

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate March 25, 2025

**ARCH:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the George W. Norris Legislative Chamber for the forty-ninth day of the One Hundred Ninth Legislature, First Session. Our chaplain for today is Reverend Loudon Redinger, from St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Lincoln, a guest of Senator Carolyn Bosn. Please rise.

**LOUDEN REDINGER:** God of power and might, wisdom and justice, through you, authority is rightly administered. Laws are enacted and judgment is decreed. Assist with your spirit of counsel and fortitude, the lawmakers of the state of Nebraska. May they always seek the ways of righteousness and mercy. Grant that they may be enabled by your powerful protections to lead our state with honesty and integrity. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**ARCH:** I recognize Senator Ibach for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**IBACH:** Colleagues, please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance. I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

**ARCH:** Thank you. I call to order the forty-ninth day of the One Hundred Ninth Legislature, First Session. Senators, please record your presence. Roll call. Mr. Clerk, please record.

**CLERK:** There's a quorum present, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Are there any corrections for the Journal?

**CLERK:** I have no corrections this morning, sir.

**ARCH:** Thank you. Are there any messages, reports or announcements?

**CLERK:** There are, Mr. President. Motions to be printed from Senator Kauth to LB532, LB530, and LR12CA. Additionally, your Committee on Health and Human Services, chaired by Senator Hardin, reports LB275, LB668 to General File. Your Committee on Business and Labor, chaired by Senator Kauth, reports LB455 to General File with committee amendments. Committee report from the Health and Human Services Committee concerning gubernatorial appointments to the Nebraska Rural Health Advisory Commission, as well as the State Board of Health, and the Health Information Technology Board, and the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. New LR, LR80, from Senator DeKay. That will be laid over. Communication from the Governor concerning a gubernatorial appointment of Tyler C. Ritz to the State Electrical

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Board, Inspector position; as well as 2 appointments, Nathan Sorben and Karl Anderson, to the Board of Public Roads Classifications and Standards. Notice that the Retirement Committee will be-- have a hearing that has been moved from room-- to room 1524 on Friday, March 28. Retirement Committee hearing will be in room 1524, this Friday, March 28. That's all I have at this time, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. We have several guests with us today that I'd like to announce. They are JAG Nebraska, which is Jobs for America Graduate. It's funded by United Way of the Midlands. There are about 150 members of this group, and they are located in the north and south balcony. Please rise and be recognized by your Legislature. Thank you, Mr. Clerk. We will now proceed to the first item on the agenda.

**CLERK:** Mr. President, LB41A, introduced by Senator Riepe. It's a bill for an act relating to appropriations; appropriates funds to aid in the carrying out of the provisions of LB41. The bill was read for the first time on March 12 of this year and placed directly on General File. There is an amendment, as well, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Senator Riepe, you're recognized to open on LB41A.

**RIEPE:** Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning to all. This is an A bill for LB41, which, this bill was brought to me by former Senator Sara Howard, on behalf of the problem that we currently have much in-- mostly in Douglas County and somewhat in Lancaster. The bill expands syphilis testing during pregnancy to 3 tests, which is currently on Final Reading. This A bill is the funding for the tests, which would require state funding, namely, those covered by Medicaid. The total estimated cost by DHHS is about \$78,000, annually, of state contribution being needed to cover these extra tests. This will be amended to change the funding source. With that, I yield my time. Thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Mr. Clerk, for an amendment.

**CLERK:** Mr. President, Senator Riepe would move to amend with AM739.

**ARCH:** Senator Riepe, you're recognized to open.

**RIEPE:** Thank you, again, Mr. President. AM739 changes the funding source from the General Fund to the Medicaid Managed Care Excess Profit Fund, as LB41 was amended to do last week. This has been coordinated with Appropriations Chair Senator Clements, and we're in agreement on this. And I ask for your green vote on this and the underlying A bill, which is LB41. Thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Turning to the queue, Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak.

**CONRAD:** Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Hope everybody had a productive and restful long weekend. I know it's always good to get home and connect with constituents, and take a minute to breathe and catch your breath, and have time to contemplate the important work before us. I rise in support of Senator Riepe's A bill, in regards to the underlying legislation, LB41. As members will know, this measure is part of our continued work together to figure out how to advance critical reproductive justice issues where we can indeed find consensus. Even though there are sharp disagreements at times in regards to things like comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education, or access to contraception, or family planning services, or access to abortion care, we have been able to find areas of consensus when it comes to ensuring healthy moms, healthy babies, and healthy pregnancies, and this is indeed a continuation of that area of consensus. Senator Riepe has rightly identified, working with our friend and former colleague, Senator Sara Howard, who's home on maternity leave-- and congratulations to her and her family-- on this important issue, which has, you know, really significance, particularly for the Douglas County area, where we see some of the highest incidence, highest rates of syphilis and STDs, not only in the state, but actually in, in the, in the country, I believe, when, when you really dig in to the statistics. So while this is very important to raising awareness and ensuring access to treatment and testing, it's also important that we take a moment to think about not just treating the symptoms, but also identifying and treating the causes. So if we want to really, truly work to bring down those high rates, those high incidences of sexually-transmitted infections, including syphilis, we really need to figure out how we can do a better job supporting comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education, how we can ensure access to preventative care and healthcare and family planning services so that we can prevent STIs, including syphilis, which impact not only maternal health but fetal health, as well. So I know that we will have perhaps some other opportunities to talk about those issues with other legislation that is moving forward through the body or that has been introduced. You know, I think there are also 2 other really good examples of our ability to come together to focus on common ground, commonsense solutions to enhance maternal and fetal health. Of course, we're well aware of Senator Dungan and Senator Bosn's work together to improve access to home visitation and glucose monitoring and other preventative services, which help to advance the same goals. And then I know your email inboxes are probably as full as mine in

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regards to groundswell of support that we're seeing come in from across the state, in regards to a measure Senator Hansen and Senator Spivey have put forward, to ensure access to safe home care for people who want to have a home birth, or people who want to utilize the services of a doula to improve their birthing experience. The "momnibus" that we're hearing a lot about is really grounded in that same consensus and in those same goals. The other thing that we'll need to think about that touches upon these issues are some measures that have been advanced and/or prioritized this session and related to access to reproductive justice, and what that might mean for costs, and what that might mean in terms of logistics. We also have to decipher as these issues are raised now, in the wake of successful ballot initiatives, if there is indeed any touch upon those areas that would be aligned with or incongruent with the will of the people. So this is a seemingly straightforward bill and Appropriations bill to follow it, but it raises important issues. And I thank Senator Riepe for bringing it forward, and I'm glad the body has been able to find a significant amount of consensus--

**ARCH:** Time, Senator.

**CONRAD:** --on these issues. Thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Senator Spivey, you're recognized to speak.

**SPIVEY:** Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning, colleagues, and folks that are watching. I also want to give another warm welcome to all of the young people in the balconies. And I'm really excited-- yes, hey. I'm really excited that y'all are here and get to see your Legislature at work for you. And so make sure that you pull us off the floor and you hold us accountable for the work that we're doing here, because y'all are going to be the people that will be sitting in these seats next. I appreciate this measure that Senator Riepe has brought, and I echo the sentiments of Senator Conrad. There are higher cases of STIs, especially during the gestational period, for pregnant folks. And so this is a growing concern in-- inside of the maternal and child health space. And so, I think this testing would allow for treatment to happen in a way that keeps that parent, that pregnant person, that mom and baby safe. I was hoping that Senator Riepe would maybe yield for a question, just around the funding.

**ARCH:** Senator Riepe, will you yield?

**RIEPE:** Yes, I will.

**SPIVEY:** Good morning, good morning, Senator Riepe. So I know HHS and this body in general has had a lot of questions and concerns about federal funding, and what does that look like from a-- the grants perspective, whether it's FMAP or how dollars are coming in. And I know this A bill does allocate and make some changes utilizing federal funding. Is there any concern that you have that if there are changes that the federal funding that you have allocated in this A bill will now have to come from general funds, or what will be the implications?

**RIEPE:** Well, we do anticipate-- and thank you for the question. We do anticipate that the federal participation in this would be \$105,000 per year. And with everything that's going on, on, on funding at the federal level, we do have concerns, but we need to move forward as we do in life. And if that becomes an obstacle, then we'll have to come back and reassess this, as we will with a lot of other bills. But right now, it's, it's \$78,000 from the state, and I know the Department of HHS had some concerns about that from an administrative standpoint, but the point is we need to pass policy and they need to figure out how to manage it.

**SPIVEY:** Thank you. Thank you, Senator Riepe.

**RIEPE:** Thank you.

**SPIVEY:** And I, I, I really appreciate those sentiments, as you've been a long-time member on HHS. Because what we have seen is a bottleneck of bills that draw down federal funds and utilize other health, health care cash funds, for example, in the name of that federal funding. It's not going to be there. And so I appreciate you naming that we have to move bills forward. We have to do our job as a Legislature. And if that happens, we will cross that bridge when we-- when it comes. But we cannot stop the work that's in front of us, especially as it relates to the people that we say we are here to protect and serve, and especially in this case, which are mom and baby. So again, I appreciate that sentiment and clarification, and I hope that that same approach can continue to be applied to all of the bills that are navigating federal funding that are within the HHS Committee. Thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak.

**CONRAD:** Thank you, Mr. President. Again, good morning colleagues. I'm glad that Senator Spivey had a chance to weigh in on these issues, as well, since she has led a lot of important work around reproductive justice in her community, and not only from the advocacy standpoint,

but from the supportive services standpoint and community and public health education and engagement standpoint, as well. One thing that I think is always an interesting barometer of maternal and fetal health is the annual report from the March of Dimes, which kind of takes stock about where states are, in terms of adopting policies and practices that reduce the number of preterm births and that have better outcomes for-- better maternal healthcare, healthcare outcomes and better outcomes for babies, as well. And if you look at the most recent report from the March of Dimes and if you drill down to see kind of where Nebraska is in comparison to our sister states, unfortunately, you will see that Nebraska ranks a D. That is definitely not a ranking that any of us want or should celebrate, but shows that we have a lot of work to do when it comes to improving pregnancy outcomes, and maternal health, and ensuring that we give Nebraska children the best possible start to their lives. So when you look at where Nebraska is in terms of preterm birth, we're actually higher than the national average. And we-- the March of Dimes also goes on to not only rank states in terms of where they are in, in adopting good policies and practices to reduce the number of preterm births, but they also inventory those policies so that states can figure out evidence-based, proven ways to make systemic improvements in that healthcare delivery and environment and ensure a comprehensive, statewide policy to accomplish just that. So we know that Nebraska also has a very significant amount of healthcare deserts and maternal healthcare deserts. We know that we have disparities in healthcare and in pregnancy and in pregnancy outcomes, both socioeconomic and racial, and some of these issues are, are really well-researched and before us. I was wondering if perhaps Senator Spivey would yield to a question.

**ARCH:** Senator Spivey, will you yield?

**SPIVEY:** Yes, I will. This is my first question on the mic.

**CONRAD:** It is?

**SPIVEY:** Yes.

**CONRAD:** Oh, my goodness. Well, we'll put it in our scrapbook, or your grandma, I know she watches, so maybe she can mark it down at home. And hello to Ashlei's grandma. But thank you, Senator. I was just hoping that maybe you could help to paint a picture for the body, since you are literally grounded in this work, in community, to help people understand what are moms asking for, in terms of navigating

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their healthcare concerns, you know, before they're planning to start a family, while they're pregnant, or postpartum.

**SPIVEY:** Yeah. Thank you, Senator Conrad. And it's such a great question, because we, in the state of Nebraska, are in a maternal and child health crisis, and we don't have to be. What we are seeing is that the data is showing that a lot of the outcomes and outputs around pre-term birth, as you named, NICU stays, bad health experiences inside the hospital, are preventable. Even the maternal deaths or mortality, as well as infant deaths or mortality, 90% of those can be preventable. And so, you know, people that are choosing to be pregnant and parent are navigating their birth journeys, are wanting better access to care. We know, as you mentioned, 80% of our counties are maternal health deserts, as well as primary care deserts. So when you talk about the linkage of care, what does it mean from just everyday care to now that you are pregnant, we are seeing this exasperated, because we do not have doctors. We cannot retain doctors. Folks are not accepting Medicaid because of the reimbursement rates. It's a number of issues. And so, we are in a dire state in Nebraska, and I think we are going to really have to better start to prioritize solutions that are rooted in community and partnership.

**ARCH:** Time, Senator.

**SPIVEY:** Thank you, Mr. President.

**CONRAD:** Thank you.

**ARCH:** Seeing no one in the queue, Senator Riepe, you're welcome to close on AM739.

**RIEPE:** Thank you, Mr. President. And I would like to thank Senator Conrad and Senator Spivey for getting into the dialogue and talking all about it. This has been a problem of STDs in much-- in parts of Nebraska, not much of Nebraska, but-- and a problem that we have been after for a number of years, and we just have to step the tone up a little bit. I do support very much the testing, which is LB41, but we also have to do more in terms of education, and we do this primarily for the moms and the babes. This is important to them and that makes it important to us. So thank you, Mr. President. And I would call for your green vote on both the amendment and the underlying bill, LB41. Thank you.

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**ARCH:** Colleagues, the question before the body is the adoption of AM739 to LB41A. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Mr. Clerk, please record.

**CLERK:** 33 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the amendment, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** AM739 is adopted. Returning to the queue, Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak.

**CONRAD:** Thank you, Mr. President. Again, good morning, colleagues. And thanks, again, to my friend, Senator Riepe, for bringing forward this important legislation. And thanks to my friend, Senator Spivey, for helping to paint a clearer picture for the record and in terms of raising awareness about the issues that she sees on the frontlines of leading this work in community. So the other thing that I just wanted to note briefly before the A bill moved forward, as it relates not only to this measure but to other measures that are on our agenda today, specifically, LB415 and the amendments thereto. Part of the policy agenda that the March of Dimes lists for improving maternal health outcomes and ensuring that babies have the best start in life is to ensure that states adopt a midwife policy. We know that those measures will be before the, the body later this year, which Senator Hansen and Senator Spivey are working on. That includes things like independence of practice, pay parity, prescriptive authority, perhaps, and licensure-related issues. The other policy agenda components for ensuring better health, health outcomes for moms and babies includes Medicaid extension, Medicaid expansion, more access to mental healthcare, which we get a big red check for in Nebraska, ensuring that we have doula reimbursement in place. Again, I know Senator Spivey is working on that issue, and many of our sister states, including our sister state of South Dakota, has moved forward in that regard, very recently. Another area where Nebraska gets a big red checkmark for undermining policies that support healthy moms and healthy babies is not having paid family leave laws and paid sick leave laws, and this hurts our ability to support moms and our ability to support healthy babies and healthy kids. So as you hopefully continue to advance LB41A, please keep that in mind. As we will initiate discussion and perhaps take votes this week in regards to whether or not we'll on-- not only disregard the will of the people, with over 70% of Nebraska voters who voted for modest, paid sick leave policies to come into play, but whether we will also undermine our ability to move forward in ensuring healthy moms and healthy babies, which paid family leave and paid sick leave policies are an undeniable part of, regardless if they're young parents, regardless if they work in rural instances, regardless if they work for small businesses



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versus large businesses. Having comprehensive access to paid family leave and sick leave ensures we can continue to make progress for healthy moms and healthy babies. So that is a key access, that is a key solution on prevention, and it absolutely must be recognized. If you are going to show a commitment to healthy moms and healthy babies by continuing to support LB41 and LB41A, I ask you to hold that same commitment to ensuring healthy mothers and healthy children when we take up the paid sick leave bill today, two measures down on our agenda. Will we choose to actually support healthy moms and healthy babies, or will we undermine the will of the voters? Will we undermine maternal health? Will we undermine the health and welfare of Nebraska's children? It should be an easy question. Unfortunately, in this body, it is not. And we shall see where the debate and the votes come down in regards to that issue, perhaps this week. Thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Seeing no one in the queue, Senator Riepe, you are recognized to close on AM-- on LB41A. Senator Riepe waives close. Colleagues, the question before the body is the advancement of LB41A to E&R Initial. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Mr. Clerk, please record.

**CLERK:** 38 ayes, 0 nays on advancement of the bill, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** LB41A does advance. While the Legislature is in session and capable of transacting business, I propose to sign and do hereby sign LR70, LR71, LR72, LR73, LR74, and LR75. Mr. Clerk, next item.

**CLERK:** Mr. President, next item on the agenda, Select File, LB527A. There are no E&R amendments. Senator Jacobson, would move to amend with AM781.

**ARCH:** Senator Jacobson, you're welcome to open on your amendment.

**JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. President. The amendment-- I always love these. They come late. But what the amendment effectively does is it splits out how the dollars are divided between the CHIPS programs and the Medicaid Access and Quality Fund. That's all it's doing. The dollars are the same, the sources of the dollars are the same. The amendment is just clarifying where the dollars go to in each of the two funds. So I'd encourage your green vote on AM781.

**ARCH:** Turning to the queue, Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Thank you, Mr. President. Would Senator Jacobson yield to a question?

**ARCH:** Senator Jacobson, will you yield?

**JACOBSON:** Yes, I would.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Thank you. As you know, I support this bill and the one you brought previously. I, I am concerned about what's happening at the federal level. And are you aware, have we yet received the hospital assessment money?

**JACOBSON:** No, we haven't. But I would tell you that part of it is still confirmations of the department heads. And I think that's part of the holdup on, on--

**M. CAVANAUGH:** At the federal level.

**JACOBSON:** At the federal level.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** OK.

**JACOBSON:** So I think once we get the secretary fully appointed and confirmed, we, we expect that that will move forward. And I will tell you that on LB1087, which is the one you're referring to, the bill we passed last year, there are so many states that have access to that program that I, I find it hard to believe that we would not get approval. There may be some adjustments in the matching, but I have to believe that we will ultimately get there, and-- but, but I think that's what the holdup has been.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** OK. So do you anticipate this having similar delays or--

**JACOBSON:** I think that this could move quicker, because we now have had the change in administration and we're going to kind of know where things are at. I would say on this particular bill, there's like 18 states that have adopted this particular program, so there are fewer states. But I would tell you that many of the states are located in the, in the southern part, southeastern part of the United States, and many of those use this program to fully fund their state's Medicaid. So it would be devastating for those southern states, and my guess is the representatives from that part of the country are going to push back pretty hard.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** OK. I have one more question. So does this-- this does not obligate us to make the cash transfers as indicated if the funds don't come in.

**JACOBSON:** That's correct.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** OK.

**JACOBSON:** That's correct.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** That's. I assumed that, but you know what they say about assuming.

**JACOBSON:** Don't ever assume. Don't ever assume. Ask the question.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Thank you. I appreciate you yielding to my questions. I have been a supporter of both this assessment and the hospital assessment. I'll, I'll be honest, I don't fully understand why this program works the way that it does. But basically, hospitals, for the hospital assessment, pay a fee, and then we draw down federal funds as a result of that, and we take some of those funds and we give them back to the hospitals, so it, in a way, acts as a provider rate. And then, this, this is the MCOs, the medi-- sorry, alphabet soup. Medicaid, our managed care organizations, so MCO, managed care organizations that manage our Medicaid program. Similarly, we give them an assess-- they are assessed a fee that's paid to the federal government, and then we draw down federal funds as a result that equal way more than what they pay in. And so then, we're going to utilize those funds, I believe, for some rural healthcare initiatives, and then also to offset some other things. So thank you, Senator Jacobson, for bringing this bill and this A bill, and I'm happy that we are moving it forward to the next stage. Thank you, Mr.-- very much, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak.

**CONRAD:** Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. I was glad that Senator Jacobson brought forward this measure and appreciated my friend, Senator Jacobson's leadership in regards to a key issue to improve and strengthen healthcare in Nebraska, particularly for our rural hospitals. I know that the Appropriations Committee is working hard to make refinements from their preliminary report. They have been in public hearings in regards to key agencies. And I know that the Department of Health and Human Services budget and budget request has recently been before the committee, in regards to public feedback and additional information that HHS officials are able to provide the

committee, in regards to their budgetary request and how the Legislature may take that up or forward that. I know we also received some news very recently that, due to a miscalculation or change in calculations in regards to Medicaid funding kind of writ large and the complex but critical relationship that this key public health program has between the federal and the state government, we have recognized that on the heels of a brighter fiscal report from the Economic Forecasting Board that we have an almost-- I believe it is about \$100 million in additional funds that we'll need to sort out in order to ensure our obligation to a balanced budget, due to the change in this formula and the amount of money that Nebraska may receive. The other thing that I think is really important for us to have an awareness of in regards to this particular measure and how this creative policy financing technique has helped to improve access to healthcare, without hopefully raising costs or raising taxes, is just a clearer picture or assurance or understanding that when Nebraska utilizes this healthcare financing option that these dollars are indeed going to healthcare, that they're not put into the General Fund or swept aside to prop up budget deficit or tax cuts for the most wealthy, but in order to really ensure that we are meeting fidelity to the policy goals, to utilize a creative healthcare financing option to indeed improve healthcare. So I don't know if perhaps a member of the Appropriations Committee might be available to help answer some additional questions in that regard, but that would be important to get some clarity on at this juncture, before we move this A bill forward, which I've been supportive of the underlying bill and the A bill. But colleagues, if you look at the A bill itself, it is a, a significant A bill. We're talking north of-- I think it's over \$100 million easily. I don't have it right in front of me. But I looked this morning and it is, it is an eye-popping A bill. There is a very, very significant financial component to this measure. So it's important for me to know if we are, in fact, going to utilize this healthcare financing option to improve healthcare, or if we're going to play tricks with bringing additional resources and revenues into the state to close budget gaps or to prop up tax cuts for the most wealthy. I think we need to have a little bit of clarity, in terms of how this fits into the overall budgetary puzzle, so that we can be really clear about how this moves forward. I'll punch in again, and, and I see Senator Cavanaugh is now available, and maybe she can shine some light on things from a-- an Appropriations perspective. Thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Thank you Senator-- or Mr. President. Would Senator Conrad yield to a question?

**ARCH:** Senator Conrad, will you yield?

**CONRAD:** Yes, indeed. I was thinking this might go the other way around, but yes. Yes.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Well, I apologize. I, I heard my name--

**CONRAD:** Yes.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** --but then I didn't know what I was speaking to.

**CONRAD:** Yes.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** So what was your question for me?

**CONRAD:** Two things, please, Senator. If you could help-- and could I get a gavel, please? It's-- I know we have a lot of visitors today, but it's really loud. Thank you so much. Senator, I was hoping that you could perhaps help to shine light on two related aspects to this measure. One, I know the Appropriations Committee has very recently had the Health and Human Services budget and Agency before the committee. So was this part of that discussion-- kind of where are we, in regards to their budgetary request or questions and concerns that the committee might have? I know how big the HHS budget is from 8 years on Appropriations, so that's probably 5 times on the mic instead of just a quick response to the question. But I also just want to ensure that there's some sort of understanding that we're utilizing this smart financing option for healthcare to support healthcare, and we're not using this to draw down resources to fill budgetary deficits or prop up tax cuts for the most wealthy. So those were the two threads.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Yeah. OK. Thank you. Thanks for that clarification. So for the first question, no, this wasn't discussed about during the HHS budget hearing. I will say I was a little disappointed in the HHS budget hearing, in that I didn't feel like they came prepared to answer substantive questions about the budget and about programs, specifically. This actually, in-- because this isn't an Appropriations bill, which is why it has an A bill-- be-- this had its own hearing and its own committee, and it, and it does actually delineate usage of these funds for specific programs, and so it's not-- some of it might be backfilling things. I don't know as many details as might be for Senator Jacobson, but I do know that it is going to be used to fund

some essential services and programs out in our rural communities and our rural healthcare that are really in dire need of additional funds and resources. And then, just looking at this A bill, you know, it has temporary salaries and permanent sal-- no, it does not include salaries. But it does go into the Medicaid Access and Quality Fund, which it also creates the Medicaid Access and Quality Fund. So it'll be use-- that money will be used for Medicaid-related expenses. And as Senator Jacobson said, that it can also be used for-- some states have used it to fully fund their Medicaid programs, which I think is really great. I will say that I think, much like the hospital assessment that Governor "Pilen" is utilizing, some of this for other-- for backfilling, but I can't speak to that directly this morning. I haven't quite got myself call-- caught, caught up on Governor "Pilen's" utilization, like he had for the hospital assessment. So I hope that fully answers Senator Conrad's questions. I should probably look at the actual-- I find that the fiscal note of the underlying bills are always where you find that information, not necessarily the A bill. So I probably need to go back to LB527 itself and look at that fiscal note to be able to answer your questions a little bit more fully on the delineation of, of how this is going to be u-- these resources are going to be utilized. And of course, some of this money is going to go back to the MCOs themselves, because we're levying this fee on them. I-- looking for a head-- yes. I'm getting a head shake that that's correct. I wouldn't want to misspeak on that point. So, so I did-- oh, I'm almost out of time. I did quickly pull up the, the fiscal note for the underlying bill, LB527, and I can dive into that. I have one more time on the mic, so I can dive into that on my next time on the mic to answer the questions that you asked more specifically. So thank you, Senator Conrad.

**ARCH:** Before we continue with debate, we have some special guests that we would like to introduce. Senator Fredrickson would like to recognize 64 fourth grade students from Mary Our Queen Catholic School in Omaha, and they are located in the south balcony. Students, please rise and be recognized by your State Legislature. Senator Wordekemper would also like to recognize 18 fourth grade students from Trinity Lutheran School in Fremont, and they are located in the north balcony. Students, please rise and be recognized by your State Legislature. Returning to the queue, Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak.

**CONRAD:** Thank you, Mr. President. Again, good morning, colleagues, and thank you to Senator Cavanaugh, for shining some light on where we are with the Health and Human Services budget. Of course, we know there's a great deal of uncertainty and a lack of clarity, in regards to what's happening on the federal level with a host of different issues

and agencies, whether that's a move towards trying to dismantle the Department of Education, whether that is utilization of deep cuts in things like Medicaid to prop up budget holes and further tax cuts that primarily benefit the most wealthy on the federal level, as was part and parcel with the continuing resolution that our congressional delegation supported recently, in order to keep the federal government open for a short-term basis, but also signaling to all Americans that perhaps deep cuts to critical programs like Medicaid, which is a huge part of our, our healthcare delivery and access system, are perhaps going to be changing in very significant ways, and what that means in terms of ensuring basic protections for patients and what that means for state governments in particular, as we're trying to sort out the financial ramifications, if, for example, there are deep cuts to Medicaid or other aspects of the healthcare budget. And we need to also discern whether or not those programs would be dramatically reformed to move away from their current entitlement posture to something more like a block grant and what we need to start thinking about in preparation for those potential changes. So I don't know that we have a great deal of clarity on those fronts at this time, but I do think they are important questions to ask. And I hope that leaders in this body who have demonstrated a commitment to ensuring healthcare in their rural districts or in their urban districts, are asking those hard questions to our congressional delegation. Again, it would be important to note that I am going to follow up with either my friend, Senator Jacobson or the Fiscal Office, to ensure that the program that he's previously championed and this option, as well, are truly utilizing a financing structure to improve healthcare and not to draw down resources to play shell games with the budget to prop up self-imposed budget deficits, primarily due to inequitable, unaffordable tax cuts that this body and Governor Pillen have decided to bestow upon the largest corporations and the wealthiest Nebraskans that are blowing a hole in our state budget. We don't typically see this kind of projected budget deficit in a time of economic prosperity, where we presently are and have recently been. We don't typically see these kinds of significant shortfalls unless it's a recessionary period. But here, in Nebraska, at the present time, in contrast to the fact that we have low unemployment and we have a strong economy, we have a self-imposed budget deficit due to the governor's financial mismanagement and this body's financial mismanagement. So now, that is being utilized as an excuse to cut critical programs and services from healthcare, from education, from infrastructure. And then we see a host of measures out there, whether it's from Senator Hughes or other member-- Senator Brandt or other members in the body, to increase taxes on Nebraskans, to fill those

same budgetary gaps that they have helped to create. So these issues need to be deliberated more thoughtfully and more thoroughly in this body, and these A bills provide a very good opportunity to raise those issues. Thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Thank you, Mr. President. I do believe that we kind of jumped the gun on recognizing the students from Mary Our Queen, because I think they're there right now, if we want to maybe recognize them again in a minute. So don't worry, kids. You're going to get your moment in the sun. Especially-- is there Georgie [PHONETIC] up there? I think I saw one of our, one of our friends from the lobby's daughter up there. Anyhow, I, I did pull up the, the fiscal note and I was going through this. I was also going through the one from last year. There was a bit of a negotiation to some of the points that Senator Conrad has been discussing. There was a bit of a negotiation last year on how much money Governor "Pilen" and his administration were going to be taking out of this hospital assessment fund. And initially, Governor "Pilen" wanted to take a significant amount, but it was negotiated down. I can't quite tell what we landed on, but it wasn't the \$250 million-plus that Governor "Pilen" wanted. I think it was significantly less, maybe \$15 million. I'm, I'm not quite sure. This fund, however, is, is not going to yield as much. It's-- the hospital assessment was \$2 billion in, in funds. However, we have to spend \$650 million of it. I'll have to-- I have to figure that out. I'll put a pause on that, because that's-- I gotta, I gotta dig back into my brain and get through all that brain fog that I have, when comes with a certain age. So this fiscal note is a general funds negative of \$60 million, but then cash funds of \$63 million, and then federal funds. And I have to look through this a little bit more detail. But essentially-- let's see here. Beginning January 1, 2027, DHHS will begin to use Medicaid Access and Quality Fund to pay primary care medical home care management services, so MCO services, which will include a federal match. Its estimated impact to be \$7 million point-- \$7.1 million total funds, \$2.5 million cash funds, \$4.6 million federal funds. There is no fiscal impact for FY '26 for these additional covered services. It requires remaining funds in the Medicaid Access and Quality Fund to be transferred to program 344, CHIP, and program 348, Medicaid. And these cash funds will be used to fund program operations and will reduce General Fund expenditures. So, yes, to Senator Conrad's point, this is alleviating some General Fund expenditures in the future years, but it doesn't, it doesn't actually impact the current biennium, but it will impact future bienniums by shifting funding to some of these Medicaid programs, to these Medicaid



Access and Quality Funds, which I, in the past, would say is a, is a-- more of a reassuring fund to use. But considering we don't exactly know what's going to be happening at the federal level, it's a little bit more-- it's, it's not as a sure thing in the pa-- as it would have been in the past, because we don't know what funds and what funding mechanisms are going to be cut. I do know that the USDA funds for the Healthy Foods Program to schools and childcares is already making an impact in Nebraska. There are childcares, at least in the Omaha area, that received word yesterday that there's an interruption in their receipt of access to the Healthy Foods for, for kids from the USDA. So I know that was a program that was discussed a week or two ago. There was a, there was a lot of news media around it. And, and now, it has been enacted and we are going to start to see a decline in access to Healthy Foods for our kids across the state, which I imagine is also going to impact some of our agricultural industry, as they were having partnerships with these businesses. So I, I, I, I remain in support of LB527, and I look forward to moving this forward. I, however, feel like we, as a, as a body, need to really start talking about what we're doing, as far as planning for the future changes to the federal government, and not even future changes. Some of them are the current, immediate changes. So thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Colleagues, I had previously introduced a group of students and they were not in the room at the time, so we would like to do that again. Senator, Senator Fredrickson would like to welcome 64 fourth grade students from Mary Our Queen Catholic School in Omaha. They are located in the south balcony. Please rise. Be recognized by your Legislature. Returning to the queue, Senator Conrad, you're recognized. This is your third opportunity.

**CONRAD:** Thank you. I was wondering if Senator Strommen was available for a question.

**ARCH:** Senator Strommen, will you yield?

**CONRAD:** I know he's not checked out. I don't know if he's on the floor. Well, as he makes his way here, perhaps, even though this is my third time, maybe another member might punch in and, and yield me some time if we need to continue our dialogue. Well, I know that senators are always busy attending to other issues, and I know he has a key measure on the agenda today that perhaps he is doing additional preparations for, or maybe he's visiting with some stakeholders in the lobby, either constituents or lobbyists, which, of course, is part of the process. But I'm very interested to learn more about this issue, in regards to healthcare needs and healthcare access in rural

districts like Senator Jacobson's and Senator Strommen's. It goes without saying that one of the biggest drivers in healthcare costs is when we leave ailments untreated or we don't take care of preventative care kind of options with those checkups, or when we have minor illnesses that can, can spiral into something more significant and-- or serious for ourselves or our children or seniors in our families that we may be responsible for caring for. So having things like the voter-approved paid sick leave law actually helps to bring down healthcare costs for taxpayers, for healthcare providers, for the state. But when we undercut not only the will of the people and we undercut the ability of working Nebraska families to access preventative care or take care of a minor health issue before it exacerbates, it actually increases emergency room visits, it increases emergency room costs, it increases hospital stays and hospital costs. So when you remove things like access to a modest paid sick leave benefit, that not only hurts healthy moms, healthy babies, but it actually increases healthcare costs for everyone. So I'm very interested to know if Senator Strommen has talked about these issues in regards to his effort that he is leading, along with the Business and Labor Committee, to attack the will of the people and to undermine the modest paid sick leave law. What impact will that have on our healthcare costs, particularly in rural areas and across the state? When you remove access and opportunity for preventative care, when you leave minor ailments untreated because you can't get time off work, when you have to pick between your paycheck and a sick kid, it increases costs on society and taxpayers in a host of different ways. I had a chance to read the transcript from that committee hearing this weekend, over the long weekend, and I didn't see any discussion of that. So I was hopeful that my friend, Senator Strommen, might be on the floor to talk more about what he's learned from his district, about when you remove access to preventative care, when you remove access to an ability for working families to attend to their healthcare needs, what happens to healthcare costs that then will be on taxpayers to bear? He thinks it's unfair that small businesses should have to follow the will of the people to provide a modest healthcare sick leave benefit. So indeed, I guess his solution is to pass those costs on to state taxpayers in measures like these and otherwise, in our state budget. So I will look very forward to Senator Strommen and other members, who are attacking the will of the voters and undermining basic sick leave protections for working Nebraskans, to help the body understand where the increase in costs should lie. Thank you, Mr. President.

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**ARCH:** Seeing no one left in the queue. Senator Jacobson, you're welcome to close on AM781.

**JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. President. Before we got sidetracked on another bill in the discussion, I thought I'd bring us back to questions that were legitimately asked about the amendment itself and where these dollars are being utilized. I think if you read through the amendment, it makes it abundantly clear that these dollars can only be used for this program. This is not dollars that are going to reduce taxes. That-- this particular program gets funded on the, on the local side by health, health maintenance organizations, who pay 6% of their non-Medicaid receipts to go into the fund, and then this-- these dollars are being matched and will ultimately come in to the Medicaid Access and Quality Fund. So, these dollars are all being used for Medicaid. They cannot be used for salaries. And these dollars coming back to the state-- or actually, if you're going to look at it being diverted, it's not, but it is going to reduce the obligation that the state would otherwise have if these dollars don't come. Because we do have re-- commitments for funding of Medicaid at the state level. I would tell you that when I look at the, the bill, the bill itself and the possibility of this getting approved at the federal level, I don't know. What I do know is if we don't ask, we will definitely not get the money. OK. That we know for certain. If you don't ask for it, you're not going to get it. If we ask for it, then we've got a chance of getting those funding-- the funding. And if this gets canceled 2 or 3 years down the road, then we can count our blessings that we got it for 2 or 3 years. So, this is a great bill. It's a bill that I think is a very important bill that brings real money to the state. I would encourage you to vote for AM781, and for the bill itself, LB527. And with that, I thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Colleagues, the question before the body is the adoption of AM781 to LB527A. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Mr. Clerk, please record.

**CLERK:** 33 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the amendment, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** AM781 is adopted. Senator Guereca, for a motion.

**GUERECA:** Mr. President, I move that LB527A advance to E&R for engrossing.

**ARCH:** This is a, this is a debatable motion. Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak.

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**CONRAD:** Thank you, Mr. President. I was wondering, since we've had so much discussion on the bills this morning in regards to uncertainties in the federal level and related state funding, if perhaps Senator Andersen would yield to a question.

**ARCH:** Senator Andersen, will you yield?

**ANDERSEN:** Yes, Mr. President.

**CONRAD:** Thank you, Mr.-- or thank you, Senator Andersen, and thank you, Mr. President. I was hoping that perhaps you could take a brief moment to update the body on the great piece of legislation that you brought forward this session that requires that the state put together an inventory of federal funds and develop contingency plans, if those federal funds are not forthcoming for any number of reasons. I think that perhaps, having that inventory and that contingency planning in place would, perhaps, be more important now than ever before. And I just wasn't sure, since I'm not a member of the Government Committee, kind of what the procedural posture of that measure was.

**ANDERSEN:** Thank you for the question. I'll have to get back to you on it, if that's all right.

**CONRAD:** OK. Well, just-- I-- maybe I can tease it out a little bit. Senator Andersen, have you had an opportunity to have an executive session on that measure yet, at the Government Committee level?

**ANDERSEN:** I'll have to check and get back to you.

**CONRAD:** OK. I know sometimes you were working on some other measures, and maybe it just wasn't fresh in your mind, but we can definitely clear that up. If there are other Government Committee members here who may remember having an executive session on a critical, bipartisan piece of legislation that is perhaps more important than ever, in regards to federal-state relations and budgetary planning. I know, for example, that the Government Committee has already advanced bills to erase the vote, vote of-- and voice of Nebraskans, particularly in CD 2, and move to a winner-take-all kind of method of allocating our electoral votes. The Government Committee has put that forward. Senator Lippincott has prioritized that measure, so they've had executive sessions on that issue. I know that the Government Committee has pushed forward Senator Kauth's measure to perpetuate discrimination against trans Nebraskans. But we're not clear if the Government Committee has put forward a measure for debate and deliberation that actually inventories federal funds and comes up with a contingency

plan for the state budget if those were to go away. So I guess until we can get some clarity on the procedural posture, I will leave it there. But I think it is a very sad testament to the priorities of that committee and this body-- moving forward with measures to silence the vote and the voice of Nebraska voters at the behest of President Trump, moving forward with measures to, again, perpetuate unwarranted attacks on trans Nebraskans, and then not moving forward with bipartisan, thoughtful measures to ensure that we have clarity and planning in relation to our budgetary obligations. Thank you, Mr. President.

**DORN:** Thank you, Senator Conrad. Senator Andersen, you're recognized to speak.

**ANDERSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. In response to the question by Senator Conrad, the status of LB662 is, it is still in committee but it should be coming out as a package of a committee priority bill. So it has not been execed on, but the intent is to bring it out in a package of bills. Thank you, Mr. President.

**DORN:** Thank you, Senator Andersen. Seeing no one else in the queue, Senator Guereca, for a motion. OK. You've heard the motion. All those in favor, say aye. Opposed, nay. LB527 advances. Mr. Clerk, for announcements.

**CLERK:** Mr. President, your Committee on Enrollment and Review reports LB135, LB529, LB326, LB457, LB84, LB355, LB97, LB22A, LB148A, LB245, LB295 to Select File, some having E&R amendments. Additionally, your Committee on Government, Military and Veterans Affairs, chaired by Senator Sanders, reports LB224, L89, LB345 to General File, some having committee amendments. Amendments to be printed from Senator Clements to LB468, Senator Ibach to LB646. New LR, LR81 and LR82, from Senator Storm; LR83 from Senator Jacobson; LR84 from Senator Hughes, all will be laid over. Mr. President, as it concerns the agenda, your Committee on Natural Resources, chaired by Senator Brandt, reports LR17 to the Legislature, for further consideration.

**DORN:** Speaker Arch, for announcement.

**ARCH:** Colleagues, I just want to mention that LR17 is coming up here next on the agenda, and I just wanted to, I just wanted to explain why we are debating an LR at this point in the, in the debate. So the reason this re-- this legislative resolution is being debated prior to the 89th day when we, when we would take up-- generally take up policy LRs-- I mean there's celebratory LRs, those aren't debated. Policy

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LRs, we hold until the 89th day. This is an administrative LR, and, and I, I want to explain. State statute 37-342 requires the Game and Parks Commission to have legislative approval before entering into talks with a local government subdivision, which is what this LR deals with. This, this legislative approval is statutorily required administrative function. Therefore, I scheduled it prior to the end of session, similar to the scheduling of committee confirmation reports of gubernatorial appointments, and an LR such as this requires just one round of debate. Thank you, Mr. President.

**DORN:** Senator Brandt, you're-- Senator Quick, you're recognized to open on LR17.

**QUICK:** Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning, colleagues. Today, I'm introducing LR17. It was brought to my attention that the city of Grand Island and Nebraska Game and Parks were interested in talking about the possibility of incorporating Camp Augustine into the state park system to be managed in conjunction with or part of Mormon Island State Recreation Area. LR17 simply approves the indication of intent by the Game and Parks Commission to incorporate Camp Augustine into the state park system. If the resolution is approved, the Game and Parks Commission will begin discussions with the city of Grand Island regarding the future management of the property. LR17 came out of Natural Resources Committee 8-0, had no opposition testimony, and the resolution had no fiscal impact. The indication of intent must be approved by the whole Legislature, which is why it is re-- why this resolution is necessary. Thank you for your attention, colleagues, and I ask that you vote green on LR17. Thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Turning to the queue, Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak.

**DUNGAN:** Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues, I do rise today in support of LR17, and I just wanted to speak on this briefly to talk a little bit about why. So when I saw LR17 on the agenda, I was curious as to kind of what Speaker Arch had referenced as to why we were debating an LR, and so I went ahead and, and pulled it up and looked at the language. And when I saw that it pertained to Camp Augustine, it jumped out at me. Some of you on the floor probably know. I've talked about this a couple times. I was a member of the Boy Scouts here, in Lincoln, Troop 93, did get my Eagle Scout from Troop 93, and one of my favorite parts of scouting was the annual summer camp that we went and stayed at. In Troop 93, we would sort of alternate, where one summer, we would go and stay at Camp Cornhusker, out by Humboldt, and then every other summer, we would do a different

trip. Some summers, that would take us outwards to Laramie Peaks, Camp Bendolateur, other places out of states, but one of the places that we stayed, I think, a couple different times that stuck out in my mind, was Camp Augustine. I, as a, as a young scout, loved Camp Augustine for a number of reasons. Obviously, part of it is just the fantastic nature that you have access to, and it was just something different. When you go to Camp Cornhusker-- which is an amazing camp, as well-- over and over and over again, it's always fun when you're young to get to go try something new. And being a Lincolnite, I had not gotten to spend much time out in Grand Island. So the opportunity that we had to go stay at Camp Augustine was-- it was, it was a fun time. I really loved it. One thing that stands out in particular, is Camp Augustine had sort of canvas tents with a platform bottom that were already set up, so you didn't have to actually set up your tent when you got out there, which was fantastic. It made our lives a lot easier as young scouts. But I will say the downside was those canvas tents were quite warm. And so when you're out there in a summer camp and it's about 100 degrees, the inside of those canvas tents got to be pretty, pretty toasty. So I, I just wanted to stand up and say that I appreciate Senator Quick's efforts here, not just on behalf of Camp Augustine itself, but on behalf of Grand Island and the opportunity that this then provides people in Nebraska to continue to continue to enjoy this land. My understanding from just doing a little bit of short research is that Camp Augustine officially, I think, closed as a Boy Scout camp back in 2023. When then Grand Island-- I found an article here in November of 2023, that there was this, as they called it, a historic hand-off, as Grand Island took over Camp Augustine. It sounds like, though, from looking at this legislation or this LR, there's some procedural hurdles that have to be jumped prior to, I guess, this effectively becoming what they want it to be. The mayor, at least back in 2023, specifically had stated in this article that one of their goals was to ensure public access. And I think that when we're talking about the land here in Nebraska, it's becoming more and more difficult to enjoy land with public access. There's a lot of developments happening and a lot of private developers that sometimes want to use the land for different purposes. And so, when you're talking about trying to find pieces of nature that everyone can go enjoy, anytime we have an opportunity to create more of that chance for, for young people, for families, for everyone all across Nebraska, I think it's a win for the entire state. I'm a big advocate of bike trails. People have probably heard me talk ad nauseum about the different cycling opportunities here in Nebraska, and that I think we should be doing everything we can to continue to be sort of this destination for outdoor adventure, and cycling is a big part of that. Senator Dover

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had a bill earlier this year in Revenue that pertained to essentially property tax breaks for easements that are given for bike trails. And so that's just one piece of this puzzle, but it's part of this larger conversation that I think we should be having about ways that we can encourage tourism to Nebraska as an outdoor adventure destination. You look at adjoining states like Iowa, with amazing bike trails. You look at Missouri, with the Katy Trail. You look at Arkansas and the efforts that they've made as a state, to become one of the preeminent cycling destinations or outdoor destinations in the country. We, in Nebraska, have a chance to do that, too. We have incredible opportunities with the Cowboy Trail and a lot of other places all around the country that I think we can really do that. And to me, LR17 speaks to that larger goal of trying to ensure that we allow public access for lands, and that we try to make sure there are these opportunities, so people growing up can continue to enjoy nature, people can continue to enjoy camping, and learning a little bit more about the outdoors here in Nebraska. Camp Augustine did that for me. And certainly, I want to say thank you to all the folks in Boy Scouts, with Camp Augustine and elsewhere, who made that possible. And I would encourage my colleagues to vote green on LR17.

**ARCH:** Time, Senator.

**DUNGAN:** Thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Senator Brandt, you're recognized to speak.

**BRANDT:** Thank you, Mr. President. This came through the Natural Resources Committee. And, you know, it's kind of fun to have a bill or an LR where everything is positive. We had-- Grand Island Tourism outlined what they were trying to do. And Director McCoy of Nebraska Game and Parks was there. The reason we need an LR is we have to pass this to authorize our Game and Parks the ability to talk to the city of Grand Island. This Camp Augustine is a 156-acre campground that is adjacent to Mormon Island State Recreation Area. And the plans-- preliminary plans laid out by the city of Grand Island and Game and Parks, at least in our hearing, a tremendous amount of oppor-- opportunity to put maybe equine trails or biking trails to hook these two together, and I think we have an obligation as a state to explore this. This kind of fell in our lap, when you have an opportunity-- a willing buyer, willing seller, to expand a, a, a park and bring even more people into an area to enjoy nature. But anyway, I just wanted to give my two cents, and, and I stand in full support of LR17. Thank you, Mr. President.



**ARCH:** Senator Clouse, you're recognized to speak.

**CLOUSE:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. President. The previous two senators really talked about a lot of things that I was prepared to talk about. But I would say that the city of Kearney, we went through this just a few years ago, on a shooting range, and the partnership that we were able to work with Game and Parks has been incredible. This facility, as mentioned, was a, a Boy Scout camp, and it had a lot of amenities, had some cabins, had a pool, had a lodge area. And so, being able to turn that over to the city of Grand Island and have Grand Island then, work with Game and Parks, I think it, it makes a lot of sense, and I give my full support to LR17. And I will yield the rest of my time. Thank you.

**ARCH:** Senator Quick, you're recognized to speak.

**QUICK:** Thank you, Mr. President. I had received an email last Friday, and I just kind of wanted to read this into the record, because I think it's important. And this has to do with Camp Augustine, and it's from a Justin DeBowsky [PHONETIC]. And he says, hello, Mr. Quick. My name is Justin Debowsky, and I grew up on Camp Augustine. My father was the camp ranger from 1988, until his death in 2002. I no longer live in the area, but my brothers and I made the sign that's still on the-- on South Locust, the Camp Augustine arrow sign. I didn't know who I would be able to contact to see if I could purchase, purchase that, or to see if I could get that sign, just in case it would be disposed of. I saw your name in some articles, and I wanted to see if I could-- if you could help. And he says, greatly appreciate it for any information. I did pass his name on to the city administrator of Grand Island, and I'm going to contact Justin and tell him he can reach out to her. And I think that's really important, because not only was it a, a local-area family that was there, but it's that, that heritage that they had, that, that, that common bond that they had of, of being able to, to live out there. I've had the opportunity to go out to the, to the Camp Augustine site. I was on the Heartland United Way Board, and we'd always do the tour of agencies. And when the Boy Scouts still owned the camp, we were able to go out there and, and talk to, to the Boy Scouts and find out what all the, all the projects that they were working on. And it was really-- it's really important for Grand Island to, to, to still maintain that site. So they, they were able to purchase that site from the Boy Scouts, and now they're looking at ways that they can develop it. And I think it's going to be a great economic development tool for the, for the city of Grand Island, as well as if the-- if it would happen to be part of a state park system. To actually put a state park of that size in central

Nebraska, we just don't seem to have access to something like that in our area. I look at what would happen around the State Fair time, with people who bring in campers and who come in and, and want to stay in our area. Mormon Island is always booked up. That place is just full of campers, and we really need access to more camper sites for people who come into our community. I'd also talked to someone who was looking at maybe putting in a riding trail. They would, they would maybe like to put a riding trail that would connect to the Hall County Park, go out to Camp Augustine, maybe connect to Mormon Island, go through Stuhr Museum, and I think that would just be a great opportunity for people in our community and those who come to visit to maybe have a riding trail, as well. So-- and I do remember when I was a kid. I wasn't in Cub Scouts very long. I grew up on a farm, but I did go-- I was in Cub Scouts for one year, and we went to Camp Augustine. And I remember-- I don't remember a lot about it, but I remember-- I do remember going on-- going out canoeing, and I remember we spent the night there. But we, we, we had a great time. And I hope that campsite can be developed into something that's really going to be important for, for the state and for the, for the area of Grand Island. Thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Thank you, Mr. President. This has been interesting. And I-- and Mr. President, Speaker, was announced at the onset that we don't typically debate LRs on the floor unless there's something substantive. Like, we don't debate all of-- a lot of people came by today. Must have had a lot of wrestling over the extended weekend, because I got a lot of LRs for some wrestling folks and-- congratulating people on, you know, making it to state or winning state or et cetera, and then, you know, basketball, as well, which, first of all, I did not get a chance to say this. Senator Juarez mentioned last week-- I, too, am an- a Maverick alumni, and I was very proud of our Mavericks. And even though they didn't make it to the next round in the NCAA tournament, I was cheering you all on from home. And I did text the Chancellor. And then I saw her a couple minutes later in the crowd and I could see her enthusiastically chanc-- championing our Maverick basketball team. So thank you for your perseverance, and I look forward to continuing to cheer that team on in the future. You certainly made Omaha proud last week. But beyond the LRs that typically, we just-- are on the agenda and that technically, we do like a unanimous consent on them, this one is a little bit different. It's a little bit more substantive. But I did actually have a question, if Senator Hansen would yield to a question. As the chair of the Exec Board, I had a question about this LR,

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because typically LR's that are substantive are referenced to the Exec Board, and you have a hearing in the Exec Board. And I was just curious if Senator Hansen could tell me why this one wasn't.

**ARCH:** Senator Hansen, will you yield?

**HANSEN:** Could you repeat the question? Sorry.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Sure. So typically, LR's that are a little bit more substantive are heard by the Executive Committee. And I-- this is actually the first one that I've ever experienced that was referenced to a different committee, and I was just curious as to why that was.

**HANSEN:** Well, it's not so much substantive, as it is, as it is the topic of the, of the bill. Right.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Sure.

**HANSEN:** But from my understanding, it has to be oversight with Game and Parks.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** OK. And so that's why then it was referenced. I, I genuinely have never experience-- they're usually just-- I guess, maybe, they're just business of the Legislature, and that's why they've typically come to the Exec Board, but--

**HANSEN:** Yeah. I know, I know the Executive Board deals with a wide range of topics, I mean-- and so, this is probably just one of them that got referenced to us. And, you know--

**M. CAVANAUGH:** OK.

**HANSEN:** So referencing was a little bit more difficult this year, I think--

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Sure.

**HANSEN:** --just because of different topics and--

**M. CAVANAUGH:** And did it-- but there was a, a companion bill with this that I think did go to Exec Board. Is that accurate? Maybe I'm wrong.

**HANSEN:** I'd have to look through and see. Sorry, I'm not prepared--

**M. CAVANAUGH:** No.

**HANSEN:** --for the question.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** That's OK. I don't, I don't know exactly, either. I heard-- I think I heard Senator Quick mention something about a bill and that spurred the question, but I appreciate you taking the time to answer my question. Thank you.

**HANSEN:** You're-- yep. You're welcome.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** I did want to ask Senator Dungan, but he-- he's, I think, busy at the moment, so I won't, though I did make Senator Hansen walk-- Senator Hansen walked across the entire floor for me, so thank you, Senator Hansen. But I did want to ask a little questions about the camp, because it sounds really lovely, and, and I'm interested in, in how this could be a, a place for me to take my kids. I took my kids to Senator Hallstrom's district this weekend, to Nebraska City, and really enjoyed the opportunities for them to be outdoors there. And so, being able to take them to other parts of the state and endure-- and enjoy outdoor activities is something that myself and, and my, my husband and I are always looking to do. We love Nebraska, we love exploring Nebraska, and I look forward to-- maybe this will be on the passport next time around, can make it a passport stop. So thank you, thank you, Senator Hansen. And thank you, Senator Quick, for bringing this forward. And I yield the remainder of my time. Thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Senator Rountree, you're recognized to speak.

**ROUNTREE:** Good morning. Thank you, Mr. President. I just rise in support of this LR17, sponsored by Senator Quick. I, too, grew up as a Boy Scout, and I remember the times of going out and the camping trips and the jamborees. And this will be a great opportunity for the city of Grand Island, as they incorporate this into their overall park system and our Nebraska Game and Park system. But I wanted to ask Senator Quick, would he yield to a question.

**ARCH:** Senator Quick, will you yield?

**QUICK:** Where's he at? Yes, Mr. President.

**ROUNTREE:** Senator Quick, just looking at the LR, I wanted to know, as they get ready to make this transition from the city to the Nebraska Game and Parks, they're going to provide the legislation with an estimated fiscal impact of the incorporation coming down. But just as they were getting this together, was there any type of estimate that they were talking about just behind the scenes, before they present something to our Legislature?

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**QUICK:** No, because actually they can't even begin talks until we pass the LR. So right now, the Game and Parks can't even talk to the city of Grand Island about what they would project as happening out there. So.

**ROUNTREE:** All right. Thank you so much, Senator Quick. And I-- it's going to be a good-- once we pass this LR, it's going to be very good for the city of Grand Island and also, for those of us that go out to the Nebraska State Fair. And it might be something that I can use in the future, going for it myself. All right. Thank you so much. And I yield back any time, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Senator Juarez, you're recognized to speak.

**JUAREZ:** Thank you very much, Speaker Arch. I have quite a few announcements that I want to discuss today, but in regards to LR17, I am really proud to serve on the Natural Resources Committee. And of course, I'm supportive of this resolution. And it's really been a great experience serving on this committee. Initially, when I was appointed to it and in our first meeting, I was just like, oh, my gosh, what have I gotten myself into, because there are definitely a variety of topics that are discussed in our committee, and I'm really feeling a lot more comfortable serving on it, and I am just very proud to represent my district and the state in making decisions for us in this committee. And if, down the road, Camp Augustine does go through and it's part of our Games and Parks committee, when I go and visit it, I'll make sure to let everyone know the role that I played in the Legislature, in getting it to be part of our park system. I honestly haven't been to a lot of the parks in our state, and I should make it a goal and put it on my bucket list to visit more of them. I visited a few, but not many. The other thing that I wanted to announce today was that 37 years ago yesterday, I had my baby girl, Rachel. She was born at 9:00 in the morning. And so, of course, 37 years ago today, even though I'm aging myself, I was really quite busy and quite happy, and wanted to wish her a happy birthday, which, of course, I did yesterday. I was so grateful for having our recess day because I got to deliver to her work, as a surprise, a tower of cupcakes and her birthday card. Always getting brownie points from mom never, never hurts. Thank you. The other thing that I wanted to announce on behalf of [INAUDIBLE] Nebraska, the Association of Farm Workers Opportunities Program has declared March 25-31 to bring attention to farm workers and honor them for the contributions that they make to our daily lives. As part of the Week of Action, they're collecting light-colored, natural fabric, long-sleeved shirts to help prevent exposure to pesticides and heat-related illnesses. So, there's going

to be drop off boxes around the state, so that everybody would have an opportunity to participate in this important program. And of course, I'm very happy to support our workers in the state. In Lincoln, they can go at Proteus, Inc., Suite A, for a dropoff box. There's also one at the Lincoln American Job Center. In Columbus, you can go to Central Community College Agriculture Building. Also, you can go to the Columbus Department of Labor. In Fremont, there will be a box at the Lincoln Federal Savings Bank. In Crete, the Crete Public Schools will be setting up boxes to collect shirts. In Omaha, you can go to the Heartland Workforce Solutions to drop off shirts, both at the Ames Avenue and on South 24th Street, and also at the Migrant Education on Cuming. In Beatrice, there's the Beatrice Department of Labor. And in Norfolk, there is the Norfolk Department of Labor. I do want to let my colleagues know, though, please, if you have long-sleeved shirts that you would like to donate for this program, I welcome you to bring them to my office as a great convenience to you, and I will take them to Omaha and deposit them to support our farm workers. So it doesn't look like I'm going to have enough time to get through my announcements, so I will go ahead and stop at this point and yield the rest of my time. Thank you.

**ARCH:** Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak.

**DUNGAN:** Thank you, Mr. President. And colleagues, I rise again, in support of LR17. And I just wanted to flesh out a little bit more of what I think the goals of this are, because I think it's important that we kind of dig into this without passing over it too quickly. I was wondering if Senator Quick would answer just a few questions for me.

**ARCH:** Senator Quick, will you yield?

**QUICK:** Yes.

**DUNGAN:** Senator Quick, I apologize I didn't give you a heads up, but I think these should be pretty easy. Can you explain a little bit to me-- it sounds like from the articles that I found that the goal here is to combine Camp Augustine or the place that was previously Camp Augustine with the Mormon Island State Park Recreation Area. Is that what your understanding is?

**QUICK:** Yes. I think that's what they would like to accomplish if this-- if they can manage to have these talks and, and get through to that point.

**DUNGAN:** Can you, I guess, give us a little bit of explanation as to what the current status is of that Mormon Island Recreation Area? Is it fairly large? Fairly small? I've not, unfortunately, had the opportunity to make it out there, so I'm just kind of curious what it currently looks like and what the goal would be moving forward by incorporating Camp Augustine.

**QUICK:** Yeah. Currently, Mormon Island is about 300 acres. They have campsites out there. There is a little lake out there. They have a swimming area, and then they-- people can fish out there, as well.

**DUNGAN:** And it sounds like the ultimate goal of this would be to create, I think, a 657-acre recreation area between the two. Is that right?

**QUICK:** Yeah. And that would include some other lands that are connected just east of Mormon Island, and I think a little bit west of Camp Augustine. If they connect all those lands together into one, it could be a fairly good-sized state park.

**DUNGAN:** Do you know-- this-- you may not know the answer to this question. Do you know where that would fall, in terms of the size of a state park across Nebraska? Would this be one of the larger ones?

**QUICK:** I do not know the answer to that question. I don't know how large some of the other ones are.

**DUNGAN:** Yeah, I, I don't know either, so I appreciate that. Thank you, Senator Quick. I appreciate your answers. So the reason I asked that is I just want to make sure people understand that what we're talking about here is a really, I think, positive step forward for Grand Island. As a Lincolnite, we talk a lot about what's going on, obviously, in our neck of the woods, but one of the things I love about being a senator is I get to find out a little bit more about other people's districts and the cities and counties and towns that people come from, all across the Legislature and all across the state. I have had the opportunity to be in different parts of the state with various events, like the Tour de Nebraska, riding my bike around different parts of the, the state, both in the Panhandle and central, central Nebraska, and all the way up to Niobrara and northeast Nebraska. And I've also had the chance just to drive through and kind of get off of I-80 and make my way into some of these other areas. And I think it's really important that we, as a Legislature, do what we can to support developing these, these areas, like these state parks and developing these public recreation areas, not just because I think

it's valuable for us, as Nebraskans, to have the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors, but because it also provides a real economic boon to a lot of these areas. And when you're talking about trying to find places to go in-state for vacations or staycations, sometimes people call them, I think that things-- or projects like what we're talking about here, with Grand Island's overall goal to create a 657-acre park, essentially, comprised of areas from, it sounds like Hall County, parts of federal land, Department of Transportation, Camp Augustine, and then the currently existing Mormon Island State Recreation Area, it really does put together, I think, a really fantastic opportunity for folks in Grand Island, but also the rest of the state to go visit that. These are the kind of bills-- and I want to speak briefly to what Senator Brandt said. These are the kind of bills that don't come along very often, with regards to kind of the-- you know, we always get to talk about some of the things that are problematic. But these bills, where we can talk about the benefits that we can provide the people of Nebraska, and things that I think we, as a Legislature, can all agree on, so I enjoy the opportunity to get up and speak about this. I really enjoy the chance to talk about some of the sites that we have in greater Nebraska, that we have to make sure we continue to support. So I appreciate Senator Quick's effort on this. I appreciate the Natural Resources Committee kicking this out to the floor so we can make sure this gets done. And I do encourage my colleagues, obviously, to vote green on LR17, to make sure that we can continue to support both outdoor recreation and also tourism across the larger parts of Nebraska. Thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Senator Quick would like to recognize some special guests seated in the north balcony. They are 30 members of Leadership Tomorrow, Class 39, from Hall, from Hall County. Please rise and be welcomed by your Legislature. Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

**J. CAVANAUGH:** Thank you, Mr. President. Well, I'm sure all these folks from Hall County are glad to hear us talking about parks in Grand Island, and potentially, the, you know, the-- obviously, the economic impact of expanding the park there. I appreciate the work Senator Quick has done on this LR and the other accompanying bill that, that he's working for his community to get this issue resolved. And I support this LR, and I, I thought I'd just push in to say that. And there's a lot of great parks in the state park system, and I've enjoyed hearing the description of this one. I actually would be very interested in trying out one of those tents on a platform that Senator Dungan was talking about. So hopefully, we'll get this all put together and be able to do that. But I would yield the remainder of my time to Senator Machaela Cavanaugh.



**ARCH:** Senator Cavanaugh, you're-- you have 4 minutes, 10 seconds.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. I actually just-- I asked Senator John Cavanaugh to yield me some time. Because I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge someone very important and special to me. Yesterday was Saoirse's [PHONETIC] first birthday, and I just wanted to wish her a happy birthday. She means the world to me and I am inspired by her every single day. The name Saoirse is from Irish Gaelic. It means freedom, and it gained a lot of popularity in the 1920s, because it likely "influish" the-- influenced the Irish War of Independence and the creation of the Irish Free State. It had strong historical ties to Irish struggle for independence, representing the aspirations for liberation and self-determination. Saoirse does nothing short of represent self-determination and liberation, and I love you. Happy birthday.

**ARCH:** Senator Quick, you are, the you are the last remaining in the queue, so you are welcome to close on LR17.

**QUICK:** OK. Thank you, Mr. President. I was going to answer one of Senator Machaela Cavanaugh's questions about the-- we did have a-- we do have an accompanying LB, LB364, which will come up later during the session, but that went to the Exec Board. And that, that bill would just relate more to-- so when we're not in session, this would give the Exec Board the opportunity to vote on maybe a plan or something toget-- that the city of Grand Island and Game and Parks would put together. And then if it requires any type of financial obligation from the Parks Department or from the state, then that would have to come back to the full Legislature. I will say-- I would ask for your green vote on LR17. I think this is really important for our community, as well as all of central Nebraska, to give people an opportunity to have a place that they can come to and stay, and have a recreation area that they can enjoy. And so with that, I'll ask for your green vote on LR17. Thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Colleagues, the question before the body is the, is the passing of LR17. Senator Hunt, please state your point.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. President. Senator Quick was in the queue to speak. And when he got up to speak, you said, you're the last in the queue, so you can just use this time to close. But that's inappropriate. Because what if somebody saw the queue wasn't empty, so they were gathering their thoughts so that they could punch into the queue and make their point? And also, what if Senator Quick wanted to use his 5 minutes to talk about something, and then he still wanted

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his close? I don't think that it's appropriate or in order for the President to decide-- you know, to basically choose the order of the queue by seeing the introducer of a measure in the queue and then saying, that's your time to close, when the queue wasn't actually empty. Senator Quick could have gotten out of the queue, and then it would have been his time to close. But I think you get my meaning, so thank you, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** Senator Hunt, my understanding is that this is-- this has been common practice. At the time that I recognized Senator Quick to close, he could have said, I reject that. I, I want those 5 minutes, and he could have continued, but chose to accept that. And so, that's, that's the clarification, Senator Hunt. Thank you. Colleagues, the question before the body is, is the advancement of LR17. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Mr. Clerk, please record.

**CLERK:** 36 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the LR, Mr. President.

**ARCH:** LR17 is adopted. Mr. Clerk, for items.

**CLERK:** Mr. President, your Committee on Enrollment and Review reports LB185, LB293A, both as correctly engrossed and placed on Final Reading. Amendments to be printed from Senator Raybould to LB113; Senator DeKay to LB437; Senator DeKay to LB245. New LR, LR85, from Senator Dorn. That will be laid over. Name adds: Senator Spivey, name added to LB676; Senator Jacobson, name withdrawn from LB646. Notice that the Business and Labor Committee will have an executive session following their hearing in room 2102. Finally, Mr. President, a priority motion. Senator Bosn would move to adjourn the body until Wednesday, March 26, at 9:00 a.m.

**ARCH:** Colleagues, you've heard the motion to adjourn. All those in favor, say aye. Opposed, nay. We are adjourned.