

## EDUCATION AND CULTURE<sup>36</sup>

### Education<sup>37</sup>



**One-Room Schoolhouse Replica  
at the Stuhr Museum  
in Grand Island**

Missionaries established the first Nebraska schools to assimilate Indians into white culture. The U.S. Army started the first schools for white people at Fort Atkinson (near present-day Fort Calhoun) in the 1820s. In 1855, the first Legislature of the Nebraska Territory adopted a free-school law, one year after the territory was established.

Nebraska's present public education system is based on the state constitution adopted in 1875. The state constitution directs the Legislature to offer free instruction in public schools for people between 5 and 21 years of age. School attendance is mandatory for children 6 to 18 years of age. Public schools also provide special education for children with disabilities.

Nebraska's education system is supervised by an eight-member nonpartisan board of education with members elected to four-year terms. A board-appointed commissioner oversees administration of the state school system.

Nebraska has 244 public school districts. Most Nebraskans send their children to public schools.

Nebraska's largest higher education institution is the University of Nebraska, with campuses in Lincoln, Omaha, Kearney and Curtis. The state also supports three state colleges in Chadron, Peru and Wayne, plus a statewide community college system. Independent private colleges and trade schools are other higher education options. In November 1990, voters passed a constitutional amendment empowering the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education to coordinate and oversee the programs and activities of all colleges and universities in the state.

<sup>36</sup>Information for this section compiled from the following sources: Nebraska Constitution, Article VII; Nebraska Department of Education; Nebraska Library Commission; Nebraska Department of Economic Development; Nebraska Indian Commission; History Nebraska; Nebraska Broadcasters Association; Nebraska Press Association; Associated Press; Love Library, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

<sup>37</sup>For more details on education in Nebraska, see Page 581 (Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State College System), Page 586 (State Board of Education and State Department of Education), Page 608 (Board of Educational Lands and Funds), Page 671 (Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education), Page 688 (University of Nebraska Board of Regents), Page 707 (Nebraska Community College Student Performance and Occupational Education Grant Committee), Pages 709-710 (Nebraska Educational, Health and Social Services Finance Authority and Nebraska Elementary and Secondary School Finance Authority), Pages 727 and 729 (interstate education compacts), Page 817 (school districts and educational service units) and Page 874 (school statistics and colleges and universities).

## Libraries<sup>38</sup>

Nebraska's first library was established at the Fort Atkinson military post in 1820. The federal Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 provided for a territorial library in Nebraska, which later became the state law library. Omaha was the site of the state's first public library in 1871. In 1877, the Legislature authorized incorporated towns to establish and maintain free public libraries and reading rooms. The 1901 Legislature established a state library commission to promote, develop and coordinate Nebraska's public library services.

Today, Nebraska has 1,151 elementary and secondary school libraries, 273 public libraries, 93 county law libraries, 82 special libraries, 52 postsecondary academic libraries, 21 institutional libraries and seven state agency libraries. All libraries can share materials through a statewide network of four regional multitype library systems, supported by the Nebraska Library Commission.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln library system, which consists of Love Library and seven branch libraries, is the largest research library in the state. Other larger libraries include the Nebraska Library Commission, the Nebraska State Library-Supreme Court Law Library at the State Capitol, the Lincoln City Libraries, the Omaha Public Libraries and academic libraries at Creighton University, the University of Nebraska at Kearney, the University of Nebraska Medical Center and the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

## Museums, Art and Culture

The Joslyn Art Museum's collection in Omaha ranges from ancient to modern art, including art objects created by American Indians and western frontier art. The Durham Western Heritage Museum also is in Omaha. The Sheldon Art Gallery on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus features a comprehensive collection of American art. The Museum of Nebraska Art in Kearney features works of artists who were born in Nebraska or who reside in the state. The University of Nebraska State Museum at UNL has one of the largest fossil collections in the United States, including a prehistoric mammoth skeleton display. The Lied Center for the Performing Arts at UNL offers a variety of stage, music and dramatic performances.

History Nebraska maintains the Museum of Nebraska History in Lincoln, as well as the John G. Neihardt State Historic Site in Bancroft, the Neligh Mill State Historic Site in Neligh, the Fort Robinson Museum in Crawford, the Sen. George W. Norris State Historic Site in McCook, the Willa Cather State Historic Site in Red Cloud, the Chimney Rock National Historic Site near Bayard, Courthouse and Jail Rocks near Bridgeport, the Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center in Omaha and the Thomas P. Kennard House-Nebraska Statehood Memorial in Lincoln.<sup>39</sup>

The Strategic Air and Space Museum near Ashland has warplane and aviation history and missile displays. In Minden, the Harold Warp Pioneer Village has more than 30,000 displays depicting U.S. life since 1830. In Grand Island, the Stuhr Museum of the

<sup>38</sup> More information on Nebraska libraries can be found on Pages 663 and 907-913.

<sup>39</sup> See section on History Nebraska (Pages 630-656) for further details on the agency and lists of Nebraska historical markers and historical organizations.

Prairie Pioneer, built partially on an island in a man-made lake, features a restored 1800s railroad town. A museum at Scotts Bluff National Monument displays the history and art of the Oregon Trail. The U.S. Indian School in Genoa is a historical museum. Chadron's Museum of the Fur Trade has Indian artifact exhibits, guns and other fur trade relics.



The Lied Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

## Communication<sup>40</sup>

Thomas Morton began issuing the first newspaper in Nebraska, the *Nebraska Palladium* and *Platte Valley Advocate*, in 1854. A newspaper targeted for black audiences, *The Progress*, was first published in Omaha in 1889.

Today, Nebraska has 157 general interest newspapers, including 14 dailies and 9 college newspapers. Other newspapers published include special interest newspapers, such as farm and business newspapers, legal notice newspapers and newspapers aimed at specific ethnic or religious groups. The largest daily newspapers are the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Lincoln Journal Star*. More than 50 magazines and journals are produced in Nebraska.

Nebraska's first commercial radio station, WOAW (now WOW) in Omaha, began broadcasting in 1923. Television came to Nebraska in 1949, when KMTV and WOW-TV in Omaha began on-air operations. The University of Nebraska established educational television in 1954 and a statewide public radio network in 1988.

Nebraska has 158 commercial and noncommercial radio stations, including 27 statewide public radio stations; 26 commercial and noncommercial TV stations, including nine statewide public TV stations.

Nebraska also has an Associated Press wire service operation based in Omaha,

<sup>40</sup> See Pages 914-916 for a list of Nebraska newspapers and Pages 917-918 for a list of Nebraska radio and television stations.

with bureaus in Omaha and Lincoln. The AP is an international news organization that compiles news from and distributes news to its members, which include all daily newspapers and most broadcasting outlets.

## GOVERNMENT<sup>41</sup>

### Federal Government

Nebraska is represented in Congress by two senators and three representatives, giving Nebraska five votes in the Electoral College, which elects the U.S. president and vice president. Senators serve six-year terms, while representatives serve two-year terms. Nebraska members of Congress have offices and residences in Nebraska as well as in Washington, D.C.

The federal executive branch is represented in Nebraska by agency branch offices and other entities, many of which are in Lincoln and Omaha. Cabinet-level agencies with a presence in Nebraska include the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Justice, Labor, Transportation, Treasury and Veterans Affairs. A major federal presence in the state is Offutt Air Force Base, which employs approximately 10,000 military and civilian personnel. Offutt, located near Bellevue, is home to the Air Force's 55th Wing, as well as the U.S. Strategic Command, which manages the nation's strategic forces in order to deter attacks. Several independent federal agencies also have Nebraska branch offices, including the U.S. Postal Service, which maintains post offices in almost every community.

The U.S. judicial branch includes courts of appeals and district courts. Nebraska is part of the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, and the entire state makes up a single district in the district court system. Nebraska presently has two U.S. 8th Circuit judges and five U.S. district judges, including those with senior judge status.

### State Government

Nebraska's first constitution, adopted in 1866, served as the basis for the state's admission to the Union in 1867. This constitution was replaced in 1875 by one that strictly limited state government power. In 1920, Nebraskans approved 41 amendments proposed by a constitutional convention.

Constitutional amendments may be proposed by the state Legislature, by a constitutional convention or by the people. Amendments must be approved by voters at a regular or special election in order to be adopted.

The state constitution gives the people the power of initiative, which allows them to propose, by petition, constitutional amendments or statutory changes. The people

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<sup>41</sup> Information for this section compiled from the following sources: *The United States Government Manual 2022*; Nebraska Constitution; U.S. government agencies; League of Nebraska Municipalities; Nebraska Association of County Officials; Nebraska Department of Administrative Services; Nebraska Department of Revenue; Nebraska State Court Administrator's Office; Nebraska Indian Commission. For further details on federal, state, local and tribal government in Nebraska, see sections elsewhere in this book. See "Nebraska Political Parties and Elections" for information on Nebraska's voting requirements and election dates.