

March 19, 2021

Lawmakers adjourned for a long weekend, having reached the mid-point of the 2021 Legislative Session. Full-day floor debate commenced on Wednesday as the Legislature gave first-round approval to a bill (LB 561) designed to implement the voter-approved casino gambling measure. The Legislature closed out the week by overcoming a filibuster effort and invoking “cloture” to advance a bill preventing student journalists from being censored by school administrators.

NBA SUPPORTED BILLS PRIORITIZED

Speaker of the Legislature, Mike Hilgers (Lincoln), has selected the following bills, supported by the NBA, among the 25 bills designated as Speaker priorities.

LB 452 – Financial Literacy Act: The Education Committee has advanced LB 452 to General File. Introduced by Senator Terrell McKinney (Omaha), LB 452 is a measure that would, beginning December 31, 2022, require each school district, in consultation with the state Department of Education, to develop for incorporation into all phases of the curriculum of grades K-8, a financial literacy program (knowledge and skills regarding budget and financial record keeping, taxes, establishing, building, maintaining and monitoring credit; debt; savings; risk management; insurance; and investment strategies.). The bill would require each school district to present evidence annually to the state Department of Education, that financial literacy is being taught to students in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

Prior to advancing the bill, the Committee adopted an amendment incorporating the provisions of LB 327 into LB 452. Introduced by Senator Julie Slama (Peru), the LB 327 amendments would require a half-credit high school personal financial literacy course prior to graduation.

LB 682 – New Markets Job Growth Investment Act: Introduced by Senator Lou Ann Linehan (Omaha), LB 682 would provide additional utilization of federal dollars being appropriated to the United States Treasury Federal Program; provide additional transparency and extend the “sunset” date on new applications from December 31, 2022 to December 31, 2029.

ADDITIONAL PROPERTY TAX RELIEF PROPOSED

The Appropriations Committee is expected to finalize its two-year state budget proposal next week. During the past week, the budget proposal was adjusted to increase the state property tax credit program by \$63 million over the next two years. The additional funding is designed to allow the credits to grow by 2 percent annually from the 2019 fund level. With these changes, if adopted, property tax relief will increase by \$574 million compared with the two years ending June 30 - 65 percent increase. With these changes, the state will allocate over \$1.45 billion to direct property tax relief over the next two years from the combination of the property tax credit program and the refundable income tax credit provisions.