

# NEBRASKANS FIRST NEWSLETTER



## Legislative Update and Current Events Report

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### **2008 LEGISLATIVE SESSION OVERVIEW AND WRAP UP**

After one hundred calendar days and sixty working days, the 100th Legislature second session adjourned on April 17, 2008. In our view, the session was positive and well managed by the Speaker of the Legislature, Mike Flood of Norfolk. There was little rancor or any serious controversies that strained the mood and tempo of the process. Even outgoing firebrand senator Ernie Chambers kept his cool - most of the time.

Here is the final "scorecard" summing up the session. It is called the worksheet, and is prepared by the Clerk of the Legislature each and every day tracking all bills throughout the process. "A" bills involve appropriations. "CA" denotes constitutional amendments.

- Number of Bills introduced (excluding "A" bills), 100th Legislature: 1176  
1st Session: 705 2nd Session: 471
- Number of Carryover Bills and Resolutions: 313
- Number of "A" Bills Introduced, 100th Legislature: 89  
1st Session: 57 2nd Session: 32
- Number of Carryover "A" Bills: 15
- Number of Resolutions Introduced, 100th Legislature: 404  
1st Session: 219 2nd Session: 185
- Number of CA Resolutions Introduced, 100th Legislature: 16  
1st Session: 10 2nd Session: 6
- Number of Carryover Resolutions: 6
- Number of Constitutional Amendments Delivered to Secretary of State, 100th Legislature: 4  
1st Session: 2 2nd Session: 2
- Number of Bills to Become Law, 100th Legislature: 397  
1st Session: 217 2nd Session: 180
- Number of Bills Killed: 631

In our February 2008 newsletter we addressed the key water related bills and provided summaries of our position and testimony on each. The following bills,

LBs 800, 801, 924, 975, and 1041 were either held in the Natural Resources Committee (NRC) or indefinitely postponed (killed). Either way, they are dead and gone. LB 1094 involved paying surface water irrigators in the Republican River Basin who sold their 2007 water rights as part of a plan to help meet the requirements of the settlement agreement with Kansas. Because of a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the LB 701 (2007) local funding mechanism, payment to the surface water irrigators was and remains on hold. LB 1094 will allow 9 million dollars to be drawn from the state's cash reserve fund to cover the 2007 surface water buyout. This state "loan" will be paid back to the state when the lawsuit is resolved.

The fact that all other water related bills were killed is not a bad thing. We have argued for years now that only bills that are absolutely necessary should be advanced out of the NRC onto the floor of the full legislature where they become fair game and sitting ducks for the Omaha-Lincoln dominated body to amend into a form that oftentimes results in a positive bill being morphed into a bad bill. Over the years this has happened time and time again. Fortunately, since the NRC composition changed a couple of years ago thanks to term limits, the eight senators on that committee have done a much better job in studying bills referred to the NRC for hearing, and not voting them out of committee just because the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) asks them to do so. For this vigilance and scrutiny we applaud the senators on the NRC.

The forty-nine senators this legislative session focused their time and efforts on the following issues: (1) moving the state fair from Lincoln to Grand Island starting 2010, (2) instituting a statewide ban on smoking in bars and restaurants beginning June 1, 2009, (3) requiring uniform statewide testing in reading, math and science

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