

Open Ballot Bills Opposed In Nebraska Cities, Schools

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Lobbyists for Nebraska cities and school boards are fighting two bills that would require elected officials to disclose how they voted when picking their leaders.

Both groups faced sharp questioning from senators Wednesday as they argued against opening the votes for school board president, committee chairmen and other internal roles.

Gary Krumland, of the League of Nebraska Municipalities, said some city councils take turns in leadership roles, but for others, an open ballot

could create conflicts and disagreement among members. Krumland said the group's opposition was based on a vote by its executive board, which includes 15 elected officials and three city appointees.

"There are government bodies that use the secret ballot, and they would like to continue doing that," Krumland said.

Virtually all school board votes are already public except for internal leadership positions, and some boards already select leaders with an open vote, said John Bonaiuto, a lobbyist for the Nebraska Association of School Boards. Bonaiuto said some boards still want the option to keep those

votes closed. "We're not looking for any change in the current law," he said.

The arguments faced tough questioning from lawmakers.

"It sounds to me as if you're all for transparency except when it gets a little sticky," said Sen. Beau McCoy, an Omaha Republican.

Sen. Bill Kintner of Papillion said he introduced the bills to ensure the public knows how lawmakers and other elected officials vote when choosing legislative committee chairmen, school board presidents and other leaders. One would require elected officials to cast votes in public; the other would require that votes be

disclosed under Nebraska's open-meetings law.

"People deserve to know what we're doing down here when we're on their time and on their dime," Kintner said.

Some lawmakers say Kintner, a Republican, is attempting to impose party discipline on moderate GOP lawmakers in the nonpartisan Legislature, an allegation he denies.

Senators have already defeated a similar attempt this year to open the votes via a procedural rule change, but they're likely to debate it again as a bill. Republicans outnumber Democrats 7-1 on the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, and

half of its members have signed onto as co-sponsors.

Nebraska's one-house Legislature has no formal party structure or leadership.

Keeping votes secret has enabled Democrats to claim many of Nebraska's legislative chairmanships, including the top seat on the committee that oversees the state budget. Most Republicans in leadership positions are moderates. Last year, despite a large GOP majority, Democrats held most of the Legislature's committee chairmanships.

The bills are LB646 and LB649.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

The COMMUNITY CALENDAR appears each Monday and Thursday. Contributions to this list of upcoming events are welcome and should be submitted two weeks before the event. Submissions MUST be typewritten or legibly printed and include the name and phone number of a contact person. Send items to P&D Calendar, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, or email to news@yankton.net.

THURSDAY

Table Tennis, 8:30 a.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
Wii Bowling, 9:30 a.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
Billiards, 10 a.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
ASHH Toastmasters Club 6217, noon, Avera Sacred Heart Pavilion, conference room no. 2, Yankton, 605-665-6776.
Pinochle, 12:45 p.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
Dominos, 1 p.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
English as a Second Language classes, 2-5 p.m., United Church of Christ, Fifth and Walnut, Yankton. (605) 660-5612.
Love Addicts Anonymous, 7 p.m., for women, 120 West Third Street, Yankton, 605-760-5307.
AA, Alano Group 8:30 p.m., speaker, 1019 W. 9th St, Yankton.
Weight Watchers, 5:30 p.m., 413 W. 15th Street. Weigh in 45 minutes before meeting. For more information, call 605-665-2987.
Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS #SD 45), Weigh-in 5:30-6:30 p.m., meeting 6:30-7:30. RTEC building, 1200 W. 21st St. For more information call 605-665-8442
Yankton Area Banquet, 6-7 p.m., United Church of Christ, Fifth and Walnut

FOURTH THURSDAY

Yankton County Farmers Union, 7 p.m., Sunrise Apartments, 2015 Green St., Yankton, 661-7667.

FRIDAY

Alanon, 8 p.m., open meeting for all newcomers, Riverview Reformed Church, 1700 Burleigh, Yankton.
Line Dancing, 9:30 a.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
Quilting, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
Exercise, 11 a.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
Partnership Bridge, 1:30 p.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
AA, Alano Group 7 p.m., Big Book Study, 1019 W. 9th St, Yankton.
Bingo, 7-9 p.m., The Center, 605-665-4685 (open to the public)

SATURDAY

Yankton Toastmaster Club 1294, 7:30 a.m., Fry'n Pan Restaurant. Open session; call 605-665-8448.
Yankton Alcoholics Anonymous, 10 a.m., Women's meeting, non-smoking session, 1019 W. 9th Street.
Narcotics Anonymous "Road To Recovery" Group, 8 p.m., open meeting, First United Methodist Church (northeast door), 207 W 11th St, Yankton
AA, Alano Group 7 p.m., discussion, 1019 W. 9th St, Yankton.
Weight Watchers, 9 a.m., 413 W. 15th Street. Weigh in 45 minutes before meeting. For more information, call 605-665-2987.

SUNDAY

AA, Alano Group 7 p.m., discussion, 1019 W. 9th St, Yankton.

MONDAY

Line Dancing, 9:30 a.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
Exercise, 11 a.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
Interchange, noon, Minerva's Bar and Grill, 605-760-7082.
Whist, 12:30 p.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
Pinochle, 12:45 p.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
Cribbage, 1 p.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
Hand & Foot Cards, 1 p.m., The Center, 605-665-4685
English as a Second Language classes, 2-5 p.m., United Church of Christ, Fifth and Walnut, Yankton. (605) 660-5612.
Narcotics Anonymous "Road To Recovery" Group, 8 p.m., open meeting, First United Methodist Church (northeast door), 207 W 11th St, Yankton

FIRST MONDAY

Yankton Lions Club, 11:30 a.m. lunch, noon meeting, JoDeans, 605-665-4694
Servant Hearts Clinic, a free, Christ-centered medical clinic, 5:30-8 p.m., Technical Education Center (RTEC), 1200 W. 21st St., Yankton.

South Dakota Senate Blocks Funds Needed For Ag Land Value Study

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — State senators closed the door Wednesday against commissioning a study of converting to actual-use for setting tax valuations of agricultural land in South Dakota.

Senators voted 16 yes and 18 no. The measure, SB 4, needed 24 yes votes to stay alive. All of the opponents were Republicans and mostly from cities.

The original funding request was for \$151,000 to contract with South Dakota State University's economics department.

The amount had been amended to \$1 in the Senate Appropriations Committee in an attempt to keep the bill alive for further consideration.

The Legislature's permanent task force on agricultural land valuations sought the study. Currently valuations are based on a productivity model that uses soil types and crop prices or land rents.

A member of the panel, Sen. Jim Peterson, D-Revillo, said he had pledged

to bring an amendment to the full Senate but the negotiations fell apart.

Sen. Bob Ewing, R-Spearfish, supported approving the bill at \$1 and sending it to the House of Representatives for further work.

"It's very important to me as well as to a lot of people in this state," Ewing said.

But Sen. Jim White, R-Huron, said the agreement didn't evolve. He opposed the bill because its purpose is to deviate from the current tax base.

"It resets the valuation for the property throughout the rest of the county," White said.

The effect could be \$3.5 billion that would be shifted to other property owners, he said.

Sen. Billie Sutton, D-Burke, said actual use is a fairness issue but that wasn't the intent of the bill.

"This does not implement actual use. This simply asks for your approval to study the issue. We study issues up here all the time," Sutton said.

Sen. Gary Cammack, R-Union Center, asked the bill to be kept alive for

further discussion.

"In the end it affects the native grasses in eastern South Dakota and in western South Dakota," Cammack said.

Native grass is more valuable in eastern South Dakota because it's become more rare, according to Cammack.

"The taxation on that land has encouraged that land to be torn up," he said.

Sen. David Omdahl, R-Sioux Falls, said the change would be confusing and asked for the legislation to be killed.

Sen. Betty Olson, R-Prairie City, said her ranch is native sod that has been grazed forever. Olson said the taxes have doubled and her family is in a position where it must break up the land or sell the land.

"We need some study on this," she said.

There are "folks out there" who probably are receiving a windfall because they are being taxed as rangeland, Sen. Jason Frerichs, D-Wilmot, said.

MIDWEST DIGEST

S.D. House Says No To No-Fault Divorce

PIERRE (AP) — The state House has shot down a proposal that would have allowed unilateral no-fault divorce in South Dakota.

The House voted 44-25 against the plan, which advocates have said would make it easier for domestic violence victims to escape abusive marriages.

Democratic Rep. Ray Ring of Vermillion says his measure would allow one spouse to get a divorce without the consent of the other spouse.

Ring says his intent was to allow victims in abusive situations to leave a marriage without having to testify in court in front of their abusers.

Opponents have argued that lawmakers shouldn't make it easier to divorce.

Republican Rep. Roger Hunt of Brandon says making it easier to obtain a divorce weakens the foundation that South Dakota was founded on.

Advocates Say Shackles Traumatize Kids

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Juvenile lawyers and advocates say Nebraska children as young as 10 are treated more harshly in court than adult offenders.

Lawmakers heard testimony Wednesday on a bill by Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha that would prohibit restraints on juveniles during court appearances unless deemed necessary for courtroom security.

Currently all juvenile offenders transferred from detention centers appear in court in restraints. Child advocates say the practice damages children psychologically and affects their courtroom behavior.

Another measure reviewed by the committee would allow juveniles to choose to continue court-ordered services through

age 21. Another would allow juveniles who commit low-level offenses to receive in-home treatment.

The committee took no action on the bills.
The bills are LB25, LB212 and LB482.

Iowa Panel OKs Higher Speed Limit Bills

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The speed limit could be increased to 75 mph on some Iowa highways under a measure a Senate panel approved Wednesday.

Members of a transportation subcommittee approved the bill, which now heads to a full committee for consideration.

The bill would allow the state Department of Transportation to increase the speed limit on interstate highways to 75 mph, up from the current limit of 70 mph.

"We have done a lot of things on our interstates ... that have made it a lot safer, thus hopefully allowing it to have traffic go a little faster," said Sen. Randy Feenstra, R-Hull, the bill's co-sponsor.

Subcommittee Chairman Chris Brase, D-Muscatine, expressed opposition, saying data show there's a correlation between higher speed limits and more car crashes.

"Being a firefighter paramedic, it's just not something that I can be supportive of," he said. "I think the speed limits are reasonable at this time."

Feenstra noted he's looked at data in a neighboring state with a 75 mph speed limit and he did not see an uptick in car crashes in that region. But Steve J. Gent, director of the Office of Traffic and Safety for the state transportation department, said there is data that show the car crash correlation.

The DOT hasn't taken a side about the bill.

The state's interstate highway speed limit was last increased in 2005, when it was 65 mph. More than 35 states have speed limits of 70 mph or higher, according to a 2013 report from the National Conference of State Legislatures

Dave Says: It Shouldn't Take A Year

BY DAVE RAMSEY

Dear Dave,
I'm 30 and debt-free. Do you think I should stop making contributions to my 401(k) account for a year in order to save up an emergency fund?

— Beth

Dear Beth,
Yes, I do. But it shouldn't take you a year to set aside an emergency fund if you're debt-free and making decent money at your job. Just make it part of your monthly budget plan, grit your teeth and do it!

I recommend that people put off or stop investing until they are debt-free, except for their home, and have an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses in place. In some cases, depending on how much debt they have, it could take three or four years to do all this. I know it seems like a long time, but it's really not in the grand scheme of things. Here's the way I look at it. If you have



Dave RAMSEY

no emergency fund, but you're contributing to your 401(k), there's a good chance you'll end up cashing out your 401(k) if a large, unexpected expense comes along. When you cash out a 401(k) early, you get hit with a penalty plus your tax rate. That's not a good plan!

That's just one of the reasons I tell people to have an emergency fund in place before they start investing!

—Dave

A WASTE OF MONEY?

Dear Dave,
I have a question about home warranties. Are they a waste of money if you

already have a fully-funded emergency fund, with six months of expenses or more set aside?

— Andy

Dear Andy,

In my opinion, they're a waste of money even if you don't have that much set aside for emergencies. I recommend an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses to cover the unexpected things that life will throw at you. This amount of cash, sitting in a good money market account with check writing privileges, will give you easy access in the event of a financial emergency. I don't do extended warranties of any kind, Andy. They're not a good deal. You're better off to self-insure against things breaking down, and put what would have been profit and marketing dollars for the extended warranty company in your own pocket!

— Dave

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