

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA
ONE HUNDRED NINTH LEGISLATURE
SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE BILL 985

FINAL READING

Introduced by DeBoer, 10; Bosn, 25; Hughes, 24; Rountree, 3.

Read first time January 12, 2026

Committee: Judiciary

1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to the Nebraska Probate Code; to amend
2 sections 30-2619, 30-2623, 30-2628, 30-2636, and 30-2655, Reissue
3 Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and section 30-2201, Revised Statutes
4 Cumulative Supplement, 2024; to change provisions relating to court
5 appointment, removal or resignation, and powers and duties of
6 guardians and the powers of conservators; to provide a right of
7 attendance to certain court hearings; to provide a power to courts
8 for the awarding of cost and expenses in guardianship and
9 conservatorship proceedings; to harmonize provisions; and to repeal
10 the original sections.
11 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 **Section 1.** Section 30-2201, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,
2 2024, is amended to read:

3 30-2201 Sections 30-401 to 30-406, 30-701 to 30-713, 30-2201 to
4 30-2902, 30-3901 to 30-3923, 30-4001 to 30-4045, ~~and~~ 30-4201 to 30-4210
5 and section 7 of this act and the Public Guardianship Act shall be known
6 and may be cited as the Nebraska Probate Code.

7 **Sec. 2.** Section 30-2619, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
8 amended to read:

9 30-2619 (a) The person alleged to be incapacitated or any person
10 interested in his or her welfare may petition for a finding of incapacity
11 and appointment of a guardian or a standby guardian. The petition shall
12 be verified and shall contain specific allegations with regard to each of
13 the areas as provided under section 30-2619.01 in which the petitioner
14 claims that the person alleged to be incapacitated lacks sufficient
15 understanding to make or communicate responsible decisions concerning his
16 or her own person. An interested person may file a motion to make more
17 definite and certain requesting a specific description of the functional
18 limitations and physical and mental condition of the person alleged to be
19 incapacitated with the specific reasons prompting the request for
20 guardianship.

21 (b) Upon the filing of a petition, the court shall set a date for
22 hearing on the issues of incapacity and unless the person alleged to be
23 incapacitated has retained counsel of his or her own choice or has
24 otherwise indicated a desire for an attorney of his or her own choice,
25 the court may appoint an attorney to represent him or her in the
26 proceeding. The court may appoint a guardian ad litem as provided in
27 sections 30-4201 to 30-4210 to advocate for the best interests of the
28 person alleged to be incapacitated.

29 (c) The person alleged to be incapacitated may be examined by a
30 physician appointed by the court. The physician shall submit his or her
31 report in writing to the court and may be interviewed by a visitor, if so

1 appointed pursuant to sections 30-2619.01 and 30-2624, sent by the court.

2 (d) The person alleged to be incapacitated is entitled to be present
3 at the hearing virtually or in person and to see and hear all evidence
4 bearing upon his or her condition. He or she is entitled to be present by
5 counsel, to compel the attendance of witnesses, to present evidence, to
6 cross-examine witnesses, including the court-appointed physician and the
7 visitor appointed by the court pursuant to sections 30-2619.01 and
8 30-2624, and to appeal any final orders or judgments. The issue may be
9 determined at a closed hearing only if the person alleged to be
10 incapacitated or his or her counsel so requests.

11 (e) At any hearing conducted under this section, the court may
12 designate one or more standby guardians of the person whose appointment
13 will become effective immediately upon the death, unwillingness or
14 inability to act, resignation, or removal by the court of the initially
15 appointed guardian and upon compliance with any rules promulgated by the
16 Supreme Court. The standby guardian shall have the same powers and duties
17 as the initially appointed guardian. The standby guardian shall receive a
18 copy of the order establishing or modifying the initial guardianship and
19 the order designating the standby guardian. Upon assuming office, the
20 standby guardian shall so notify the court in writing. Upon notification
21 and upon compliance with any rules promulgated by the Supreme Court, the
22 court shall issue new letters of guardianship that specify that the
23 standby guardianship appointment is permanent. A standby guardian shall
24 complete the training required by section 30-2601.01 at the time or times
25 required by rules promulgated by the Supreme Court or as otherwise
26 provided by order of the county court.

27 (f) The Public Guardian shall not be appointed as a standby
28 guardian.

29 **Sec. 3.** Section 30-2623, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
30 amended to read:

31 30-2623 (a) On petition of the ward or any person interested in the

1 ward's ~~his~~ welfare, the court may remove a guardian and appoint a
2 successor if in the best interests of the ward. On petition of the
3 guardian, the court may accept the guardian's ~~his~~ resignation and make
4 any other order which may be appropriate.

5 (b) An order adjudicating incapacity may specify a minimum period,
6 not exceeding one year, during which no petition for an adjudication that
7 the ward is no longer incapacitated may be filed without special leave.
8 Subject to this restriction, the ward or any person interested in the
9 ward's ~~his~~ welfare may petition for an order that the ward ~~he~~ is no
10 longer incapacitated, and for removal or resignation of the guardian. A
11 request for this order may be made by informal letter to the court or
12 judge and any person who knowingly interferes with transmission of this
13 kind of request to the court or judge may be adjudged guilty of contempt
14 of court.

15 (c) Before removing a guardian, accepting the resignation of a
16 guardian, or ordering that a ward's incapacity has terminated, the court,
17 following the same procedures to safeguard the rights of the ward as
18 apply to a petition for appointment of a guardian, may send a visitor to
19 the residence of the present guardian and to the place where the ward
20 resides or is detained, to observe conditions and report in writing to
21 the court.

22 **Sec. 4.** Section 30-2628, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
23 amended to read:

24 30-2628 (a) Except as limited by section 30-2620, a guardian of an
25 incapacitated person has the same powers, rights, and duties respecting
26 the guardian's ward that a parent has respecting the parent's
27 unemancipated minor child, except that a guardian is not liable to third
28 persons for acts of the ward solely by reason of the parental
29 relationship. In particular, and without qualifying the foregoing, a
30 guardian has the following powers and duties, except as may be specified
31 by order of the court:

1 (1) To the extent that it is consistent with the terms of any order
2 by a court of competent jurisdiction relating to detention or commitment
3 of the ward, a guardian is entitled to custody of the person of his or
4 her ward and may establish the ward's place of abode within this state
5 or, with court permission, outside of this state. When establishing the
6 ward's place of abode, a guardian shall make every reasonable effort to
7 ensure that the placement is the least restrictive alternative. A
8 guardian shall authorize a placement to a more restrictive environment
9 only after careful evaluation of the need for such placement. The
10 guardian may obtain a professional evaluation or assessment that such
11 placement is in the best interest of the ward.

12 (2) If entitled to custody of his or her ward, a guardian shall make
13 provision for the care, comfort, and maintenance of his or her ward and,
14 whenever appropriate, arrange for the ward's training and education.
15 Without regard to custodial rights of the ward's person, a guardian shall
16 take reasonable care of his or her ward's clothing, furniture, vehicles,
17 and other personal effects and commence protective proceedings if other
18 property of his or her ward is in need of protection.

19 (3) A guardian may give any consents or approvals that may be
20 necessary to enable the ward to receive medical, psychiatric,
21 psychological, or other professional care, counsel, treatment, or
22 service. When making such medical or psychiatric decisions, the guardian
23 shall consider and carry out the intent of the ward expressed prior to
24 incompetency to the extent allowable by law. Notwithstanding this
25 provision or any other provision of the Nebraska Probate Code, the ward
26 may authorize the release of financial, medical, and other confidential
27 records pursuant to sections 20-161 to 20-166.

28 (4) If no conservator for the estate of the ward has been appointed,
29 a guardian shall, within thirty days after appointment, prepare and file
30 with the appointing court a complete inventory of the ward's estate
31 together with the guardian's oath or affirmation that the inventory is

1 complete and accurate so far as the guardian is informed. The guardian
2 shall mail a copy thereof by first-class mail to the ward, if the ward
3 can be located and has attained the age of fourteen years, and to all
4 other interested persons as defined in section 30-2601. The guardian
5 shall file with the court a certificate of mailing showing that copies
6 were sent to all interested persons by first-class mail along with a form
7 to send back to the court that indicates if such person wants to continue
8 receiving notifications about the proceedings. The guardian shall keep
9 suitable records of the guardian's administration and exhibit the same on
10 request of any interested person. To the extent a guardian, who has not
11 been named a conservator, has possession or control of the ward's estate,
12 the guardian shall file with the court an updated inventory every year
13 along with a certificate of mailing showing that copies were sent to all
14 interested persons and, if a bond has been required, to the bonding
15 company by first-class mail.

16 (5) If no conservator for the estate of the ward has been appointed,
17 a guardian may:

18 (i) Institute proceedings to compel any person under a duty to
19 support the ward or to pay sums for the welfare of the ward to perform
20 such person's duty;

21 (ii) Receive money and tangible property deliverable to the ward and
22 apply the money and property for support, care, and education of the
23 ward; but a guardian may not use funds from his or her ward's estate for
24 room and board which the guardian or the guardian's spouse, parent, or
25 child has furnished the ward unless a charge for the service is approved
26 by order of the court made upon notice to at least one of the next of kin
27 of the ward, if notice is possible. A guardian must exercise care to
28 conserve any excess for the ward's needs; and

29 (iii) Exercise a settlor's powers with respect to revocation,
30 amendment, or distribution of trust property when authorized by a court
31 acting under the authority of subsection (f) of section 30-3854. In

1 acting under the authority of subsection (f) of section 30-3854, the
2 court shall proceed in the same manner as provided under subdivision (3)
3 of section 30-2637.

4 (6) A guardian is required to report the condition of his or her
5 ward and of the estate which has been subject to the guardian's
6 possession or control, at least every year and as required by the court
7 or court rule. The court shall receive from any interested person, for a
8 period of thirty days after the filing of the guardian's report, any
9 comments with regard to the need for continued guardianship or amendment
10 of the guardianship order. If the court has reason to believe that
11 additional rights should be returned to the ward or assigned to the
12 guardian, the court shall set a date for a hearing and may provide all
13 protections as set forth for the original finding of incapacity and
14 appointment of a guardian.

15 (7) If a conservator has been appointed, all of the ward's estate
16 received by the guardian in excess of those funds expended to meet
17 current expenses for support, care, and education of the ward must be
18 paid to the conservator for management as provided in the Nebraska
19 Probate Code, and the guardian must account to the conservator for funds
20 expended.

21 (b) Any guardian of one for whom a conservator also has been
22 appointed shall control the custody and care of the ward and is entitled
23 to receive reasonable sums for the guardian's services and for room and
24 board furnished to the ward as agreed upon between the guardian and the
25 conservator if the amounts agreed upon are reasonable under the
26 circumstances. The guardian may request the conservator to expend the
27 ward's estate by payment to third persons or institutions for the ward's
28 care and maintenance.

29 (c) Nothing in subdivision (a)(3) of this section or in any other
30 part of this section shall be construed to alter the decisionmaking
31 authority of an attorney in fact designated and authorized under sections

1 30-3401 to 30-3432 to make health care decisions pursuant to a power of
2 attorney for health care.

3 (d) A guardian shall monitor the ward and his or her care.
4 Monitoring shall, at a minimum, consist of quarterly personal contact
5 with the ward. The guardian shall maintain a written record of each
6 visit. Personal contact may be in person or virtually if such contact
7 allows the guardian to assess the ward and his or her care. If a guardian
8 is unable to contact a ward, the guardian shall provide the court
9 documentation of the attempts to contact the ward made by the guardian.
10 The requirements of this subsection may be modified or waived by the
11 court upon a request by the guardian.

12 (e) A guardian shall make all reasonable efforts to provide the ward
13 the ability to attend all hearings relating to his or her guardianship in
14 person or virtually.

15 (f) A guardian shall not accept an appointment for a permanent
16 guardianship of an individual if the guardian serves as a permanent
17 guardian or conservator for twenty or more individuals. Temporary
18 guardianships or conservatorships shall not count toward such limit.

19 **Sec. 5.** Section 30-2636, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
20 amended to read:

21 30-2636 (a) Upon receipt of a petition for appointment of a
22 conservator or other protective order because of minority, the court
23 shall set a date for hearing on the matters alleged in the petition. If,
24 at any time in the proceeding, the court determines that the interests of
25 the minor are or may be inadequately represented, the court may appoint
26 an attorney to represent the minor, giving consideration to the choice of
27 the minor if he or she is fourteen years of age or older. A lawyer
28 appointed by the court to represent a minor as provided in sections
29 30-4201 to 30-4210 has the powers and duties of a guardian ad litem.

30 (b) Upon receipt of a petition for appointment of a conservator or
31 other protective order for reasons other than minority, the court shall

1 set a date for hearing. Unless the person to be protected has counsel of
2 his or her own choice, the court may appoint an attorney to represent him
3 or her in the proceeding. The court may appoint a guardian ad litem as
4 provided in sections 30-4201 to 30-4210 to advocate for the best
5 interests of the person to be protected. If the alleged disability is
6 mental illness, mental deficiency, physical illness or disability,
7 chronic use of drugs, or chronic intoxication, the court may direct that
8 the person to be protected be examined by a physician designated by the
9 court, preferably a physician who is not connected with any institution
10 in which the person is a patient or is detained. The court may send a
11 visitor to interview the person to be protected. The visitor may be a
12 guardian ad litem or an officer or employee of the court.

13 (c) The minor or person to be protected under subsections (a) and
14 (b) of this section shall have the right to attend each court hearing
15 virtually or in person.

16 (d) (~~e~~) After hearing, upon finding that clear and convincing
17 evidence exists for the appointment of a conservator or other protective
18 order, the court shall make an appointment or other appropriate
19 protective order.

20 **Sec. 6.** Section 30-2655, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
21 amended to read:

22 30-2655 (a) The court may, at the time of appointment or later,
23 limit the powers of a conservator otherwise conferred by sections 30-2653
24 and 30-2654, or previously conferred by the court, and may at any time
25 relieve the conservator of any limitation. If the court limits any power
26 conferred on the conservator by section 30-2653 or 30-2654, the
27 limitation shall be endorsed upon the conservator's letters of
28 appointment.

29 (b) A conservator shall not change a protected person's place of
30 abode to a location outside of the State of Nebraska without court
31 permission.

1 (c) A conservator shall not accept an appointment for a
2 conservatorship of an individual if the conservator serves as a permanent
3 guardian or conservator for twenty or more individuals. Temporary
4 conservatorships or guardianships shall not count toward such limit.

5 (d) The limitation described in subsection (c) of this section shall
6 not apply to a corporate entity serving as a conservator.

7 **Sec. 7.** In any judicial proceeding involving the appointment of a
8 guardian or a conservator, the administration of a guardianship or
9 conservatorship, or an accounting for a guardianship or a
10 conservatorship, the court, as justice and equity may require, may award
11 costs and expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees, to any party,
12 to be paid by another party or from the trust that is the subject of the
13 controversy.

14 **Sec. 8.** Original sections 30-2619, 30-2623, 30-2628, 30-2636, and
15 30-2655, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and section 30-2201,
16 Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024, are repealed.