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**Capitol View  
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**Here’s a Look at More of What the Legislature Accomplished**

Two measures from the Health and Human Services Committee to expand benefits to Nebraskans struggling with food insecurity and utility bills were vetoed by the Governor but overridden by lawmakers.  
 Senator John McCollister’s measure (LB108) would expand food assistance eligibility to 165 percent of the federal poverty level until September 30, 2023, when it would return to 130 percent.

Senator Tom Brandt’s bill (LB306) increases the eligibility threshold for the low-income home energy assistance program from 130 percent of FPL to 150 percent.

A comprehensive measure from the Judiciary Committee addresses police certification and training. Committee Chairman Sen. Steve Lathrop said the measure (LB51) increases the current 20 hours of annual continuing education required of all officers to 28 hours in 2022, and 32 hours in 2023 and subsequent years. It also: requires a psychological evaluation of any applicant who has not worked previously in law enforcement; calls for completion of de-escalation training related to mental health behaviors, substance abuse, anti-bias, implicit bias and crisis communication; allows the appointment of noncertified conditional officers, pending acceptance into a formal law enforcement training program; prohibits a police officer from intentionally using a chokehold on a person; prohibits use of a carotid restraint control hold unless the officer believes the individual would cause death or bodily injury to others and the officer is trained in the restraint technique.

A bill that would ban the use of treated seed in ethanol production to address a situation at an ethanol plant in Mead was advanced by the Natural Resources Committee and approved by lawmakers. Sen. Bruce Bostelman sponsored LB507 to prohibit the use of treated

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seed in the production of ethanol if its use results in the generation of a byproduct that is deemed unsafe for livestock consumption or land application.

Another gubernatorial override was necessary for lawmakers to pass Retirement Committee Chairman Sen. Mark Kolterman’s [LB147](http://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/search_by_number.php?DocumentNumber=LB147&Legislature=107th" \t "_blank" \o "Link to the webpage for LB147) which transfers duties and responsibilities for management of the OPS retirement plan from the Omaha School Employees Retirement System board of trustees to the Public Employees Retirement Board, which manages the rest of the state’s plans through the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems. The transfer will take effect Sept. 1, 2024. The bill specifies that the school district remains liable for the retirement system’s funding obligations and OPS will cover all costs for the management transfer. It also requires completion of a compliance audit and annual audits by the state auditor.

At the request of the Governor, the Transportation and Telecommunication Committee offered a measure (LB388) to increase broadband availability throughout the state. Chairman Sen. Curt Friesen said the Public Service Commission would administer grants to providers, cooperatives and political subdivisions to fund qualifying broadband development projects using $20 million in fiscal year 2021-22 and FY2022-23. Priority will be given to grants to unserved areas that previously have not been targeted for such a project, unserved areas that are receiving federal support for construction that will not be completed within 24 months and underserved areas that have developed a broadband and digital inclusion plan.

Revenue Committee bills approved cut Nebraska’s top corporate income tax rate and will exempt military retirement pay and a percentage of Social Security income from state income tax.

The state’s top corporate income tax rate cut will be approximately one-half of 1 percent. The exemption on Social Security taxes will be 5 percent in tax year 2021, then increase to 20 percent in 2022 and then 10 percent more per year until reaching 50 percent in tax year 2025. Passage of new legislation would be required then to extend beyond that date to

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100 percent in 2030. All military retirement benefit pay would be exempt from state income tax under LB387 sponsored by Sen. Tom Brewer at the request of the Governor beginning in 2022.

An Urban Affairs Committee bill (LB156) would establish up to five inland port authorities in a metropolitan, primary or first-class city or a county with a population of greater than 20,000. To be eligible, an inland port site must be at least 300 acres in area and meet two of the following criteria of being within: one mile of a navigable river or waterway; one mile of a major rail line; two miles of a major airport; or two miles of any federal interstate or any four-lane divided highway. An inland port authority is authorized to engage in marketing activities, issue and sell revenue bonds and acquire rights-of-way and property. Another committee bill (LB25) implements the provisions of a constitutional amendment approved by voters in 2020. The bill, passed 48-0, extends the maximum repayment period for tax-increment financing from 15 years to 20 if more than one half of the land in a project is designated as extremely blighted.

See, they did accomplish something!

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*J.L. Schmidt has been covering Nebraska government and politics since 1979. He has been a registered Independent for more than 20 years.*