

LEGISLATIVE BILL 104

Approved by the Governor June 4, 2013

Introduced by Lathrop, 12; Mello, 5; Nordquist, 7; Dubas, 34; Hadley, 37.

FOR AN ACT relating to revenue and taxation; to amend sections 77-27,142, 77-27,142.01, 77-5715, and 77-5725, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2012; to change provisions relating to sales and use tax increases under the Local Option Revenue Act; to provide tax incentives for renewable energy projects under the Nebraska Advantage Act; to redefine qualified business; to change provisions relating to tiers; to harmonize provisions; to repeal the original sections; and to declare an emergency.

Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

Section 1. Section 77-27,142, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2012, is amended to read:

77-27,142 (1) Any incorporated municipality other than a city of the metropolitan class by ordinance of its governing body is hereby authorized to impose a sales and use tax of one-half percent, one percent, one and one-half percent, one and three-quarters percent, or two percent upon the same transactions that are sourced under the provisions of sections 77-2703.01 to 77-2703.04 within such incorporated municipality on which the State of Nebraska is authorized to impose a tax pursuant to the Nebraska Revenue Act of 1967, as amended from time to time. Any city of the metropolitan class by ordinance of its governing body is hereby authorized to impose a sales and use tax of one-half percent, one percent, or one and one-half percent upon the same transactions that are sourced under the provisions of sections 77-2703.01 to 77-2703.04 within such city of the metropolitan class on which the State of Nebraska is authorized to impose a tax pursuant to the Nebraska Revenue Act of 1967, as amended from time to time. No sales and use tax shall be imposed pursuant to this section until an election has been held and a majority of the qualified electors have approved such tax pursuant to sections 77-27,142.01 and 77-27,142.02.

(2)(a) Any incorporated municipality that proposes to impose a municipal sales and use tax at a rate greater than one and one-half percent or increase a municipal sales and use tax to a rate greater than one and one-half percent shall submit the question of such tax or increase at a primary or general election held within the incorporated municipality. The question shall be submitted upon an affirmative vote by at least seventy percent of all of the members of the governing body of the incorporated municipality.

(b) Any rate greater than one and one-half percent shall be used as follows:

~~(i) In a city of the metropolitan class, the proceeds from the first one-quarter percent of the rate greater than one and one-half percent shall be used to reduce other taxes, the proceeds from the next one-eighth percent of the rate greater than one and one-half percent shall be used for public infrastructure projects, and the proceeds from the next one-eighth percent of the rate greater than one and one-half percent shall be used for purposes of the interlocal agreement or joint public agency agreement described in subsection (3) of this section;~~

~~(ii) (i) In a city of the primary class, up to fifteen percent of the proceeds from the rate in excess of one and one-half percent may be used for non-public infrastructure projects of an interlocal agreement or joint public agency agreement with another political subdivision within the municipality or the county in which the municipality is located, and the remaining proceeds shall be used for public infrastructure projects or voter-approved infrastructure related to an economic development program as defined in section 18-2705; and~~

~~(iii) (ii) In any incorporated municipality other than a city of the metropolitan or primary class, the proceeds from the rate in excess of one and one-half percent shall be used for public infrastructure projects or voter-approved infrastructure related to an economic development program as defined in section 18-2705.~~

For purposes of this section, public infrastructure project means and includes, but is not limited to, any of the following projects, or any combination thereof: Public highways and bridges and municipal roads, streets, bridges, and sidewalks; solid waste management facilities; wastewater, storm water, and water treatment works and systems, water distribution facilities, and water resources projects, including, but not limited to, pumping stations, transmission lines, and mains and their appurtenances; hazardous waste

disposal systems; resource recovery systems; airports; port facilities; buildings and capital equipment used in the operation of municipal government; convention and tourism facilities; redevelopment projects as defined in section 18-2103; mass transit and other transportation systems, including parking facilities; and equipment necessary for the provision of municipal services.

(c) Any rate greater than one and one-half percent shall terminate no more than ten years after its effective date or, if bonds are issued and the local option sales and use tax revenue is pledged for payment of such bonds, upon payment of such bonds and any refunding bonds, whichever date is later, except as provided in subdivision (2)(d) of this section.

(d) If a portion of the rate greater than one and one-half percent is stated in the ballot question as being imposed for the purpose of the interlocal agreement or joint public agency agreement described in subdivision ~~(2)(b)(ii)~~ (2)(b)(i) or subsection (3) of this section, and such portion is at least one-eighth percent, there shall be no termination date for the rate representing such portion rounded to the next higher one-quarter or one-half percent.

(e) Sections 13-518 to 13-522 apply to the revenue from any such tax or increase.

(3)(a) No municipal sales and use tax shall be imposed at a rate greater than one and one-half percent or increased to a rate greater than one and one-half percent unless the municipality is a party to an interlocal agreement pursuant to the Interlocal Cooperation Act or a joint public agency agreement pursuant to the Joint Public Agency Act with a political subdivision within the municipality or the county in which the municipality is located creating a separate legal or administrative entity relating to a public infrastructure project.

(b) Except as provided in subdivision ~~(2)(b)(ii)~~ (2)(b)(i) of this section, such interlocal agreement or joint public agency agreement shall contain provisions, including benchmarks, relating to the long-term development of unified governance of public infrastructure projects with respect to the parties. The Legislature may provide additional requirements for such agreements, including benchmarks, but such additional requirements shall not apply to any debt outstanding at the time the Legislature enacts such additional requirements. The separate legal or administrative entity created shall not be one that was in existence for one calendar year preceding the submission of the question of such tax or increase at a primary or general election held within the incorporated municipality.

(c) Any other public agency as defined in section 13-803 may be a party to such interlocal cooperation agreement or joint public agency agreement.

(d) A municipality is not required to use all of the additional revenue generated by a sales and use tax imposed at a rate greater than one and one-half percent or increased to a rate greater than one and one-half percent under this subsection for the purposes of the interlocal cooperation agreement or joint public agency agreement set forth in this subsection.

(4) The provisions of subsections (2) and (3) of this section do not apply to the first one and one-half percent of a sales and use tax imposed by a municipality.

(5) Notwithstanding any provision of any municipal charter, any incorporated municipality or interlocal agency or joint public agency pursuant to an agreement as provided in subsection (3) of this section may issue bonds in one or more series for any municipal purpose and pay the principal of and interest on any such bonds by pledging receipts from the increase in the municipal sales and use taxes authorized by such municipality. Any municipality which has or may issue bonds under this section may dedicate a portion of its property tax levy authority as provided in section 77-3442 to meet debt service obligations under the bonds. For purposes of this subsection, bond means any evidence of indebtedness, including, but not limited to, bonds, notes including notes issued pending long-term financing arrangements, warrants, debentures, obligations under a loan agreement or a lease-purchase agreement, or any similar instrument or obligation.

Sec. 2. Section 77-27,142.01, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2012, is amended to read:

77-27,142.01 (1) The governing body of any incorporated municipality may submit the question of changing any terms and conditions of a sales and use tax previously authorized under section 77-27,142. Except as otherwise provided by section 77-27,142, the question of modification shall be submitted to the voters at any primary or general election or at a special election if the governing body submits a certified copy of the resolution proposing modification to the election commissioner or county clerk within the time

prior to the primary, general, or special election prescribed in section 77-27,142.02.

(2) If the change imposes a sales and use tax at a rate greater than one and one-half percent or increases the sales and use tax to a rate greater than one and one-half percent, the question shall include, but not be limited to:

(a) The percentage increase of one-quarter percent or one-half percent in the sales and use tax rate;

(b) A list of reductions or elimination of other taxes or fees, if any;

(c) A description of the projects to be funded, in whole or in part, from the revenue collected, along with any savings or efficiencies resulting from the projects;

(d) The year or years within which the revenue will be collected and, if bonds will be issued with some or all of the revenue pledged for payment of such bonds, a statement that the revenue will be collected until the payment in full of such bonds and any refunding bonds; and

(e) (i) The percentage of revenue collected to be used for the purposes of the interlocal agreement or joint public agency agreement as provided in subdivision ~~(2)(b)(ii)~~ (2)(b)(i) or subsection (3) of section 77-27,142; (ii) a statement of the overall purpose of the agreement which is the long-term development of unified governance of public infrastructure projects, if applicable; and (iii) the name of any other political subdivision which is a party to the agreement.

This subsection does not apply to the first one and one-half percent of a sales and use tax imposed by a municipality.

Sec. 3. Section 77-5715, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2012, is amended to read:

77-5715 (1) For a tier 2, tier 3, tier 4, or tier 5 project, qualified business means any business engaged in:

(a) The conducting of research, development, or testing for scientific, agricultural, animal husbandry, food product, or industrial purposes;

(b) The performance of data processing, telecommunication, insurance, or financial services. For purposes of this subdivision, financial services includes only financial services provided by any financial institution subject to tax under Chapter 77, article 38, or any person or entity licensed by the Department of Banking and Finance or the federal Securities and Exchange Commission and telecommunication services includes community antenna television service, Internet access, satellite ground station, call center, or telemarketing;

(c) The assembly, fabrication, manufacture, or processing of tangible personal property;

(d) The administrative management of the taxpayer's activities, including headquarter facilities relating to such activities or the administrative management of any of the activities of any business entity or entities in which the taxpayer or a group of its shareholders holds any direct or indirect ownership interest of at least ten percent, including headquarter facilities relating to such activities;

(e) The storage, warehousing, distribution, transportation, or sale of tangible personal property;

(f) The sale of tangible personal property if the taxpayer derives at least seventy-five percent or more of the sales or revenue attributable to such activities relating to the project from sales to consumers who are not related persons and are located outside the state;

(g) The sale of software development services, computer systems design, product testing services, or guidance or surveillance systems design services or the licensing of technology if the taxpayer derives at least seventy-five percent of the sales or revenue attributable to such activities relating to the project from sales or licensing either to customers who are not related persons and located outside the state or to the United States Government, including sales of such services, systems, or products delivered by providing the customer with software or access to software over the Internet or by other electronic means, regardless of whether the software or data accessed by customers is stored on a computer owned by the applicant, the customer, or a third party and regardless of whether the computer storing the software or data is located at the project;

(h) The research, development, and maintenance of an Internet web portal. For purposes of this subdivision, Internet web portal means an Internet site that allows users to access, search, and navigate the Internet;

(i) The research, development, and maintenance of a data center; ~~or~~

(j) The production of electricity by using one or more sources of

renewable energy to produce electricity for sale. For purposes of this subdivision, sources of renewable energy includes, but is not limited to, wind, solar, geothermal, hydroelectric, biomass, and transmutation of elements; or

~~(j)~~ (k) Any combination of the activities listed in this subsection.

(2) For a tier 1 project, qualified business means any business engaged in:

(a) The conducting of research, development, or testing for scientific, agricultural, animal husbandry, food product, or industrial purposes;

(b) The assembly, fabrication, manufacture, or processing of tangible personal property;

(c) The sale of software development services, computer systems design, product testing services, or guidance or surveillance systems design services or the licensing of technology if the taxpayer derives at least seventy-five percent of the sales or revenue attributable to such activities relating to the project from sales or licensing either to customers who are not related persons and are located outside the state or to the United States Government, including sales of such services, systems, or products delivered by providing the customer with software or access to software over the Internet or by other electronic means, regardless of whether the software or data accessed by customers is stored on a computer owned by the applicant, the customer, or a third party and regardless of whether the computer storing the software or data is located at the project; or

(d) Any combination of activities listed in this subsection.

(3) For a tier 6 project, qualified business means any business except a business excluded by subsection (4) of this section.

(4) Except for business activity described in subdivision (1)(f) of this section, qualified business does not include any business activity in which eighty percent or more of the total sales are sales to the ultimate consumer of (a) food prepared for immediate consumption or (b) tangible personal property which is not assembled, fabricated, manufactured, or processed by the taxpayer or used by the purchaser in any of the activities listed in subsection (1) or (2) of this section.

Sec. 4. Section 77-5725, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2012, is amended to read:

77-5725 (1) Applicants may qualify for benefits under the Nebraska Advantage Act in one of six tiers:

(a) Tier 1, investment in qualified property of at least one million dollars and the hiring of at least ten new employees. There shall be no new project applications for benefits under this tier filed after December 31, 2015, ~~without further authorization of the Legislature.~~ All complete project applications filed on or before December 31, 2015, shall be considered by the Tax Commissioner and approved if the project and taxpayer qualify for benefits. Agreements may be executed with regard to completed project applications filed on or before December 31, 2015. All project agreements pending, approved, or entered into before such date shall continue in full force and effect;

(b) Tier 2, (i) investment in qualified property of at least three million dollars and the hiring of at least thirty new employees or (ii) for a large data center project, investment in qualified property for the data center of at least two hundred million dollars and the hiring for the data center of at least thirty new employees;

(c) Tier 3, the hiring of at least thirty new employees. There shall be no new project applications for benefits under this tier filed after December 31, 2015, ~~without further authorization of the Legislature.~~ All complete project applications filed on or before December 31, 2015, shall be considered by the Tax Commissioner and approved if the project and taxpayer qualify for benefits. Agreements may be executed with regard to completed project applications filed on or before December 31, 2015. All project agreements pending, approved, or entered into before such date shall continue in full force and effect;

(d) Tier 4, investment in qualified property of at least ten million dollars and the hiring of at least one hundred new employees;

(e) Tier 5, (i) investment in qualified property of at least thirty million dollars or (ii) for the production of electricity by using one or more sources of renewable energy to produce electricity for sale as described in subdivision (1)(j) of section 77-5715, investment in qualified property of at least twenty million dollars. Failure to maintain an average number of equivalent employees as defined in section 77-5727 greater than or equal to the number of equivalent employees in the base year shall result in a partial recapture of benefits; and

(f) Tier 6, investment in qualified property of at least ten million dollars and the hiring of at least seventy-five new employees or the investment in qualified property of at least one hundred million dollars and the hiring of at least fifty new employees. Agreements may be executed with regard to completed project applications filed before January 1, 2016. All project agreements pending, approved, or entered into before such date shall continue in full force and effect.

(2) When the taxpayer has met the required levels of employment and investment contained in the agreement for a tier 1, tier 2, tier 4, tier 5, or tier 6 project, the taxpayer shall be entitled to the following incentives:

(a) A refund of all sales and use taxes for a tier 2, tier 4, tier 5, or tier 6 project or a refund of one-half of all sales and use taxes for a tier 1 project paid under the Local Option Revenue Act, the Nebraska Revenue Act of 1967, and sections 13-319, 13-324, and 13-2813 from the date of the application through the meeting of the required levels of employment and investment for all purchases, including rentals, of:

(i) Qualified property used as a part of the project;

(ii) Property, excluding motor vehicles, based in this state and used in both this state and another state in connection with the project except when any such property is to be used for fundraising for or for the transportation of an elected official;

(iii) Tangible personal property by a contractor or repairperson after appointment as a purchasing agent of the owner of the improvement to real estate when such property is incorporated into real estate as a part of a project. The refund shall be based on fifty percent of the contract price, excluding any land, as the cost of materials subject to the sales and use tax;

(iv) Tangible personal property by a contractor or repairperson after appointment as a purchasing agent of the taxpayer when such property is annexed to, but not incorporated into, real estate as a part of a project. The refund shall be based on the cost of materials subject to the sales and use tax that were annexed to real estate; and

(v) Tangible personal property by a contractor or repairperson after appointment as a purchasing agent of the taxpayer when such property is both (A) incorporated into real estate as a part of a project and (B) annexed to, but not incorporated into, real estate as a part of a project. The refund shall be based on fifty percent of the contract price, excluding any land, as the cost of materials subject to the sales and use tax; and

(b) A refund of all sales and use taxes for a tier 2, tier 4, tier 5, or tier 6 project or a refund of one-half of all sales and use taxes for a tier 1 project paid under the Local Option Revenue Act, the Nebraska Revenue Act of 1967, and sections 13-319, 13-324, and 13-2813 on the types of purchases, including rentals, listed in subdivision (a) of this subsection for such taxes paid during each year of the entitlement period in which the taxpayer is at or above the required levels of employment and investment.

(3) Any taxpayer who qualifies for a tier 1, tier 2, tier 3, or tier 4 project shall be entitled to a credit equal to three percent times the average wage of new employees times the number of new employees if the average wage of the new employees equals at least sixty percent of the Nebraska average annual wage for the year of application. The credit shall equal four percent times the average wage of new employees times the number of new employees if the average wage of the new employees equals at least seventy-five percent of the Nebraska average annual wage for the year of application. The credit shall equal five percent times the average wage of new employees times the number of new employees if the average wage of the new employees equals at least one hundred percent of the Nebraska average annual wage for the year of application. The credit shall equal six percent times the average wage of new employees times the number of new employees if the average wage of the new employees equals at least one hundred twenty-five percent of the Nebraska average annual wage for the year of application. For computation of such credit:

(a) Average annual wage means the total compensation paid to employees during the year at the project who are not base-year employees and who are paid wages equal to at least sixty percent of the Nebraska average weekly wage for the year of application, excluding any compensation in excess of one million dollars paid to any one employee during the year, divided by the number of equivalent employees making up such total compensation;

(b) Average wage of new employees means the average annual wage paid to employees during the year at the project who are not base-year employees and who are paid wages equal to at least sixty percent of the Nebraska average weekly wage for the year of application, excluding any compensation in excess of one million dollars paid to any one employee during the year; and

(c) Nebraska average annual wage means the Nebraska average weekly

wage times fifty-two.

(4) Any taxpayer who qualifies for a tier 6 project shall be entitled to a credit equal to ten percent times the total compensation paid to all employees, other than base-year employees, excluding any compensation in excess of one million dollars paid to any one employee during the year, employed at the project.

(5) Any taxpayer who has met the required levels of employment and investment for a tier 2 or tier 4 project shall receive a credit equal to ten percent of the investment made in qualified property at the project. Any taxpayer who has met the required levels of investment and employment for a tier 1 project shall receive a credit equal to three percent of the investment made in qualified property at the project. Any taxpayer who has met the required levels of investment and employment for a tier 6 project shall receive a credit equal to fifteen percent of the investment made in qualified property at the project.

(6) The credits prescribed in subsections (3), (4), and (5) of this section shall be allowable for compensation paid and investments made during each year of the entitlement period that the taxpayer is at or above the required levels of employment and investment.

(7) The credit prescribed in subsection (5) of this section shall also be allowable during the first year of the entitlement period for investment in qualified property at the project after the date of the application and before the required levels of employment and investment were met.

(8) (a) Property described in subdivisions (8)(c)(i) through (v) of this section used in connection with a project or projects and acquired by the taxpayer, whether by lease or purchase, after the date the application was filed, shall constitute separate classes of property and are eligible for exemption under the conditions and for the time periods provided in subdivision (8)(b) of this section.

(b) (i) A taxpayer who has met the required levels of employment and investment for a tier 4 project shall receive the exemption of property in subdivisions (8)(c)(ii), (iii), and (iv) of this section. A taxpayer who has met the required levels of employment and investment for a tier 6 project shall receive the exemption of property in subdivisions (8)(c)(ii), (iii), (iv), and (v) of this section. Such property shall be eligible for the exemption from the first January 1 following the end of the year during which the required levels were exceeded through the ninth December 31 after the first year property included in subdivisions (8)(c)(ii), (iii), (iv), and (v) of this section qualifies for the exemption.

(ii) A taxpayer who has filed an application that describes a tier 2 large data center project or a project under tier 4 or tier 6 shall receive the exemption of property in subdivision (8)(c)(i) of this section beginning with the first January 1 following the acquisition of the property. The exemption shall continue through the end of the period property included in subdivisions (8)(c)(ii), (iii), (iv), and (v) of this section qualifies for the exemption.

(iii) A taxpayer who has filed an application that describes a tier 2 large data center project or a tier 5 project that is sequential to a tier 2 large data center project for which the entitlement period has expired shall receive the exemption of all property in subdivision (8)(c) of this section beginning any January 1 after the acquisition of the property. Such property shall be eligible for exemption from the tax on personal property from the January 1 preceding the first claim for exemption approved under this subdivision through the ninth December 31 after the year the first claim for exemption is approved.

(iv) A taxpayer who has a project for an Internet web portal or a data center and who has met the required levels of employment and investment for a tier 2 project or the required level of investment for a tier 5 project, taking into account only the employment and investment at the web portal or data center project, shall receive the exemption of property in subdivision (8)(c)(ii) of this section. Such property shall be eligible for the exemption from the first January 1 following the end of the year during which the required levels were exceeded through the ninth December 31 after the first year any property included in subdivisions (8)(c)(ii), (iii), (iv), and (v) of this section qualifies for the exemption.

(v) Such investment and hiring of new employees shall be considered a required level of investment and employment for this subsection and for the recapture of benefits under this subsection only.

(c) The following property used in connection with such project or projects and acquired by the taxpayer, whether by lease or purchase, after the date the application was filed shall constitute separate classes of personal

property:

(i) Turbine-powered aircraft, including turboprop, turbojet, and turbofan aircraft, except when any such aircraft is used for fundraising for or for the transportation of an elected official;

(ii) Computer systems, made up of equipment that is interconnected in order to enable the acquisition, storage, manipulation, management, movement, control, display, transmission, or reception of data involving computer software and hardware, used for business information processing which require environmental controls of temperature and power and which are capable of simultaneously supporting more than one transaction and more than one user. A computer system includes peripheral components which require environmental controls of temperature and power connected to such computer systems. Peripheral components shall be limited to additional memory units, tape drives, disk drives, power supplies, cooling units, data switches, and communication controllers;

(iii) Depreciable personal property used for a distribution facility, including, but not limited to, storage racks, conveyor mechanisms, forklifts, and other property used to store or move products;

(iv) Personal property which is business equipment located in a single project if the business equipment is involved directly in the manufacture or processing of agricultural products; and

(v) For a tier 2 large data center project or tier 6 project, any other personal property located at the project.

(d) In order to receive the property tax exemptions allowed by subdivision (8)(c) of this section, the taxpayer shall annually file a claim for exemption with the Tax Commissioner on or before May 1. The form and supporting schedules shall be prescribed by the Tax Commissioner and shall list all property for which exemption is being sought under this section. A separate claim for exemption must be filed for each project and each county in which property is claimed to be exempt. A copy of this form must also be filed with the county assessor in each county in which the applicant is requesting exemption. The Tax Commissioner shall determine whether a taxpayer is eligible to obtain exemption for personal property based on the criteria for exemption and the eligibility of each item listed for exemption and, on or before August 1, certify such to the taxpayer and to the affected county assessor.

(9)(a) The investment thresholds in this section for a particular year of application shall be adjusted by the method provided in this subsection, except that the investment threshold for a tier 5 project described in subdivision (1)(e)(ii) of this section shall not be adjusted.

(b) For tier 1, tier 2, tier 4, and tier 5 projects other than tier 5 projects described in subdivision (1)(e)(ii) of this section, beginning October 1, 2006, and each October 1 thereafter, the average Producer Price Index for all commodities, published by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, for the most recent twelve available periods shall be divided by the Producer Price Index for the first quarter of 2006 and the result multiplied by the applicable investment threshold. The investment thresholds shall be adjusted for cumulative inflation since 2006.

(c) For tier 6, beginning October 1, 2008, and each October 1 thereafter, the average Producer Price Index for all commodities, published by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, for the most recent twelve available periods shall be divided by the Producer Price Index for the first quarter of 2008 and the result multiplied by the applicable investment threshold. The investment thresholds shall be adjusted for cumulative inflation since 2008.

(d) For a tier 2 large data center project, beginning October 1, 2012, and each October 1 thereafter, the average Producer Price Index for all commodities, published by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, for the most recent twelve available periods shall be divided by the Producer Price Index for the first quarter of 2012 and the result multiplied by the applicable investment threshold. The investment thresholds shall be adjusted for cumulative inflation since 2012.

(e) If the resulting amount is not a multiple of one million dollars, the amount shall be rounded to the next lowest one million dollars.

(f) The investment thresholds established by this subsection apply for purposes of project qualifications for all applications filed on or after January 1 of the following year for all years of the project. Adjustments do not apply to projects after the year of application.

Sec. 5. Original sections 77-27,142, 77-27,142.01, 77-5715, and 77-5725, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2012, are repealed.

Sec. 6. Since an emergency exists, this act takes effect when passed and approved according to law.