

Advocacy, The Legislative Process, and Legislation

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Advocacy

Means...

Getting Involved

Getting Involved—Why?

1. Without citizen involvement in the political process, policy progress stalls
2. Policymakers need to understand the personal and practical impacts of public policies
3. To tell your story, to give human perspective and impact on tough policy decisions
 - But along with your story, identify the policy deficits, legislative need, and/or political barriers that exist
4. To help influence decisions and policies that will affect you

Get Involved—How?

4 popular methods:

1. Phone, email, fax contact your legislative representatives
2. Schedule a personal meeting(s)
3. Write a letter of support, opposition, congratulations, or thank you to let your representatives know how you feel (honestly, they *do* want to know!)
4. Testify at a public hearing

Getting Involved—How?

- Keep as current as possible on as many issues as you can/want
- Identify who your representatives in the Unicameral and Congress are
 - Staff is just as important
- Develop a relationship with your political representatives
- Keep lines of communication open between you and your representatives
- Know who you need to approach

Get Involved—Things to Remember

Irrespective of how you get involved in the legislative/political process, however you decide to get out your story, priorities, or position, there are some fundamental things to keep in mind:

Things to Remember

Policymakers are people, too

- No reason to be intimidated
- Be polite and respectful; in short, treat them as you would like to be treated
- Thank them for their time and energy

Policymakers serve you

- ***DO NOT*** threaten them with your vote
- Let them know that **you are a resource** as well
- Follow up on legislation

Things to Remember

Arguments are supported

- Why do feel or think that change is needed; what led you to that belief; what arguments/evidence will convince others?

Be accurate

- Inaccuracy jeopardizes credibility, follow legislation or policy from the beginning to the end

Be organized

NO PERSONAL ATTACKS!!!!

Things to Remember

Be brief, but succinct

- Legislators have busy schedules—if you can say it in ten words, say it in ten words, but give them the full picture

Be direct

- Tell them what you want them to know, why/how it is important, and what you want them to do
- Avoid tangents

Know who to talk to and why

- Who has influence, jurisdiction, control, or authority to make the decision you want or the issue you are interested in

Know how to play

- What are the customs and proper etiquette

The Legislative Process

Means...

**Know how the rules are
made and become a part of
the rulemaking**



Legislative Process (in a nutshell)

- Nebraska is unique--it is a “Unicameral” system
 - Only has one legislative chamber instead of two
 - Is a “nonpartisan” system
 - Only 49 senators
- Dual legislative sessions per year—next session begins January 2004
 - Initial thinking and policy creation are often performed over the interim (time between sessions)
 - Good time to start dialogue and relationship with representatives

“Hurdles” a bill must overcome before becoming law

Bill Introduction and Committee Assignment

Introduced by a Senator or Speaker; first 10 days of session reserved for introducing new bills.

Committee Hearing

Public hearings; committee hears public testimony and comment. Committee can **advance** the bill to General File, **advance with amendment(s)** to General File, **hold**, or **indefinitely postpone** the bill; indefinitely postpone effectively “kills” the bill--no further consideration but may be reintroduced subsequent session.

General File

First round of debate and consideration by the full legislature. Bill can be amended at this stage. Full legislative vote to **advance** the bill to Select File, **advance with amendment(s)** to Select File, **bracket**, **re-refer**, **hold**, or **indefinitely postpone** the bill.

Select File

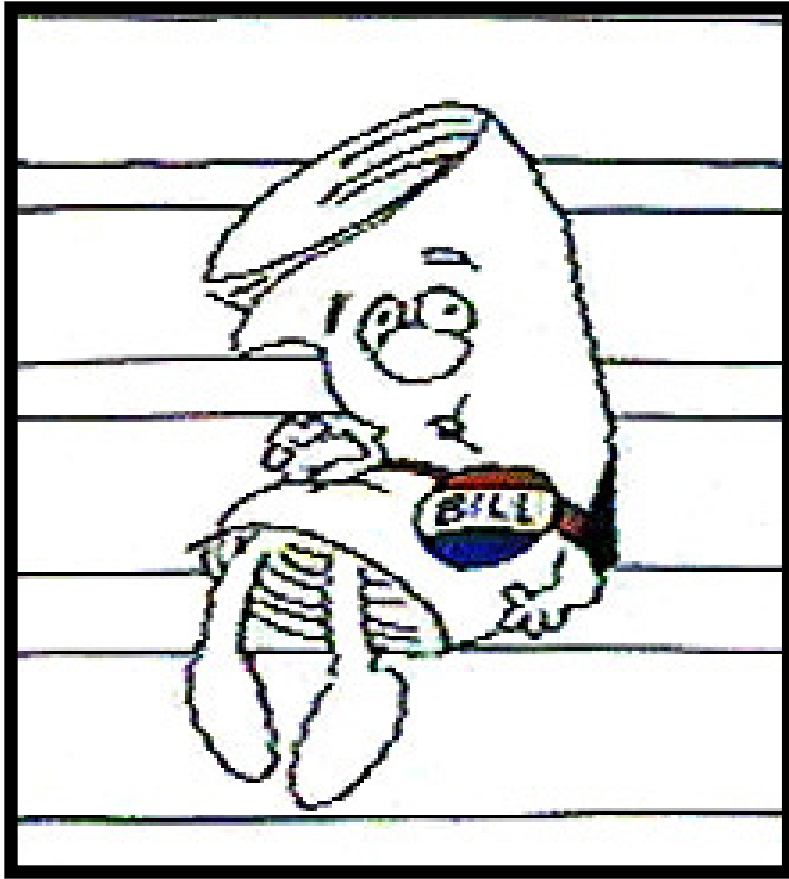
Second round of debate and consideration by the full legislature. Bill can be amended at this stage. Full legislative vote to **advance** the bill to Final Reading, **advance with amendment(s)** to Final Reading, **bracket**, **re-refer**, **hold**, or **indefinitely postpone** the bill.

Final Reading

Final round of debate and consideration by the full legislature. Bill can not be amended at this stage. Full legislative vote to **pass** the bill (send to the Governor), **bracket**, **re-refer**, or **kill** the bill.

Governor

Bill is submitted to Governor to sign. Governor can **sign** the bill or **not take action** on the bill (it becomes law either way) or **veto** the bill. If vetoed, bill is sent back to legislature for **veto override** (30 votes or 3/5 legislature needed to override veto).



How to Track & Read a Bill

Legislative Resources

- Unicameral Website:
www.unicam.state.ne.us
- Free *Unicameral Update* Magazine: (a weekly publication online, mailed, or picked up at the Capitol)
- Newspapers and television (NETV2 has all-day, live coverage during the session)
- *Legislative Journal* and *Legislative Worksheet* (online or at the Capitol)



Welcome to the Nebraska Legislature online

ONLINE ACCESS TO THE NEBRASKA UNICAMERAL | "THE SALVATION OF THE STATE IS WATCHFULNESS IN THE CITIZEN"

Explore the Legislature:

- LEGISLATIVE DOCUMENTS
- SENATORS & DISTRICTS
- LAWS OF NEBRASKA
- ABOUT THE NEBRASKA UNICAMERAL
- OFFICES
- REPORTS
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Current Legislative Action

The 98th Legislature, First Session adjourned sine die on Friday, May 30.

- [Interim Study Resolutions \(committee referrals and text\)*](#)
- [Budget Status](#)
- [Unicameral Update Online - 2003 Session Review](#)

New Web Site Features

- [Operative Dates for Legislative Bills Enacted During the 2003 Legislative Session*](#)
- [Numerical Listing of Sections Amended and Repealed During the 2003 Legislative Session*](#)
- [Section Number Assignments by Legislative Bill for Bills Enacted During the 2003 Legislative Session*](#)
- [Legislative Research Division report: A Review: 98th Legislature, First Session* \(1.67 mb file\)](#)

(* - Adobe Acrobat PDF document)

BILL FINDER

SEARCH BY NUMBER:

Enter the bill or resolution number below.

LB LR

None A CA

SEARCH BY WORD OR PHRASE:

Enter your query below.

Search Terms:

Document Type:

-- All Documents --

- UNICAMERAL UPDATE
- UNICAM LIVE!
- NEBR. BLUE BOOK
- FOR STUDENTS

Nebraska Unicameral
Legislature
State Capitol
P.O. Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509-4604

Legislation

Means...

Opportunity for reform is knocking; Are YOU going to answer?

LB 724

NE Behavioral Health Reform Act

- LB 724 is an “intent bill”—no substantive legislation or action, only defines legislative intent. Bill requires such activity to be proposed in the next legislative session.

LB 724

NE Behavioral Health Reform Act

Key tenets:

Regional Centers

- Decrease reliance on regional centers for inpatient mental health treatment
- Consolidate inpatient treatment provided at the regional centers
- Designate one inpatient regional center facility with a single administrative and clinical staff for all regional center operations
- Reinvest revenue from the reduction or elimination of inpatient regional centers toward enhancing community-based treatment
- Provide more accountable and cost-effective utilization of professional staff at the regional center (consistent with clinical needs of consumers)
- Ensure that payment for professional services at the regional center is made only on an hourly basis for the number of hours actually provided

LB 724

NE Behavioral Health

Reform Act

Regional Governance System

- Reduce number of behavioral health regions
- Restructure regional governing boards to include county board members and other persons with broad range of interests and expertise in provision of behavioral health services within the region
- Limit and redefine duties of the regional governing boards while preserving local control and self-determination to the greatest degree possible
- Eliminate county matching funds requirement and require funding from the regional governing boards based on a “maintenance of effort” requirement established by Health and Human Services
- Prohibit regional governing boards from directly providing behavioral health services in the region, while permitting governing boards currently providing services to reorganize as separate legal entities with separate boards of directors for service provision

LB 724

NE Behavioral Health Reform Act

Administration and funding

- Reduce growth of state expenditures by the system
- Maximize access to Medicaid federal funding for community-based services
- Provide additional support to develop community-based treatment services
- Require that all public funding for the behavioral health system, including regional center funding, be integrated into the Health and Human Services System to provide efficient and effective transition of persons to the least costly and least restrictive treatment environment possible
- Restructure administration of the behavioral health system to require the creation of a separate Division of Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Addiction Services within Health and Human Services System
- Governor-appointed chief administrative and clinical officer for behavioral health within the Health and Human Services System

LB 724

NE Behavioral Health Reform Act

Amendment 1031

Regional Center Restructuring

- Permissive language on consolidation: “...MAY include designation of one inpatient regional center...”
- Removes hourly payment requirement for professional services at regional centers

Regional Governance System

- *Restructure regional governing boards to include elected officials and other persons with broad range of interests and expertise in provision of behavioral health services within the region and change method for the appointment of board members*

- Requires “local funding for behavioral health services provided in each behavioral health region based on a maintenance of effort requirement established by the department, including funding from counties and other public and private sources”

- Regional governing boards shall be restricted or prohibited from providing services without state approval

- Chief administrative and clinical officer does not have to be appointed by the Governor

LB 724

NE Behavioral Health Reform Act

Amendment 1031 (cont.)

LB 710: mental health commitment inclusion

1. "limit the number of mental health boards and change provisions relating to such boards"
2. "permit physicians and psychologists to initiate emergency protective custody procedures"
3. "encourage outpatient community-based commitments, avoid more costly and inappropriate inpatient commitments, and facilitate consumer transition from institutions to community-based treatment services"
4. "clarify the authority and obligation of counties relating to emergency protective custody after mental health board commitment"

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