

Legislative Update

By Kimberly Carroll Steward

The 109th Nebraska Legislature adjourned on April 17, 2026, concluding a full 60-day session. Over the course of the session, 547 bills were introduced, with 167 ultimately passed into law. Many additional policy changes were incorporated through amendments, reflecting the increasingly complex and interconnected nature of legislative solutions impacting Nebraska's communities, economy, and environment.

Looking ahead, the Nebraska Recycling Council is excited to engage with a significantly evolving legislative body. At least thirteen new senators are expected in the 2027 session. Ten senators are term-limited, including Robert Clements, Machaela Cavanaugh, Megan Hunt, Wendy DeBoer, John Arch, Ben Hansen, Mike Moser, Myron Dorn, Tom Brandt, and Dave Murman. Additionally, Christy Armendariz and Jane Raybould have chosen not to seek re-election, and Fred Meyer, who was appointed to fill a vacancy, did not file for election.

At the same time, twelve incumbent senators—including Merv Riepe, Jana Hughes, Barry DeKay, Mike Jacobson, Teresa Ibach, Danielle Conrad, Brian Hardin, Rick Holdcroft, Brad von Gillern, John Fredrickson, George Dungan, and Loren Lippincott are preparing for competitive re-election races.

A total of 62 candidates filed for Nebraska's 25 legislative seats in 2026, reflecting a highly competitive election cycle shaped by term limits, retirements, and open races.

This level of turnover presents both challenges and opportunities to elevate conversations around waste reduction, recycling infrastructure, and circular economy solutions across Nebraska, and we are excited to see what next year brings!

This session, the Nebraska Recycling Council closely followed budget-related legislation, particularly LB 1072. After significant debate, lawmakers approved mid-biennium budget adjustments to address a projected \$646 million deficit. The final budget package included reduced appropriations and transfers from several cash funds compared to the original proposal.

Of particular concern was the transfer from the Nebraska Environmental Trust. Ultimately, \$11.1 million was swept from the Trust. Given that the Trust typically distributes around \$20 million annually in grants, this reduction represents a meaningful impact on funding available for environmental, conservation, and recycling-related projects across the state.

Jim Pillen signed the final budget bills on April 7, 2026, without veto. However, continued revenue challenges remain. On April 15, 2026, the Nebraska Department of Revenue reported that March tax receipts were 14.8% below projections, leaving the state with a

Legislative Update

negative ending balance of \$72 million. These ongoing shortfalls suggest that future investments in recycling and waste reduction efforts may face increased competition for limited state resources.

As we look ahead, the Nebraska Recycling Council remains committed to working alongside our policymakers, partners, and communities to strengthen recycling systems, reduce waste, and support resilient local economies.

We know this will require proactive engagement and clear priorities as Nebraska prepares for the 2027 legislative session. Real progress happens when communities are engaged. We encourage everyone to learn about the issues, ask questions, and share their perspectives with elected officials. We encourage you to [find your Senator](#) and reach out!

By working together, we can build stronger recycling systems and create lasting solutions that serve communities across the state.