

# Nebraska Legislature Update

**By Kimberly Carroll Steward**

The Nebraska Legislature has passed the halfway mark of this year's 90-day session, reaching Day 45 on March 17. This milestone signifies a transition to more intensive legislative activities, with full-day floor debates commencing on March 31 to deliberate on priority bills. A significant focus during this session has been addressing the state's projected budget shortfall of over \$432 million for the upcoming fiscal years, with Speaker Arch emphasizing the importance of fiscal responsibility and the need for strategic solutions to navigate this financial challenge.

Previously, NRC highlighted several bills that we found valuable to follow for our work in sustainable materials management.

## **LB 167 – Introduced by Sen. Stan Clouse, this bill extends the Nebraska Litter Reduction and Recycling Act's termination date from 2025 to 2030.**

LB 167 Passed on final reading with an emergency clause February 21, 2025 and approved by Governor Jim Pillen on February 25, 2025, going into effect immediately. With the enactment of LB167, the Nebraska Litter Reduction and Recycling Act will continue its efforts to manage litter and promote recycling programs across the state for an additional five years!

## **LB 247 – Introduced by Sen. Barry DeKay, this bill amends the Integrated Solid Waste Management Act.**

Passed on Final Reading February 19, 2025 and approve by Governor Pillen the following day. This increase will become operative July 1, 2025. The enactment of LB 247 will continue the enhancement environmental management through increased funding for waste disposal and remediation programs.

### **Still in progress:**

## **LB 264 – Introduced by Speaker John Arch, on the behalf of Governor, a part of this bill alters the allocation and investment earnings of the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund.**

During an Appropriations Committee hearing held on February 18, the bill has elicited varied reactions. Organizations opposition, particularly concerning the reallocation of funds from workforce development initiatives, environmental projects, and the Financial Institutions Assessment Cash Fund. Conversely, supporters argue that reallocation is

necessary to address the state's projected budget shortfall of over \$432 million for the upcoming fiscal years.

*LB 264 remains pending before the Appropriations Committee, awaiting further legislative action.*

**LB 121 – Introduced by Sen. Brian Hardin, this bill amends the Integrated Solid Waste Management.**

A hearing was held before the Natural Resources Committee on January 30.

*There have been no further actions or advancements reported regarding LB 121.*

**LB 163 – Introduced by Sen. Ashlei Spivey, this bill establishes the Office of Climate Action within the Department of Environment and Energy.**

A public hearing was conducted by the Natural Resources Committee on January 30th.

During the hearing, proponents argued that establishing the Office of Climate Action would enable Nebraska to better coordinate its climate initiatives and leverage federal funding opportunities. They emphasized the importance of a dedicated office to addressing the state's climate challenges effectively.

*No further actions have been recorded regarding LB 163 and the bill awaits advancement from the Natural Resources Committee to the full Legislature for debate.*

**LB 317 – Introduced by Sen. Tom Brandt, this bill proposes merging the Department of Natural Resources with the Department of Environment and Energy to create the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment. Currently under review by the Natural Resources Committee. The bill's legislative journey includes:**

Designated as a priority bill by the Natural Resources Committee on March 12, with a Committee amendment AM711 filed on March 27, 2025. Supporters, including Governor Pillen and interim department directors, argue that the merger will improve efficiency and address challenges related to water resource management and energy development. Opponents express concerns that the merger may create bureaucratic barriers and impair the state's ability to effectively manage water issues.

**LB 309 – Introduced by Sen. Jana Hughes, this bill establishes the Safe Battery Collection and Recycling Act, creating a statewide battery recycling framework. Under consideration by the Natural Resources Committee.**

A public hearing was held before the Natural Resources Committee on February 12. With

Supporters of the bill, argue that it is a necessary step to mitigate safety hazards, economic and environmental impact. However, opposition initial expresses concern about the administrative burdens retailers may face in ensuring compliance with the program. Additionally, some believe the bill's coverage is limited, as it does not address batteries embedded in devices.

*As of April 2, LB309 was amended (AM635) along with several committee bills. LB36 (now includes the text of LB309) is on General File as a Natural Resources Committee priority bill. The bill awaits advancement from the Natural Resources Committee to the full Legislature for debate.*

**LB 607 – Introduced by Sen. Eliot Bostar, the Adopt the Environmental Stewardship of Batteries Act, the Extended Producer Responsibility Data Collection Act, and the Minimum Recycled Content Act, and change provisions relating to the Integrated Solid Waste Management Act, the Environmental Protection Act, and the Waste Reduction and Recycling Incentive Fund.**

A hearing was held before the Natural Resources Committee February 27. Support for LB 607 has come from environmental advocacy groups, which view the bill as a necessary step toward improving environmental stewardship and promoting sustainable practices. The waste management industry has also expressed support, recognizing the bill's potential to address challenges related to waste reduction and recycling. Opposition raised concerns about provisions that may impact the packaging industry, though they support the bill's advanced recycling measures. Additionally, concerns about the responsibilities it places on retailers to ensure compliance with extended producer responsibility measures, and certain product manufacturers have expressed apprehension about the bill's mandates on recycled content, citing challenges in sourcing materials and meeting new standards.

*No further actions have been recorded regarding LB 607. The bill remains under consideration by the Natural Resources Committee.*