

Nebraska Association of County Officials Legislative Report



January 25, 2008

Bill Introductions End, Hearings Begin

When the ten-day period for bill introductions ended on Wednesday, 471 new bills had been introduced. Each bill is assigned to one of the Legislature's 14 standing committees for a public hearing. The hearings, which began on Tuesday, are held in the afternoon while debate on bills carried over from last

year occurs in the morning. As committees advance bills to the floor, they will begin to appear on the Legislature's daily agenda for debate. Senators have begun selecting their 2008 priority bills in hopes of facilitating debate on those measures.

Road Funding Bills Set for Debate on Jan. 30

Three bills with the same goal – increased funding for roads – will be heard by the Revenue Committee next Wednesday. **LB 758**, by Sen. Carol Hudkins, would increase gas taxes by one cent with proceeds directed to counties, cities and the state. **LB 846**, by Sen. Deb Fischer, would increase the wholesale tax on fuel. **LB 881**, by Sen. Arnie Stuthman would tax ethanol producers with the proceeds going to the Highway Trust Fund. Although some of the state's budget surplus could be targeted as a means for additional road funds, numerous other bills have been introduced that seek money from the General Fund or cash reserves for other projects or programs. Regardless of the source, no road funding bills will advance until a coalition of

senators agree on a process for generating ongoing support.

A proposal by Sen. Tony Fulton to shift motor vehicle taxes from schools to counties and cities, **LB 741**, will be heard by the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee on Tuesday, along with one of several bills dealing with expressways. **LB 1034**, introduced by Sen. LeRoy Loudon, would designate certain highways as expressways. **LB 771** and **LB 1035**, which would provide funding for specified expressways, have not been scheduled for hearing.

The Transportation Committee will also hear **LB 837**, which would eliminate restrictions on closing railroad crossings, on Tuesday, Jan. 29.

Committees Hear Bills with County Impact

County officials, including NACO board members, and NACO staff testified on bills before a half-dozen committees this week. Here are some highlights.

Deputy clerks of the district court would not be required to be county residents under **LB 775**. Sen. John Wightman introduced the bill at NACO's request. Several clerks of the district court testified in support of the bill, as well as **LB 772**, a bill by Sen. Carol Hudkins to require the Supreme Court to pay district court security costs. A sheriff also testified in support of **LB 772**.

Fees for filing documents in the register of deeds office would increase for the first time since 1971 under **LB 776**. Up to five lots could be indexed without charge. An amendment was offered to replace proposed fee changes for filing state and federal tax liens with a flat fee. NACO supported the bill. The Realtors Association and Home Builders Association opposed the bill.

County treasurers would be required to accept partial payments of property taxes and send additional notices of delinquent property tax under **LB 814**. An amendment was offered to clean up an error in the proposed notice timeline.

The penalty for delinquent filing of personal property taxes would take effect sooner if a bill introduced by Sen. Arnie Stuthman on NACO's behalf is adopted. **LB 985** is intended to encourage timely filing to give assessors more time to complete certifications of values.

Among other things, **LB 965** would eliminate multiple copies of Form 521, which reports the sales price of real property. This language is intended to enable the forms to be placed online. Ruth Sorensen, Property Tax Administrator, testified in support of the bill and offered to provide necessary information and support to make the proposed process workable. The bill also changes dates for certifying certain values to assessors.

County Board Workshop On-Line Registration Available

Human resources issues, the Highway Trust Fund, and numerous other topics on are the agenda for NACO's County Board Workshop. The workshop will be held Feb. 6-8 at the

Holiday Inn Convention Center in Kearney. A tentative agenda and on-line registration form are available on the front page of the NACO website at www.nacone.org.

Selected Hearing Schedule for the Week of Jan. 28

The following is a list of some of the bills with county impact that have been scheduled for public hearing next week. Not all committees had completed next week's schedule at the time this newsletter went to print. The Legislature publishes a complete schedule of hearings for the upcoming week each Friday. Please check the Legislature's website for a full listing.

Monday, Jan. 28

General Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB995 Change provisions relating to cemeteries

Transportation and Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB827 Change the retention period for motor vehicle registration records
- LB834 Change procedures for notation of liens on certificates of title
- LB910 Require that motor vehicle and motorboat titling be performed by county treasurers
- LB709 Permit motor vehicle and motorcycle dealers to issue certificates of title and registration and license plates

Tuesday, Jan. 29

Transportation and Telecommunications

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB837 Change provisions relating to railroad crossings
- LB741 Change distribution of motor vehicle tax proceeds
- LB1034 Designate the Nebraska Expressway System

Urban Affairs

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB997 Change provisions relating to economic development programs of political subdivisions

Wednesday, Jan. 30

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB758 Increase motor fuel taxes and allocate and reallocate revenue
- LB846 Change motor fuel taxes
- LB881 Impose an excise tax on production of ethanol
- LB946 Impose an excise tax on ethanol production
- LB1040 Impose a tax on ethanol production, terminate an excise tax, and change funding for the Water Resources Cash Fund

Natural Resources

Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB743 Eliminate restrictions on trapping wildlife in county road rights-of-way

Jan. 30 --Natural Resources con't.

- LB865 Allow trapping of raptors within the county road right-of-way

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB930 Change provisions relating to dangerous sex offender evaluations
- LB957 Change the Sex Offender Registration Act
- LB735 Rename the Sexual Predator Residency Restriction Act and provide for certain employment restrictions

Health and Human Services

Room 1510 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB759 Change provisions relating to relabeling and redispensing prescription drugs
- LB830 Adopt the Prescription Drug Cost Savings Act

Thursday, Jan. 31

Revenue

Room 1524 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB757 Adopt the Volunteer Emergency Responders Incentive Act

Government, Military and Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB803 Provide for election-day voter registration for statewide general elections
- LB991 Provide for election day voter registration
- LB1062 Change election recount provisions
- LR225CA Constitutional amendment to require manually counted paper ballots at elections

Judiciary

Room 1113 - 1:30 p.m.

- LB1024 Provide for listings maintained by the Secretary of State to facilitate filings and service of process under the Political Subdivisions Tort Claims Act
- LB901 Provide immunity for emergency management workers as prescribed

Friday, Feb. 1

Government, Military and Veterans Affairs

Room 1507 - 1:30 p.m.

- Change provisions relating to applications for veterans aid