

City of Lincoln
2008 Legislative Session
January 10, 2008

Community Priorities

1. **Arena Funding**

a. This bill is basically the “Lincoln Amendment” to last year’s LB 551 (the “Qwest Center Bill”). It “turns back” the state’s portion of the sales tax revenue generated at “eligible facilities,” including any publicly or privately owned arena and convention center. It would also “turn back” the state’s portion of sales tax revenue generated at “associated hotels” located within a certain number of yards of an eligible facility. Seventy percent of the “turn back” revenue would come to Lincoln, and the remaining 30% would go to the Local Civic, Cultural, and Convention Center Financing Fund, which is designed to support the development of civil, cultural, and convention centers throughout Nebraska.

2. **Roads Funding**

a. Urban Growth Districts

i. This bill would allow a City to create one or more urban growth districts on the edge of the city. All or a portion of the estimated sales tax revenues generated within the district could then be pledged for payment of an “urban growth bond.” The proceeds of such a bond could be used to fund a broad range of infrastructure needs, including roads. These urban growth bonds would also be backed by the City’s general taxing authority.

b. Additional revenues for the Highway Allocation Fund

i. A number of senators have come forward in recent weeks with plans to increase funding for the local road needs of cities and counties. The City of Lincoln looks forward to working with the Legislature as it develops a roads financing package that addresses the growing funding gap at the local level.

c. Roads Distribution Formula

i. LB 439 (Senator Raikes) proposed the Highway Finance Task Force, which would study, among other things, the Highway Allocation Fund distribution formula. LB 439 is still in the Transportation Committee. The City supports efforts to study/revise the statutory distribution formula.

3. **State Fair**

a. During the 2007 session, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 435, which directed the Legislature's Agriculture Committee to commission an independent study of the State Fair and its current location. The study has been completed, and the Agriculture Committee recently met to entertain proposals from various communities and groups seeking to move the State Fair.

b. The City supports both the Innovation Park, as envisioned by the University, and the State Fair, with its 100-year tradition here in Lincoln. Mayor Beutler, at the Governor's request, has been meeting with the interested parties. He intends to continue those discussions in an effort to find a solution that meets the long-term needs of both the State Fair and the University.

Additional City Issues of Importance

1. **Stormwater Funding**

a. Lincoln is again a part of a state-wide coalition of communities working to pass LB 534, which would allow cities to utilize a system similar to water and sewer rates for financing stormwater management improvements required by the Federal Clean Water Act. LB 534 is still in the Natural Resources Committee, and stormwater management was the topic of an interim study this fall. This coalition will also work to ensure that the state-wide stormwater grant programs remains funded during this second year of the two-year legislative budget cycle.

2. **Child Care Licensing Exemption for City's Recreational Programs**

a. The City of Lincoln's recreational programs, operated by the Parks and Recreation Department, have historically been exempt from licensing under the state's Child Care Licensing Act. A 2006 bill designed to "clarify" certain statutory definitions inadvertently brought the City's recreational programs within the scope of the Act. As a result, the City was required to provisionally license a number of its before- and-after-school recreational programs at the start of the current school year. The costs of this provisional licensing was approximately \$30,000. This bill would once again exempt these programs from the child-care licensing requirement.

3. **Self-Insurance**

a. Current law allows Omaha to provide an employee benefit plan (i.e., medical, dental, disability accident coverage) without excess insurance if it obtains an independent determination that such insurance is not necessary "to preserve the safety and soundness of the employee benefit plan." This bill would allow self-insurers like Lincoln and Lancaster County to do the same. It would also mean a savings of about \$40,000/year for the City. The City will be working with Lancaster County to advance this bill.

4. **Centennial Mall Renovation**

a. This new legislation would create a task force to study the environs of other state capitol buildings and consider possible design options for Centennial Mall.

5. **Safe Haven Legislation**

a. Senator Stuthman's bill, LB 157, remains on General File. It was his priority bill last year. The Lincoln City Council passed a resolution last summer encouraging the state legislature to enact a safe haven law.