

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 248

Introduced by Cavanaugh, J., 9.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this resolution is to propose an interim study to survey Nebraska's small public utilities, municipalities, and cooperatives, excluding the Lincoln Electric System, Nebraska Public Power District, and Omaha Public Power District, in a comprehensive manner which consolidates information relating to rates classifications and equipment. This study should also assess obsolescence, administrative costs, labor, the process of recruitment for staff, the ability to retain employees, budgeting, cash reserves, and retirement plans. A standard should be developed by the study so that a comparative analysis can be constructed so a direct comparison of districts can be made.

The objective of this study is to identify possible opportunities to share information, equipment, and staffing across districts to streamline performance and enhance efficiencies which will result in reduced energy costs for customers while, at the same time, preserving and enhancing reliability, service, and flexibility.

The study should also identify and justify barriers to innovation on farms and in businesses imposed by the small public utilities entities when restrictive limits are placed on new technologies, such as solar installations on farms and ranches. These barriers include different power purchasing agreements, and barriers to adaptation, such as amalgamating of meters.

Tremendous dislocations are occurring in the industry as new technologies open pathways to decoupling from the grid. Recent actions by the Omaha Public Power District have opened the door for more significant investment in renewables by ordinary businesses and homeowners, but these opportunities are not available in most of Nebraska. This is a barrier to economic development.

The study should assess why this barrier exists and how to promote more permissive policies in rural parts of the state without causing undue hardships to the rural electric associations.

Significant cooperative arrays have been put in place in several Nebraska municipalities. The study should assess how the cooperative arrays have impacted those communities and their relationships with their public utilities providers. Many Nebraska communities purchase their electricity through rural electric associations and the study should evaluate whether further development should be conducted.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, FIRST SESSION:

1. That the Natural Resources Committee of the Legislature shall be designated to conduct an interim study to carry out the purposes of this resolution.

2. That the committee shall upon the conclusion of its study make a report of its findings, together with its recommendations, to the Legislative Council or Legislature.