

NEBRASKANS FIRST NEWSLETTER



Legislative Update and Current Events Report

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2008 LEGISLATURE WELL UNDERWAY

- The Nebraska legislature convened on January 9, 2008 for a "short" sixty working days session. Nearly four months will transpire before the session ends on April 17, 2008.
- This will be the last session for fifteen of the forty-nine senators due to term limits which, in our view, has been a good thing. The quality, integrity, independence and energy of the new senators attaining office since term limits kicked in last year has been a breath of fresh air.
- Senators Term Limited Out Effective January 1, 2009. Ray Aguilar (Grand Island - 9 years), Carroll Burling (Kenesaw - 8 years), Ernie Chambers (Omaha, 38 years), Pat Engel (South Sioux City - 15 years), Phil Erdman (Bayard - 8 years), Carol Hudkins (Malcolm - 16 years), Ray Janssen (Nickerson - 16 years), Joel Johnson (Kearney - 6 years), Lowen Kruse (Omaha - 8 years), Vickie McDonald (St. Paul - 7 years), Dwite Pedersen (Omaha - 16 years), Don Preister (Omaha - 16 years), Ron Raikes (Lincoln - 11 years), DiAnna Schimek (Lincoln - 20 years), John Synowiecki (Omaha - 7 years).
- 330 bills which were not killed or passed last session carried over for consideration this session. In addition to these carryover bills, 846 new bills were introduced, all of which will have at the very least one public hearing. It seems obvious that such a huge number of bills cannot be addressed properly by our senators in a sixty or even a ninety day session. It would be a good move if the legislature self-imposed by rule a limit on the number of bills any one senator could introduce during a session.
- Because there is no way over 800 bills could ever be actually considered by any legislative body, the rules of the legislature allow each senator to designate one bill as his/her priority bill. Each standing committee (there are 14) can designate two bills as their priority bills. The Speaker of the Legislature can designate up to twenty-five priority bills.
- In a short 60-day session it is unlikely any bills of substance that are not designated priority status will have a chance to be debated and acted upon.
- All water/irrigation related bills are assigned to the Natural Resources Committee (NRC) for a public hearing. The NRC has eight members. They are: Senators Leroy Loudon (Ellsworth), Carol Hudkins (Malcolm), Tom Carlson (Holdrege), Mark Christensen (Imperial), Annette Dubas (Fullerton), Deb Fischer (Valentine), Gail Kopplin (Gretna), Norm Wallman (Cortland). The composition of this committee is quite good. Nearly all have roots in agriculture.
- Because Omaha and Lincoln dominate the full legislature, it is critical that only bills that are absolutely necessary and that are pro-irrigation, pro-agriculture be voted out of the NRC for debate and consideration by all 49 senators.
- When this session comes to an end, all bills which have not been passed will die and go away. No carryovers. 2009 will start with a clean slate.

