB135, LB135-- at that time, you have to wait 10 months before you can have another bond, which should really-- it's really not 10 months because you have to-- it's really 12 months because you have to wait for the next regularly scheduled election. So this really is designed to help out school districts like Gretna, Elkhorn, and, and Bennington, who are, you know, they-- if they have a failed bond election-- they're growing so fast they need to build another elementary school almost every other year. So this gives them an opportunity to get right back in the game, do a better job-- frankly, do a better job of selling the bond to the constituents. Because if bonds fail, it's largely because you-- they didn't-- the school board didn't make its case to the constituents. Either the, the, the price tag is too high or it's being applied to something that, you know, that the people don't feel like they, they want to vote for. So this is to help out those fastest growing school, school, school districts that have a, a bond failure. So I'd appreciate your green vote on AM477. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Holdcroft. Members, the question is the adoption of AM477. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 30 ayes, 3 nays on the adoption of the amendment, Mr. President.

KELLY: The amendment is adopted. Speaker Arch would like to recognize a guest under the south balcony: the chair of the Irish Senate, Mark Daly. Please stand and be recognized by the Nebraska Legislature.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

Seeing no one else in the queue. Senator Holdcroft, you're recognized to close.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you. Mr. President, I'll be brief. We've been on this a long time. Just a couple things. In the original hearing, that was the original bill, LB135, which only allowed special elections in the even years in conjunction with primary and secondary-- primary and general elections. So now with the amendment, there's the opportunity for, you know, having elections every six months. I think that was-- you know, at, at the testifier, we, we only really had two construction agencies come, and one was the Brotherhood of Elect-- Electrical Workers, and the other was the AGC, which represents a number of construction agencies. But I think we have somewhat allayed their concerns with, with the, with the amendment which we just voted over. You know, it's kind of interesting that Senator Raybourn-- Raybour-- Raybould said, you know, that Lincoln schools bundles their bonds issues so they only have a bond once every five to six years. Well, if you're having a, an opportunity to, to vote on that bond issue every six months, I think you could figure that into your planning process. And that's really what it comes down to, is we need school boards to look out more than just a year. They need to be looking out two and three years, planning their major projects, getting those bond packages together, and then holding an election in conjunction with a fixed date. So that is-- that's the bill. And I would appreciate your green vote. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Holdcroft. Members, the question is to advance LB135 to E&R Initial. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 27 ayes, 9 nays on the advancement of LB135, Mr. President.

KELLY: LB135 advances to E&R Initial. Mr. Clerk for items.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Thank you, Mr. President. Committee on Health and Human Services, chaired by Senator Hardin, reports LB610 to General File. There are committee amendments. Senator John Cavanaugh would print amendments to LB316; Senator von Gillern, amendments to LB568; Senator Brandt to LB170; Senator Riepe, amendments to LB320 [SIC-- LB230]. Senator John Cavanaugh designates LB192 as his committee priority bill. Senator Hardin prioritizes LB168 as his individual priority bill. Senator Bosn selects LB559 as her priority bill; Senator Clements, LB468 as his priority bill. And the Natural Resources Committee designates LB36 and LB317 as priority bills. And notice of

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

committee hearings from the Revenue Committee. And Senator Dungan has a proposed rule change to print in the Journal. That's all that I have, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Please return to the agenda.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President: General File, LB529, introduced by Senator Jacobson. A bill for an act relating to the Nebraska Investment Council; to amend Section 84-602.04, Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and Sections 73-801, 73-806, 73-817, and 73-817, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024; to provide certain exemptions for the Nebraska Investment Council under the State Procurement Act and the Taxpayer Transparency Act relating to contracts; to harmonize provisions; to repeal the original sections. The bill was first read on January 22. It was referred to the Committee on Government, Military and Veteran Affairs. That committee reports the bill to General File with a committee amendment.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Jacobson, you're recognized to open.

JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. President. And good afternoon, colleagues. I'm here to introduce LB529, a bill that provides the necessary exemptions to the State Procurement Act and the Taxpayer Transparency Act to allow the Nebraska Investment Council to effectively manage Nebraska's investment assets. The Nebraska Investment Council manages over \$43.5 billion in state assets across 32 investment programs. Its efficiency depends on its ability to negotiate favorable investment agreements that maximize the state's returns. However, the 2024 amendment to the State Procurement Act created some restrictions that inadvertently hinder the Nebraska Investment Council's ability to enter into specific investment contracts. These restrictions create unnecessary barriers to Nebraska's ability to effectively and efficiently participate in competitive investment opportunities. Under current law, the Nebraska Investment Council is limited by contract duration, indemnification clauses, and jurisdictional agreements. Investment contracts often require flexibility in, in these areas. LB529 allows Nebraska to make sound investment decisions by exempting Nebraska Investment Council from procurement rules incompatible with industry standards. These changes are necessary to align Nebraska with the best investment management. This ensures that our state remains competitive in securing high-quality investment opportunities. Now, let me be clear: LB529 does not remove oversight. It simply gives the Nebraska Investment Council the flexibility to serve the best interests of Nebraska taxpayers.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

Thank you for your time. I ask for your green vote on LB529 and would be happy to answer any questions. I-- and I am also in support of, of the AM, AM27, which is going to be up next. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Jacobson. As the Clerk stated, there is a committee amendment. Senator Sanders, you're recognized to open.

SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. President. The Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee held its hearing on Senator Jacobson's bill on February 5. We heard from Ms. Elaine [SIC] Hung, our chief investment officer. She explained that the bill simply recognizes the nature of the current fiscal services marketplace. There was no opposition at the hearing, and our committee voted unanimously to advance this bill to General File with AM13. AM13 is a white copy amendment. Instead of creating a new section of statute, the amendment adds the Nebraska Investment Council to a preexec-- preexisting exemption in the State Procurement Act. Changes in the bill would apply to actions taken by the council on or after July 19, 2024. The amendment includes the emergency clause. I would ask you to vote green on AM27 to LB529. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Sanders. Seeing no one else in the queue. You're recognized to close. And waive closing. Members, the question is the adoption of AM27. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 33 ayes, 0 nays on the adoption of the amendment, Mr. President.

KELLY: AM27 is adopted. Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: I have nothing further on the bill, Mr. President.

KELLY: Senator Jacobson, you're recognized to close on LB529.

JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. President. I'll be very brief. I just want to first thank the Government Committee for advancing-- or, for the amendment and advancing the bill. I also want to just point out that Ellen Hung has done an outstanding job as our investment manager. She does a wonderful job of putting the pieces together. Very hard worker. The State Investment Council has done really a superb job of handling our investments and, and creating superior returns without taking undue risk. So I appreciate the support. Encourage you to vote LB529 forward. Thank you, Mr. President.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Jacobson. Members, the question is the advancement of LB529 to E&R Initial. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 37 ayes, 0 nays on the advancement of LB529, Mr. President.

KELLY: LB529 is advanced to E&R Initial. Mr. Clerk, next item on the agenda.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President: General File, LB326, introduced by Senator Jacobson. A bill for an act relating to insurance; to amend Sections 44-1523, 44-1524, 44-1525, 44-1527, 44-1528, 44-1529, 44-1530, 44-1532, 44-40-- 44-2403, 44-2405, 44-2406, 44-20-- 44-2407, 44-2411, and 44-6135, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska; to define and redefine terms; to change powers and duties of the director of insurance; to change provisions relating to the Unfair Insurance Trade Practices Act, the Nebraska Property and Liability Insurance Guaranty Association Act, and mutual insurance holding companies; to change provisions relating to the board of directors of the, of the Nebraska Property and Liability Insurance Guaranty Association and first-par-- first-party and third-party claims; to change provisions relating to settlements, releases, compromises, and judgments; to provide for defenses as prescribed; to change requirements relating to the exhaustion of remedies; to change requirements relating to the annual statement as prescribed; to eliminate the Health Insurance Access Act and the Health Care Purchasing Pool Act; to eliminate obsolete provisions; to harmonize provisions; to repeal the original sections; and to outright repeal Sections 44-5301, 44-5302, 44-5303, 44-5304, 44-5305, 44-5306, 44-5307, 44-5308, 44-5309, 44-5310, 44-5311, and 44-6701, and 44-6702, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska. Bill was read for the first time on January 16 of this year. Bill was referred to the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee. That committee reports the bill to General File. I have no amendments on the bill.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Jacobson, you're recognized to open.

JACOBSON: Thank you again, Mr. President. And once again, good morning, colleagues. This morning, I'm asking for your green vote on LB326. LB326 was brought to me by the Department of Insurance, and it amends and outright repeals a number of insurance-related statutes. First, it updates the Unfair Insurance Trade Practices Act to include jur-- include jurisdictions over lead generators who promulgate advertisements, emails, phone calls, and other forms of communication

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

to obtain information to use in the sale of insurance. The bill also amends the State Property and Casualty Insurance Guaranty Association Act to conform with changes made to the National Association of Insurance co-- commissioner's model. The changes amend the definition of covered claim to insure guaranty fund coverage when a policy is transferred from one insurer to another and clarifies that cybersecurity is covered under the fund and defines that coverage. LB326 also updates the Mutual Insurance Holding Company Act to clarify that companies may use either generally accepted accounting principles or statutory accounting principles. Finally, the bill repeals the Health Insurance Access Act and the Health Care Purchasing Pool Act, which are no longer app-- applicable or necessary. Again, I would appreciate your su-- support for this important bill. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Jacobson. Seeing no one else in the queue. You're recognized to close. And waive closing. Members, the question is to advance LB326 to E&R Initial. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 27 ayes, 0 nays on the advancement of LB326, Mr. President.

KELLY: LB326 is advanced to E&R Initial. Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President: General File, LB457, introduced by Senator Bostar. A bill for an act relating to public health and welfare; to amend Section 71-1908, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024; to require the Department of Health and Human Services in consultation with the State Department of Education to develop model policies relating to "anaphyxis" for the use in schools and licensed child care programs as prescribed; to change the provisions of the Child Care Licensing Act; to require school districts to employ a policy relating to anaphylaxis as prescribed; to provide powers and duties to the Department of Health and Ed-- Human Services and the State Department of Education; to limit the out-of-pocket costs of medically necessary "ephinerim" injectors and-- covered individual as prescribed; to harmonize provisions; and to repeal the original section. Bill was first read on January 21 of this year. The bill was referred to the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee. That bill reports the bill to General File. I have no amendments, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Bostar, you're recognized to open.

BOSTAR: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. LB457 is a bill to improve the preparedness of Nebraska schools and licensed child care programs for responding to anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis is a severe and potentially life-threatening allergic reaction that requires immediate medical intervention, typically through the use of an epinephrine injector. Every year, children across the country experience anaphylactic episodes in schools or child care settings, where a delayed or improper response can have dire consequences. As of 2022, an estimated 197,282 Nebraskans have food allergies, and more than 36,000 are children. Currently, Nebraska lacks a comprehensive statewide approach to managing anaphylaxis for both schools and child care programs. LB457 seeks to fill this gap by requiring the Department of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the State Department of Education, to develop statewide model policies that guide school districts and licensed child care programs on best practices for preventing, responding to, and communicating about anaphylaxis. This legislation provides recommendations and resources to help ensure that Nebraska schools and child care facilities are well-prepared to respond effectively to severe allergic reactions. By July 1, 2026, school districts that do not already have an anaphylaxis policy will be required to adopt one. Likewise, licensed child care programs caring for children with known severe allergies will need to adopt and publish an anaphylaxis policy in their program manuals or handbooks, helping to promote consistency and clarity in emergency response procedures. LB457 also proposes to make epinephrin autoinjectors, or EpiPens, vital for saving lives during allergic reactions more accessible and affordable for the nearly 200,000 families in Nebraska grappling with severe allergies by capping the out-of-pocket expense to no more than \$60 per two pack for covered individuals. The absence of a cure for life-threatening allergies underscores the critical importance of epinephrine autoinjectors for preventing fatal anaphylaxis, which is a life-threatening allergic reaction that, without prompt administration of epinephrine, the consequences can be dire. Unfortunately, one of the greatest burdens severe allergy patients and families face is the rising cost of epinephrine autoinjectors. Currently, the cost of brand-name EpiPens ranges from \$650 to \$730, depending on the pharmacy. And the generic version costs between \$320 and \$750, making it too expensive for many Nebraskans who can't-- who cannot simply afford the only medicine that can save their lives. This trend is nothing new, as six years ago, CNN reported that these lifesaving devices had increased by more than 400% since 2007. While the price of epinephrine autoinjectors continues to rise, so too has the use of high deductible health insurance plans, as they've increased nationally by 83.7% over the last ten years. This combination is problematic for food allergy

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

families, as a recent NBC news story summarized the problem: even as the cost of EpiPens and other epinephrine autoinjectors have stabilized, many are paying thousands of dollars out of pocket each year due to high deductible insurance. For a typical family living in Nebraska with a child who has a severe allergy, they must purchase each, each and every year at least two packs of epinephrine autoinjectors-- one for at home and the other for at school, which means that their total cost of \$14,000 is 88.2% of the median monthly mortgage payment in Nebraska of \$1,586. For a family with children who have severe allergies, this bill provides peace of mind knowing that schools and child care providers have clear, standardized procedures to prevent and respond to anaphylaxis. It also makes epinephrine injectors more affordable, reducing financial barriers to obtaining this essential lifesaving medication. LB457 was heard in the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee on February 10. The committee advanced the bill on a vote of 7-0. The bill has no state fiscal impact and received no opposition testimony at the hearing. I'd ask for your green vote on LB457. Thank you very much.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Bostar. Seeing no one else in the queue. You're recognized to close. And waive closing. Members, the question is to advance LB457 to E&R Initial. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 31 ayes, 0 nays on the advancement of LB457, Mr. President.

KELLY: LB457 advances to E&R Initial. Next item on the agenda, please.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President: General File, LB84, introduced by Senator Rountree. Bill for an act relating to public health; to amend Section 38-3113, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024; to adopt the School Psychologist Interstate Licensure Compact; to harmonize provisions; and to repeal the original section. Bill was first read on January 10 of this year. Bill was referred to Health and Human Services Committee. That committee has placed the bill on General File. There are no amendments, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Rountree, you're recognized to open.

ROUNTREE: Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning, colleagues and those that are watching online this morning. Today, I rise to introduce LB84, which would have Nebraska join the School Psychologist Interstate Licensure Compact. Interstate compacts are our legislatively enacted

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

agreements between two or more states. This compact aims to provide greater mobility for a licensed school psychologist in our country. The Department of Defense and the Council of State Governments have partnered over recent years to craft interstate compacts for many occupations, of which Nebraska has become a member state. In Sarpy County, we have many families that move in and out of our community due to military service, and it is important that we make their transition to living in Nebraska as easy as possible. Allowing licensed individuals to get work sooner helps families plant roots in Nebraska and become a member of our community. The Interstate Compact for School Psychologists would allow a licensed school psychologist who wishes to move into a member state to use their existing license as proof they are qualified to receive a license in the new state. The compact commission, which is made of representatives from each member state, will facilitate the transfer of documentation. School psychologists who hold an active, unencumbered license in a member state will be eligible to use the interstate compact and obtain a license in another member state. There are currently only two states who have joined the School Psychology Compact: Colorado and West Virginia. And eight states are currently looking at adopting the compact. While this is still a growing compact, I believe the opportunity for additional school psychologists in our state is something we should seriously consider. Mental health in schools is a serious concern that we hear about every day. LB84 provides us an opportunity to grow our school psychologist workforce in Nebraska and to ensure our students are able to access mental health care. Allowing greater mobility shows that Nebraska is a worker-friendly state ready for new providers to practice in our communities. LB84 was voted out of the Health and Human Services Committee unanimously with no opposition testimony. So I appreciate your attention on this bill and ask that you vote green on LB84. And thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Rountree. Seeing no one else in the queue. You're recognized to close.

ROUNTREE: Thank you again, colleagues, for your-- just listening to me on this bill. As I said before, LB84 will have Nebraska join the School Psychologist Interstate Compact and allow greater mobility for licensed school psychologists. As we look at different ways to improve the mental health landscape in Nebraska, I believe this is a chance to attract additional workforce to our state. As I said, this bill was voted out unanimously. And I ask for your green bote on-- vote on LB84. Thank you.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Rountree. Members, the question is the advancement of LB84 to E&R Initial. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 32 ayes, 0 nays on the advancement of LB84, Mr. President.

KELLY: LB84 advances to E&R Initial. Mr. Clerk for the next item on the agenda.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President: General File, LB355, introduced by Senator Andersen. A bill for an act relating to census data; to amend Sections 13-1906, 81-1203, 81-12,108, Revised-- Issue Statutes of Nebraska, and Sections 13-2610, 18-2103, 77-6831, and 77-6906, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024; to change certain census data provisions relating to development districts and a committee formed under the Convention Center Facility Financing Assistance Act; to redefine terms under the Community Development Law, the Imagine Nebraska Act, the Urban Redevelopment Act, a job training grant program, and, and the Nebraska Innovation Hub Act; to provide an operative date; and to repeal the real-- original sections; and to declare an emergency. The bill was first read on January 16 of this year. The bill was referred to the Revenue Committee. That committee reports the bill back to General File. I have no amendments pending, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator And-- Andersen, you're recognized to open.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Today, I'm introducing LB355. It is a simple cleanup bill brought by the Department of Ed-- Economic Development to ensure the agency can effectively distribute aid to economic development districts. The bill outdates-- or, updates outdated statutory references to the U.S. census and provides DED with the flexibility to use alternative, reliable data sources when necessary. These changes will allow the department to continue to work without unnecessary delays caused by outdated language in state laws. The need for this update arose when the 2020 census no longer provided certain population data that had previously been available and used for distributing aid. To ensure the continuity of these programs, DED successfully used similar data from Census Bureau's Population Estimating Program. LB355 would formally authorize DED to use appropriate alternative data sources in cases where specific census data is available-- or, unavailable, preventing future disruptions. By modernizing statutory language and aligning references with current

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 12, 2025

Census Bureau practices, LB355 eliminates obsolete provisions and ensures DED can administer its programs efficiently. This bill is a straightforward fix that allows DED to do its job effectively and continues supporting Nebraska's economic development efforts. I ask you all to advance this to Select File so the Department of Economic Development can better distribute aid to the economic development districts throughout our great state. Again, colleagues, I appreciate your green vote on LB355 to advance it to Select File. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Andersen. Seeing no one else in the queue. You're recognized to close. And waive closing. Members, the question is the advancement of LB355 to E&R Initial. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 29 nays, 0 nays on the advancement of LB355, Mr. President.

KELLY: LB355 is advanced to E&R Initial. Mr. Clerk for an item.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Holdcroft would move to adjourn until Thursday, March 13, 2025 at 9 a.m.

KELLY: Members, you have heard the motion to adjourn. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed, nay. The Legislature is adjourned.