

# Nebraska State Legislature

**PHILIP ERDMAN**  
Senator

District 47  
511 2nd Avenue, PO Box 624  
Bayard, Nebraska 69334

Legislative Address:  
State Capitol  
PO Box 94604  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4604  
(402) 471-2616  
(866) 800-7445, Fax: (402) 479-0947  
perdman@leg.ne.gov



## COMMITTEES

Chair - Agriculture  
Vice Chair - Rules  
General Affairs  
Health and Human Services  
Nebraska Retirement Systems  
Executive Board  
Reference

December 15, 2007

Patrick J. O'Donnell  
Clerk of the Legislature  
State Capitol, Room 2018  
Lincoln, NE 68502

Dear Patrick:

LB 435 enacted during the 2007 legislative session directed the Agriculture Committee of the Legislature to perform a study of the capital investments necessary to serve the programming needs of a contemporary state fair and state fair facility, both at its existing location and at a hypothetical alternative location, and on or before December 15 provide a report of its findings. On behalf of the members of the Committee, I am pleased to provide you with the report of the Agriculture Committee in fulfillment of the provisions of LB 435.

The committee's report provides an historical overview leading up to present day discussions surrounding the future of the Nebraska State Fair at its present location and opportunities that may be realized in utilization of State Fair Park for an alternative use. LB 435 provided the Committee's study be assisted by analysis and recommendations relevant to the purposes of the study by a professional consultant. The consultant team of HOK Smith Forkner and Economic Research Associates (HOK/ERA) were selected for the State Fair Modeling Study authorized by LB 435. Our report summarizes the conclusions reached by HOK/ERA and compares the findings of this most recent assessment of State Fair Park with the conclusions of previous planning assessments. Final work products submitted by HOK/ERA are included as appendix items to the Committee report.

The immediate issue before us is one of choosing between competing alternatives for utilization of a state asset, which is now occupied and managed on behalf of the State of Nebraska by the Nebraska State Fair Board. The Agriculture Committee does not recommend a particular resolution of that question at this time. We are encouraged by the renewed interest by all parties to dialogue and to seek consensus or collaborative solutions to the questions at hand. A recommendation from the committee at this point would likely inhibit the ability for creative solutions to emerge. We expect the stakeholders in this discussion will work towards resolution and their success will guide and advise the Legislature on this important matter. The Committee is considering legislation for the 2008 session which would remove the statutory requirement found in §2-101 that the Nebraska State Fair be limited to its current location. Introduction of this statutory change would provide the catalyst for all parties to work towards resolving this issue. However, the Agriculture Committee is prepared to act to provide direction if the parties are unable or unwilling to resolve this issue through negotiation.

Pat O'Donnell  
December 15, 2007

Page 2 of 2

It is the committee's hope and belief that question is not approached as whether we should have a great state fair or a great University. We believe the question is better framed as how can we achieve both. We are encouraged by the visionary thinking that has emerged from various communities and groups throughout the state during the course of this study. We urge and expect dialogue between the interested parties and the State Fair Board to move the state forward both in realizing opportunities to leverage the University's considerable assets through strategic research partnerships and in restoring the State Fair as a showcase of our state's heritage and as a premier cultural and educational event for the state and its citizens.

The members of the Agriculture Committee join me in expressing appreciation for the cooperation and assistance of the Nebraska State Fair Board and other stakeholder groups during the course of this study. We are encouraged by the ownership Nebraskan's continue to take in their State Fair, and impressed by the interest shown in its welfare. The Nebraska State Fair, as HOK/ERA observes, is a true "state" fair serving a statewide purpose and constituency.

A copy of this communication will be provided to members of the Legislature. I request that the committee's report for LB 435 along with this cover letter be made available to the public through the webpage of the Agriculture Committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Philip Erdman".

Philip Erdman, Chair  
Agriculture Committee of the Legislature