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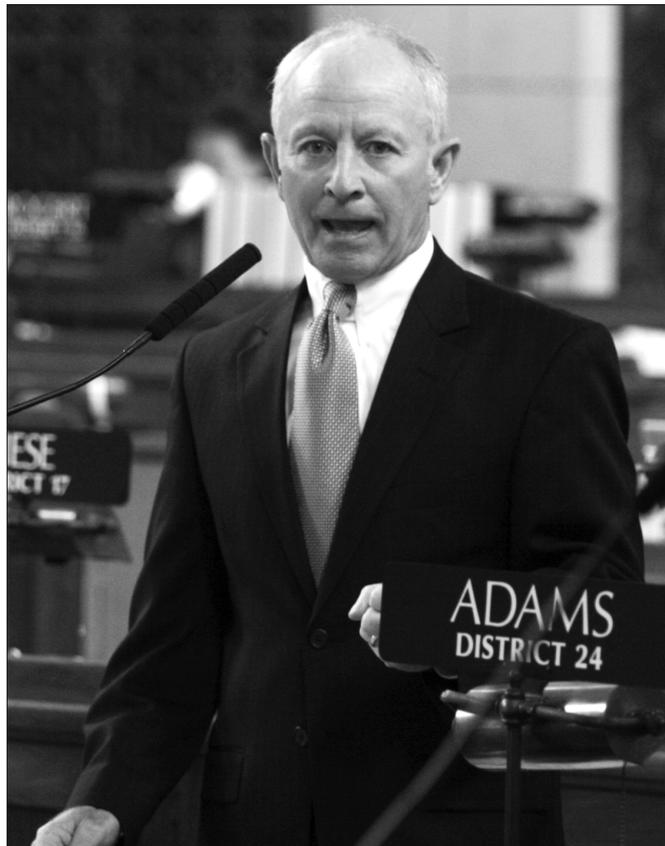
Bill funding state aid to schools stalls

After nearly three days of debate, a bill aimed at slowing the growth of state aid to schools stalled in general file discussion April 22.

LB545, introduced by York Sen. Greg Adams, originally would have reduced state aid to schools, but an amendment offered by the Education Committee, adopted 39-0, replaced the bill and would use \$234 million of federal stimulus funds to increase state aid. The current state aid funding formula calls for \$295 million, Adams said.

Other provisions of the bill, as amended, would:

- recreate reorganization incentives by allocating \$800,000 in lottery funds to small school districts that consolidate;
- reformulate an existing hold harmless provision in learning communities;
- exempt early retirement agreements made before July 1, 2009, from spending lids;
- make changes to employer retirement contributions, excluding them from spending lids and future general fund



Sen. Greg Adams introduced LB545 in an effort to slow the growth of state aid to schools, which he said is unsustainable at its current level.

- operating expenditures;
- reduce school district spending authority from 2.5 percent of their general fund operating expenditures to 1.5 percent;
- base the instructional time allowance on the statewide average rather than on a comparison group average;

- enable school districts to use stimulus bond programs with the current levy cap of 5.2 cents per \$100 valuation; and
- set the certification date for state aid to schools as March 1 for next year.

Debate focused on how to address the \$61 million gap between the available federal stimulus funds and what the current formula demands.

Adams: Reduce averaging adjustment by 10 percent

Another amendment offered by the Education Committee would address the gap by significantly reducing the averaging adjustment figure included in the state aid formula. Because large districts often spend less per student than small districts, the averaging adjustment was designed to help close the gap between the average spent per student in large and small districts. Under current law, the state contributes 100 percent of the difference between the statewide average amount spent per student and the average of large

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State aid to schools bill stalls

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districts.

The averaging adjustment, created under last year's LB988, has caused unexpectedly large and unsustainable growth in the formula, Adams said.

He offered an amendment to the committee amendment that would lessen the reduction to the averaging adjustment figure. Under Adams' amendment, the state would contribute 90 percent of the difference between the statewide average amount spent per student and the average of large districts.

Although larger districts would receive significantly less than expected under the amendment, Adams said it would result in a 10 percent increase in state aid over the previous year.

But several senators said reducing the averaging adjustment is unfair because large districts would bear the brunt of the reduction. Omaha Public Schools, for example, would receive \$6.3 million less next year than school officials expected based on the current school aid formula.

"Does it make every school happy?" Adams asked. "No, but in the context of the times that we're dealing with, a 10 percent increase works pretty well."

Omaha Sen. Tom White said reducing the averaging adjustment would give less funding to the schools that need it most – large districts in high-need areas.

"We're cutting the pie with slivers for the poor and the minorities and that is just wrong," he said.

Adams' amendment was adopted on a 33-8 vote.

Council: Reduce basic funding to schools by 1 percent

Two failed amendments were aimed at increasing aid to larger school districts.

Omaha Sen. Brenda Council offered an amendment to the committee amendment, which failed 16-30, that would address the \$60 million shortfall in a different way. Council's amendment would have restored the averaging adjustment and instead reduced basic funding to schools by 1 percent over the next two years. The stabilization funding would be increased and extended to help small school districts absorb the cuts, Council said. Under her amendment, the 5 percent stabilization would be changed to 3.5 percent in fiscal year 2009-10 and grow to 5 percent in FY2010-11.

Council said her amendment would ensure that all school districts



Sen. Brenda Council offered an amendment that would have reduced basic funding to schools by 1 percent.

share in the \$61 million reduction.

"We can get closer to fairness and equity by addressing this issue on the basis of proportionality," Council said.

Lincoln Sen. Bill Avery disagreed, saying policy decisions should be driven by needs, rather than which schools get increased aid and how much they get.

"I think we have to understand what fair means," Avery said. "When we provide aid to schools according to their needs, that is fair."

Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist supported Council's amendment, saying it would honor the intentions of state aid equalization.

"We're not changing the formula," Nordquist said. "We're going to continue to meet those needs. Everyone's going to have to come together and take a little bit of a hit."

But Adams opposed Council's amendment, saying it falls outside the principles set forth in the state aid formula. He said changes to funding should be kept within the framework of the formula, rather than making across-the-board funding reductions.

Elk Creek Sen. Lavon Heidemann, chairperson of the Appropriations Committee, also opposed the amendment, saying it would cost the state about \$37 million for the biennium.

"That's money that we have not accounted for," he said.

Ashford: Delay 50 percent reduction by one year

Ashford offered an amendment to the committee amendment that

continued on next page

A CLOSER LOOK.....

would continue the 10 percent reduction of the averaging adjustment into the second year of the biennium. Under the amendment, the state would continue to contribute 90 percent of the averaging adjustment for the second year of the biennium before reducing it to 50 percent in the third year. This would allow larger districts to gradually adjust to further reduction of the averaging adjustment, Ashford said. The amendment would cost the state \$24 million.

But Ashford said the cost would be worth it because it would help a majority of the state's students. Twenty-six districts in the state are affected by the averaging adjustment, he said, and those districts educate 85 percent of the state's students.

Heidemann opposed the amendment, saying the budget could not provide \$24 million.

"We don't have it," he said. "We would have to go back and make some hard cuts."

Ashford's amendment failed on a 16-29 vote.



Sen. Brad Ashford's amendment would have reduced the averaging adjustment gradually.

Sustainability of school funding questioned

Other debate centered on the sustainability of the funding formula. Some senators raised concerns about the long-term effect of using one-time stimulus funds to fund state aid to schools.

Nordquist said although using federal funds for state aid would save general fund money now, the state would pay for it in coming years.



Sen. Jeremy Nordquist said lawmakers should consider the state's future financial resources.

"Sustainability is the word of the day," Nordquist said. "I have a concern over the direction we're headed. Without having any general fund dollars in this situation, we are setting ourselves up for a huge cliff effect."

Sen. Heath Mello of Omaha agreed, saying it is irresponsible for senators to bypass state funding obligations by using federal stimulus funds. He said any increases to state aid under the bill could not be attributed to the state, but rather to the federal government.

"We shouldn't be patting ourselves on the back," Mello said. "We're not putting general fund dollars toward schools. We are giving a zero percent increase over the next biennium."



Sen. Tom White moved to bracket the bill.

Cloture motion fails

White offered a motion to bracket the bill until June 4, which would effectively kill it. He said the bill is unworkable as is and every effort to change it has been defeated. As written, the bill would result in insufficient funding for minority students in larger districts, he said. Schools up against their levy lid would be forced to cut jobs, White said, adding that OPS has announced 99 teacher and school staff layoffs.

"In what universe have we done a good job?" White asked.

Avery opposed the motion, saying senators must act on state aid to schools.

"We're in a financial downturn and we're all in it together," he said. "This bracket motion is wrong. If we do [bracket the bill], we won't have a budget."

Adams made a motion to invoke cloture, or cease debate and vote immediately on the bill's advancement. His motion failed on a 30-17 vote, falling three votes short.

The Legislature adjourned before taking any further action on the bill. ■

A CLOSER LOOK.....

Over the course of three days, senators debated solutions to a funding gap in state aid for schools. The current state aid formula calls for \$295 million. Lawmakers voted to use \$234 million of federal stimulus funds for state aid to schools, but senators had different opinions on how best to address the \$61 million funding shortage. The bill proposed reducing the state's contribution to larger school districts designed to help equalize the average amount spent per student in small and large school districts. But some senators proposed making a 1 percent decrease to basic funding across the board. The bill remains on general file.



Clockwise from top-left: Sens. Lavon Heidemann, Bill Avery, Brenda Council, Mike Friend, Jeremy Nordquist, Tom White, Robert Giese, and Greg Adams.

ISSUES UPFRONT

Executive Board

New planning committee proposed

The creation of a committee devoted to setting goals and benchmarks for the state received first-round approval April 22.

As amended by an Executive Board Committee amendment, adopted 40-0, LB653 would establish the Planning Committee as a special committee of the Legislature. Committee members would include the speaker, Executive Board Committee chairperson, Appropriations Committee chairperson and six senators chosen by the Executive Board chairperson. The bill was introduced by Scottsbluff Sen. John Harms.

The committee would be charged with analyzing data about the state, indentifying long-term issues, setting goals and benchmarks, issuing yearly finding reports and proposing legislation.

Given the globalization of the economy, the state's aging population and an outmigration of youth, Harms said, long-term planning is needed to guarantee the success of the state.

"It's important for us to understand what the new economic opportunities will be in the future and what the challenges will be," Harms said. "It's very clear to me that the only way we will accomplish this is through some long-range plan."



Sen. John Harms



Omaha Sen. Pete Pirsch spoke in support of LB653. He said the bill has the potential to improve the Legislature by taking a more comprehensive approach to policymaking.

"Far too often, we as a body approve issues on a piecemeal, case-by-case basis," Pirsch said. "No business would operate without looking at a long-term strategy."

Fullerton Sen. Annette Dubas also spoke in favor of the bill. She said the bill would enable the Legislature to provide benchmarks to identify successes and failures.

Senators voted 39-0 to adopt a technical amendment containing an emergency clause and advanced LB653 to select file 45-0.

Government, Military & Veterans Affairs

Extension for convention center financing assistance advances

Localities would have an additional two years to submit convention center projects for state assistance under a bill receiving first-round approval April 22.

LB402, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Bill Avery, would extend the deadline from June 1, 2010, to Dec. 31, 2010, for applications made under the Convention Center Facility Assistance Act. An Avery amendment, adopted 35-0, further extended the date to Dec. 31, 2012.



Sen. Bill Avery

The Convention Center Facility Assistance Act permits political subdivisions that have approved general obligation bonds for convention center projects to apply for the remittance of state sales tax revenues generated by entities benefiting from the facility.

The convention assistance program requires that general obligation bonds receive an affirmative vote of more than 51 percent of the electorate in a statewide regular primary or general election. LB402 would lower this requirement by permitting bonds approved by more than 50 percent of voters at any statewide or local primary, special, joint or general election.

Avery said the bill would grant the city of Lincoln greater flexibility in submitting a proposed arena for state assistance. Bonding currently

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is difficult to obtain, he said, adding that city sales tax revenues are behind projections and total property valuation is expected to decrease.

“The times are bad and the city of Lincoln needs a little more time to make an application,” Avery said.

Grand Island Sen. Mike Gloor spoke in support of LB402. He said Grand Island has benefitted from investing in public facilities.

“Good things happen when you pay attention to your facilities and what they can accommodate,” Gloor said.

LB402 advanced to select file 39-0.

Health & Human Services

Bill would change statewide trauma system

Senators gave first-round approval April 22 to a bill that would bring Nebraska’s Statewide Trauma System Act into compliance with federal requirements.

LB195, introduced by Papillion Sen. Tim Gay, would revise several definitions relating to the statewide trauma system and would require that:

- basic level trauma centers maintain appropriate equipment for resuscitation and stabilization of pediatric trauma patients;
- general level trauma centers provide trauma-trained physicians and nurses to the emer-



Sen. Tim Gay

gency department within 30 minutes; and

- comprehensive level trauma centers provide an emergency trauma team available within 15 minutes, 24 hours a day.

In addition, the bill would require that trauma plans be updated every five years instead of every two years and would update the duties of the State Trauma Advisory Board and the state Department of Health and Human Services.

A committee amendment, adopted 37-0, incorporated six additional bills into the measure.

LB132, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Tony Fulton, would make technical changes to the state Barber Act.

LB220, introduced by Grand Island Sen. Mike Gloor, is a technical clean-up bill relating to pharmacy practice in Nebraska.

LB250, also introduced by Gloor, is a clean-up bill relating to physician assistant practice. Among other provisions, LB250 would prohibit a physician from supervising more than four physician assistants at a time and would allow physician assistants to sign birth and death certificates.

LB367, introduced by Gloor, would make changes to the state’s certificate of need requirements. Among other provisions, the bill would exempt from certificate of need requirements a transfer or relocation of long-term care beds from one facility to another.

LB451, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell, would update terms relating to hearing instruments, allow for one member not licensed as an audiologist to serve on the state Board of Hearing Instrument Specialists and permit hearing instrument fitters and dealers to practice under an existing license until it expires.

LB515, introduced by Norfolk Sen.

Mike Flood, would create the following new classifications for out-of-hospital emergency care providers: emergency medical responder, advanced emergency medical technician and paramedic. The bill would allow for temporary licensure of care providers who have completed educational requirements but have not yet completed the testing requirements for licensure.

Gay said the bills included in the committee amendment were chosen because they will make medical practitioners’ jobs easier.

“This bill will go a long way to helping the state deliver those services that our constituents are looking for,” he said.

LB195 was advanced to select file on a 40-0 vote.

Safer cigarette bill amended, advanced

Senators amended and advanced a bill April 23 that would require cigarettes sold in Nebraska to meet fire safety requirements by adopting the Reduced Cigarette Ignition Propensity Act.

According to Platte Center Sen. Arnie Stuthman, sponsor of LB198, reduced ignition propensity cigarettes are manufactured with additional layers of paper so the tip does not maintain enough heat to ignite other materials if left unattended. Such cigarettes carry an “FSC” stamp or other approved marking signifying fire standard compliance.

Stuthman offered an amendment on select file, adopted 30-0, that would:



Sen. Arnie Stuthman

ISSUES UPFRONT.....

- change the definition of cigarette to ensure that cigars are not included under the bill's provisions;
- allow the state fire marshal to adopt another state's reduced ignition propensity standards or a comparable subsequent national testing method;
- remove the state fire marshal's authority to initiate court action for violations of the act;
- allow the state tax commissioner to seize non-compliant cigarettes; and
- move the effective date from July 1, 2009 to Jan. 1, 2010.

The bill provides for a fine for retailers of \$500 for a first offense of knowingly violating the act and \$2,000 for subsequent offenses. Fines increase if the number of noncompliant cigarettes offered or sold exceeds 1,000.

Fines for manufacturers and wholesalers who knowingly violate the act are \$10,000 for a first offense and \$25,000 for subsequent offenses, not to exceed \$100,000 in any 30-day period.

The bill also includes a false certification penalty not to exceed \$250,000.

A \$1,000 fee would be required for certification of each brand family of cigarettes. This fee would apply to all cigarettes listed in the brand family, and cigarettes would have to be recertified every four years.

Senators advanced LB198 to final reading by voice vote.

Judiciary

Senators consider additional sex offender restrictions

Nebraska lawmakers gave first-round approval April 22 to a bill

intended to update the state's criminal code dealing with registered sex offenders.

LB97, introduced by Omaha Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh at the request of the state attorney general, would create the offense of unlawful use of the Internet by a registered sex offender and enhance the penalties for crimes relating to enticement of a child and the manufacture, possession and trafficking of child pornography.



Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh

As technology changes, Lautenbaugh said, Internet predators find new avenues to pursue their victims, such as social networking sites. An estimated 10,000 computers in Nebraska are involved in sharing images of child pornography, he said.

"That was a shock to me and I hope it's a shock to you," Lautenbaugh said.

LB97 also would:

- change the offense of online enticement using a computer to online enticement using an electronic communication device, which would include PDAs or cell phones.
- expand the definition of visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct to include undeveloped films and videotapes and images on a computer screen;
- eliminate the applicability of the statute of limitations for the crime of incest;
- describe rules and procedures for introducing child pornography in court and for sharing child pornography evidence with the defense through the discovery process;

- require judges to inform sex offenders at sentencing that they will be required to disclose pertinent computer and Internet information to law enforcement and that they are prohibited from accessing and using social networking sites;
- add the crime of enticement by electronic communication device to the list of registered offenses; and
- allow for service of search warrants and subpoenas on Internet service providers headquartered in other jurisdictions but doing business in Nebraska.

A Judiciary Committee amendment, adopted 41-0, incorporated LB15 into the bill.

LB15, introduced by Omaha Sen. Tom White, would require the addition of driver's licenses, e-mail addresses, instant messaging screen names and other Internet communication identifiers to the database of registered sex offenders.

Any changes to Internet communication identifiers would require written notification from the registered sex offender to the sheriff's department by the next working day.

Lincoln Sen. Colby Coash, who has worked with both victims and perpetrators of abuse, said one of the things sexual offenders value most is their anonymity. Knowing the domain and user names of sex offenders would enable parents to monitor who is communicating with their children on the Internet, he said.

"This bill takes away their ability to blend in," Coash said. "It gives parents another tool."

The committee amendment also would allow the court to order that a copy of child pornography evidence be delivered to a defense expert witness in order to prepare testimony

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and would expand the crime of sexual assault on a child to include instances of penetration of a person at least 12 years old, but younger than 16 years old, by a person at least 25 years old.

Finally, the amendment would provide lesser penalties for possession of child pornography for those younger than 19 years old and would establish an affirmative defense for individuals under 19 when the image in question portrays a child at least 15 years old who is alone in an image created knowingly and voluntarily. The image must not have been made available to anyone except the receiver and the individual who generated the image.

Committee chairperson Sen. Brad Ashford of Omaha said the provisions relating to juvenile defendants are meant to address the issue of adolescents sending sexually explicit pictures of themselves to one another, a practice known as "sexting."

The practice is common among teenagers, he said, and the amendment attempts to "recognize negligent actions by juveniles not aware of the gravity of what they're participating in."

Possession of child pornography would be a Class IV felony for persons under 19 years of age and a Class III felony for those 19 and older.

Norfolk Sen. Mike Flood offered an amendment to the committee amendment that would change provisions relating to rules of evidence concerning sexual offenses.

The amendment would allow the introduction of evidence of other sexual misconduct or sexual offenses committed by an alleged perpetrator.

Flood said judges still would have to balance the value of admitting such evidence against its prejudicial potential and stressed that admissibility would not be automatic. The change would put Nebraska in line with other states that have liberalized

evidence introduction to demonstrate a defendant's propensity to commit sexual crimes, he said.

Senators adopted Flood's amendment 35-0 and advanced LB97 to select file on a 44-0 vote.

Concealed carry handgun bill amended, advanced to final reading

Senators amended and advanced a bill April 23 that would change conceal and carry provisions.

LB430, introduced by Imperial Sen. Mark Christensen, would nullify all city and village ordinances, permits and regulations regarding the ownership, possession and transportation of concealed handguns. Christensen said the bill would remove inconsistencies in conceal and carry policies across the state.

As amended, the bill also would allow universities to prohibit firearms by expanding the definition of schools. The bill's definition of schools was expanded to include private postsecondary career schools, community colleges, public or private colleges, junior colleges, universities, and any other educational institutions.

Under amendments adopted on general file, LB430 would allow a place of worship to authorize its security personnel with concealed handgun permits to carry concealed handguns. Concealed handgun permits from other states would be recognized under the bill. Recognized states would have to require standards equal to or greater than the standards determined by the Nebraska attorney general. Military personnel permanently sta-

tioned in Nebraska would be considered residents for the purpose of the concealed handgun permits.

During select file debate, Christensen offered an amendment, adopted 36-0, that would allow conceal and carry permit holders to carry a concealed handgun onto parking lots of entities where concealed handguns are prohibited. Current law outlines several places where concealed handguns are prohibited including emergency rooms, courtrooms, government meetings and school grounds.

Under the amendment, handguns would have to be left in the vehicle and locked in a glove box, trunk or other secured compartment.

Christensen said the amendment would allow permit holders to legally travel with a concealed handgun.

Omaha Sen. Tom White raised concerns about what he called a vague amendment. He said the amendment should require permit holders to store their handguns discreetly.

"I'm concerned that we're specifically permitting something that could cause a lot of people a lot of alarm," he said. "It's pretty loose."

Malcolm Sen. Ken Haar objected to a provision in the amendment that would require handguns to be stored in saddlebags on the side of motorcycles. He said the bags are not sufficiently secure to hold a handgun.

In response, Christensen offered an amendment to his original amendment that would require handguns be stored prior to exiting the vehicle. The amendment also would require motorcycle drivers to store handguns in a hard-sided compartment.

The amendment was adopted to the original amendment 36-0 and LB430 advanced to final reading on a voice vote.



Sen. Mark Christensen

ISSUES UPFRONT.....

Natural Resources

Changes to livestock waste discharge penalties advance

Penalties for illegally discharging livestock waste into state waters would be applied on a facility-by-facility basis under a bill advanced to final reading April 23.

Under current law, violations of the Livestock Waste Management Act result in “strikes” being levied against offending National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit holders. Strikes are applied to the violating facility, as well as other facilities in partnership with them.

LB56, introduced by Valentine Sen. Deb Fischer, would clarify that strikes do not apply to partners, shareholders, parent companies, subsidiaries or affiliates of permit holders. As amended during general file debate, the bill also would increase from three to five the number of strikes allowed before a facility’s permit is revoked. Whereas current statute revokes permits and rejects new applications for those who have received three strikes, LB56 would allow up to five strikes for discharges caused by intention or neglect.

Ewing Sen. Cap Dierks introduced an amendment on select file that retained the current three-strike limit. A total of only four strikes have been administered since 2006, he said, so there is no need to increase the current limit.

“The main thing I’ve always had a concern for is maintaining the quality of our rivers and streams,” Dierks said.



Sen. Deb Fischer

Wilber Sen. Russ Karpisek spoke in support of Dierks’ amendment. Restoring the number of strikes improves LB56, Karpisek said, adding that no owner currently has more than one strike.

Dierks’ amendment was adopted 37-0, and LB56 advanced to final reading on a voice vote.

Revenue

Board revises economic forecast downward

The Nebraska Economic Forecasting Advisory Board met April 23 to revise economic projections for the state.

The board – whose job is to set annual revenue projections for sales, income, corporate and miscellaneous taxes – decreased the amount of money the Appropriations Committee will have to work with in balancing the state budget.

After presentations by the state Department of Revenue and the Legislative Fiscal Office, the board voted to decrease revenue projections for the current fiscal year by an additional \$71 million, most of which is being anticipated from decreased individual income tax receipts.

The board projects revenues will be \$70 million lower for FY2009-10 and \$66 million lower for FY2010-11 than the board’s February projections.

The Legislature is expected to begin debating budget bills next week.

Long-term insurance tax credit advances

Purchasers of long-term care insurance policies would be eligible for an income tax credit under a bill advanced to final reading April 23.

LB159, introduced by Papillion Sen. Tim Gay, would allow a nonrefundable income tax credit equal to 25 percent of premiums paid for long-term care insurance policies issued on or after Jan. 1, 2010. The credit could not exceed \$250 for an individual policy and \$500 for a joint policy. The credit could be claimed for a maximum of three years and an unused credit could not be carried forward to the next tax year.



Sen. Tim Gay

A taxpayer could not use the credit if he or she used the adjustment to federal adjusted gross income as a participant in the Nebraska long-term savings plan for the same year.

Lexington Sen. John Wightman offered an amendment that would phase in the tax credit and provide a sunset date of Jan. 1, 2015. Under his amendment, tax credits would be the lesser of a taxpayer’s income tax liability or:

- \$150 on individual returns and \$300 on joint returns in fiscal year 2010-11;
- \$200 on individual returns and \$400 on joint returns in FY2011-12; and
- \$250 on individual returns and \$500 on joint returns in FY2012-13, FY2013-2014 and FY2014-15.

Wightman said his amendment would reduce the fiscal impact of LB159. He said the credits offered under the bill are needed to encourage procurement of long-term insurance plans to avert increased Medicaid costs.

“I think we’ve got to do everything we can to get Medicaid under control,” Wightman said.

Wightman’s amendment was adopted 32-0, and LB159 advanced on a voice vote.

ISSUES UPFRONT.....

Sen. Janssen builds on personal history of public service

Sen. Charlie Janssen has paid attention to public policy issues for as long as he can remember.

“My interest in politics was born in me,” the Fremont senator said.

Both of Janssen’s parents and his uncle, former Sen. Ray Janssen, were involved in politics. His mother served as the village clerk in Nickerson for many years. Janssen said he learned from her how government officials could make a difference for their constituents.

“The village clerk’s office was basically my house,” Janssen said. “If you had a problem with the town, you came to our house for a solution.”

His relatives’ involvement in politics also taught him the value of nonpartisanship, he said, since they represented different political parties.

“Leadership really has no political party assigned to it,” he said.

From serving on the student councils at Logan View High School and Wayne State College, to his eventual membership on the Fremont City Council, Janssen said public service has come naturally to him.

“I want to help shape what’s going on,” he said.

That eagerness to make a difference is what led Janssen to the Legislature.

“I’m not afraid to get in the fight,” he said. “I wasn’t elected to come down here and sit on my hands.”

An awareness of and involvement in the community is something he’s passed on to his two children, five-year-old Charlie, Jr., and two-year-

old Betsy Anne.

“I tell my son he’s the kid senator and my daughter that she’s the baby senator,” he said, smiling. “Together we represent the 15th district.”

Beyond a passion for public service, Janssen also shares his passion for baseball with his children. A season ticketholder, Janssen and his children can often be found at Haymarket Park cheering on the Huskers. He also coordinates his vacations around baseball game schedules – he’s seen the Cubs play in Chicago and the Red Sox in Boston.

But his favorite vacation spot is Hawaii, which he’s visited three times. A former U.S. Navy search and rescue swimmer, Janssen said he always visits Pearl Harbor. He also enjoys jogging on the beach.

“You’re just overwhelmed by the whole landscape,” he said.

An avid runner, Janssen said he initially was worried about how the rigors of his legislative schedule would affect his physical activity.

“They say everybody gains weight their first year,” he said. “But I’ve actually lost weight.”

The senator wears a pedometer and the day of the interview had already clocked 3,193 steps before lunch.

Juggling the responsibilities of being a father, a senator and CEO of a fast-growing medical staffing firm, Janssen said a sense of humor and balance are key.

“I’m the kind of guy that jokes around a lot, but I’m very serious when I have to be,” he said.



Sen. Janssen at home with his daughter, Betsy Anne.

CITIZEN VIEWS of the CAPITOL



Named one of America's favorite buildings by the American Institute of Architects, Nebraska's State Capitol Building is a favorite subject among photographers. Its dramatic architecture provides many opportunities for closer study.

The Unicameral Update invited members of the public to share their own Capitol photographs with our readers.

This color photo series is available on the Unicameral Update online at <http://unicameralupdate.blogspot.com>.

photo by Peter Stewart, used with permission

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