

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA  
NINETY-NINTH LEGISLATURE  
FIRST SESSION

**LEGISLATIVE BILL 214**

Introduced by Beutler, 28; Brown, 6

Read first time January 7, 2005

Committee: Government, Military and Veterans Affairs

A BILL

1 FOR AN ACT relating to tourism; to adopt the Nebraska Treasures  
2 Act; to provide for designation, development, and  
3 promotion of Nebraska Treasures.  
4 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1                   Section 1.    This act shall be known and may be cited as  
2 the Nebraska Treasures Act.

3                   Sec. 2.   (1) The Legislature finds and declares:

4                   (a) Tourism is a growing source of employment, income,  
5 and tax revenue in this state, and the expansion of the tourism  
6 industry is vital to the growth of the state's economy;

7                   (b) The tourism industry is important to the state, not  
8 only because of the number of people it serves and the human,  
9 financial, and physical resources it employs, but because of the  
10 benefits tourism and related activities confer on individuals and  
11 on society as a whole;

12                   (c) Currently, promotion of tourism is funded primarily  
13 at the local level with lodging taxes. Investment of state  
14 resources in a limited number of tourism sites is needed to develop  
15 and protect resources and to provide a more effective means of  
16 marketing travel to, and within, the state by focusing on these  
17 attractions that have the greatest potential to benefit the state  
18 as a whole; and

19                   (d) Coordination of existing state government involvement  
20 in tourism promotion at the state level and with local government  
21 and the private sector will maximize the economic and employment  
22 benefits of the tourism industry.

23                   (2) Through the Nebraska Treasures Act the Legislature  
24 intends to encourage:

25                   (a) A commitment to the fostering of the economic  
26 activity inherent in tourism promotion;

27                   (b) Development of a means to promote and market the  
28 Nebraska Treasures as destinations for tourists on a nationwide

1 basis;

2 (c) Tourism growth to assist the state in remaining  
3 competitive in the national tourism marketplace;

4 (d) Maximization of the contribution of the  
5 tourism-related industries to the state's economic prosperity and  
6 expansion of employment opportunities;

7 (e) Recognition of historic, natural, and scenic  
8 environments, and the development of cultural and heritage tourism  
9 programs and national marketing strategies, to enhance the state's  
10 appeal as a destination for domestic tourism;

11 (f) Provision of timely, up-to-date travel and tourism  
12 information on the Nebraska Treasures, to enable state residents to  
13 take maximum advantage of travel opportunities within the state;

14 (g) Health, education, and intercultural appreciation of  
15 the geography, natural resources, history, arts, and ethnicity of  
16 the state;

17 (h) The establishment of a plan to market the Nebraska  
18 Treasures to state residents and, more importantly, nonresidents;

19 (i) Public interest in protection of the natural  
20 resources and the cultural heritage of the state; and

21 (j) Recognition of state and locally managed recreational  
22 opportunities, including camping, hunting, fishing, boating,  
23 golfing, and other outdoor recreation experiences.

24 Sec. 3. The Travel and Tourism Division of the  
25 Department of Economic Development shall conduct a study to  
26 identify the two to five existing or potential tourism sites in  
27 Nebraska that have the greatest potential to attract visitors from  
28 out of state. The selected sites, once approved by the

1 Legislature, shall be known as the Nebraska Treasures. In  
2 conducting the study, the division shall obtain input from the  
3 public, local community leaders, and out-of-state consumer focus  
4 groups.

5           Sec. 4. After the Travel and Tourism Division of the  
6 Department of Economic Development has identified the tourism sites  
7 pursuant to section 3 of this act, the division shall submit a  
8 report to the Legislature. The report shall define the geographic  
9 area of each site and include a summary of the input and public  
10 comments received pursuant to such section. The report shall also  
11 outline the reasons why the division feels the designated sites  
12 will attract nonresidents if properly developed. A site shall not  
13 be designated as a Nebraska Treasure until it is approved by the  
14 Legislature.

15           Sec. 5. In addition to the sites selected pursuant to  
16 section 3 of this act, the Niobrara scenic river corridor, as  
17 defined in section 72-2006, and the Omaha Riverfront District are  
18 hereby designated and approved by the Legislature as Nebraska  
19 Treasures. The boundaries of the Omaha Riverfront District shall  
20 be specified by the Travel and Tourism Division of the Department  
21 of Economic Development, with the input and recommendations of the  
22 Omaha city council and the Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau,  
23 from within the following area: No further north than the north  
24 boundary of Eppley Airfield; no further south than the southern  
25 boundary of the Henry Doorly Zoo; no further west than Sixteenth  
26 Street; and no further east than the Missouri River.

27           Sec. 6. After approval of a Nebraska Treasure by the  
28 Legislature, the division shall form a local advisory committee

1 from within the general geographic area of the attraction, except  
2 that the Niobrara Council shall be the local advisory committee for  
3 the Niobrara scenic river corridor, and the Omaha city council  
4 shall be the local advisory committee for the Omaha Riverfront  
5 District. Except as otherwise provided in this section, each local  
6 advisory committee shall consist of six to eight members appointed  
7 by a process set forth by the Legislature in designating a site as  
8 a Nebraska Treasure. Members shall represent a cross-section of  
9 the geographic area. Each local advisory committee shall meet at  
10 least quarterly after appointment and shall make short-term  
11 recommendations to the division for developing the Nebraska  
12 Treasure within four months after appointment. After receiving  
13 formal input of the local advisory committee, the division shall  
14 develop short-term and long-term plans for the development and  
15 promotion of the Nebraska Treasure. All plans and modification to  
16 the plans shall be reviewed and approved by the Governor before  
17 implementation. The local advisory committee may recommend  
18 specific expenditures and suggest modifications to the plan from  
19 time to time, and the plans may be reviewed and modified by the  
20 division from time to time. Members shall be reimbursed for actual  
21 and necessary expenses as provided in sections 81-1174 to 81-1177.

22           Sec. 7. (1) The Legislature shall appropriate funds to  
23 the Department of Economic Development for use under this section  
24 to identify, develop, and promote the Nebraska Treasures, which  
25 funds may be used for capital projects, for marketing and other  
26 programs, for the acquisition of land or other property rights, or  
27 for any other purpose reasonably designed to enhance the site or to  
28 improve access to the site or to make known the site. Funds

1 appropriated for use under this section shall not be used for  
2 ongoing operating costs at the various sites or for administrative  
3 costs of the division, other than such minimal administrative costs  
4 of the division as may be necessary to effectively administer the  
5 Nebraska Treasures Act.

6 (2) The Nebraska Treasures Fund is created. Any money in  
7 the fund available for investment shall be invested by the state  
8 investment officer pursuant to the Nebraska Capital Expansion Act  
9 and the Nebraska State Funds Investment Act. Five hundred thousand  
10 dollars shall be appropriated to the fund for each of fiscal years  
11 2005-06 and 2006-07. The funds shall be allocated among the  
12 Nebraska Treasures by the division in proportions that best meet  
13 the long-term goal of attracting the maximum number of nonresidents  
14 to the sites.