

2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAP

Leadership

Innovation

Vision

Engagement

#liveNASB

<https://members.nasbonline.org/government-relations>

Sixty days done. From cold icy mornings to warmer late nights. The past four months saw it all, with twists and turns almost daily. For those familiar with professional wrestling, or maybe the famous internet meme, it was the clip of the WWE's Undertaker character flat on his back, done and "dead" per se, only to quickly sit back up, revived, with some last-minute life left. (Go ahead, type "Undertaker" into your #images or GIFs section of your phone). At times, that was good, at times it just meant our fight wasn't over.

From our perspective, so much of the Session boils down to two things. Green or Red. Do we like it, support it, and put our weight behind its passage. Or, do we fight, scratch, claw, and strategize on killing it, or hoping the clock runs out. As you'll see below, while we have our bumps and bruises, there is a lot more green and black (still important, but we simply followed closely vs stamping a strong support or oppose) in the "What Passed" section, with a lot of our red items in "What Did Not Pass."

So much of "what did not pass" is because of the work you all put in to help us. From attending LIC and visiting the Capitol to testify or meet with Senators during Advocacy Days, to participating in legislative lunches, meetings, and outreach from home, your efforts to educate and advocate for education made a meaningful difference.

Now ... the fight is not over. To go back to the WWE reference, we may have won this time, but something will pop back up in the future. Expect all of the below that did not pass this year to be seen again in some form or fashion. But for now, we can take a step back, a deep breath, and save all of that for another day.

APPROVED BY THE GOVERNOR ... WHAT PASSED

THE BUDGET – LB 1071

- Passed with the \$3.5 million "scholarship funds" OUT
- Reduction in Special Education was \$18.5 million
- Significant transfer of Board of Educational Lands and Funds (BELF) to the Education Future Fund (EFF)

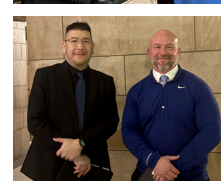
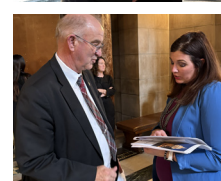
What the bill does and how it impacts districts: The reduction in Special Education appropriations, coupled with the Governor's narrative, is concerning as it signals a potential step back from funding commitments that were hard-fought during the 2023–24 session. From Governor Pillen in the 2025-2027 Mid-Biennium Budget Adjustment, "The rapid growth in special education expenditures over the last two years is not sustainable in the long term, and the excessive costs must be examined to uncover the underlying cause of runaway growth in special education costs."

BELF dollars are to be allocated on a per pupil basis and not to be used to prop up the State's obligation to the EFF. Raiding these funds sets a dangerous precedent. BELF leadership is considering all legal avenues as the Trustees for this fund.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE PACKAGE

LB 937 (Education) Adopt the Prior Learning Act and the K-12 Education Cybersecurity Act and change provisions relating to student transfers, school absences, option enrollment, extracurricular activities, reports, school employment, the improvement grant program, monitoring or providing instruction, deadlines, the Nebraska Teacher Apprenticeship Program, the Nebraska Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act, and the College Pathway Program Act.

What LB 937 does and how/if it impacts districts: As the long title suggests, this bill contains A LOT of other bills. It's important to note that none of the provisions of this bill were requested by the education community, with the exception of the original/underlying clean-up provisions contained in 937. The following bills were added as amendments:



2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAP

Leadership

Innovation

Vision

Engagement

#liveNASB

<https://members.nasbonline.org/government-relations>



LB 599 (DeBoer) Cybersecurity: Adds 'cybersecurity' to an improvement grant and duties to the ESUCC to facilitate cybersecurity activities with NDE. Districts will be hearing from their ESUs and the ESUCC.

LB 1146 (Conrad) Change provisions relating to reports by a school district relating to absences of a child from school. Changes made to the definition of excused absences. Will require an examination of your truancy policy for alignment.

LB 1164 (Lonowski) Adopt the Prior Learning Act.

LB 1224 (Hunt) Prohibit children from transferring to an exempt school during certain child abuse or neglect investigations and prohibit persons convicted of certain crimes from monitoring or providing instruction at such schools

LB 1241 (Murman) Provide requirements relating to applications for employment at a school. Adds additional requirements of applicants and screening procedures.

LB 1243 (Murman) Change school district board policies and procedures relating to part-time enrollment. Allows schools to require up to 5 credit hours for 7th & 8th grade students as a condition for participation in extracurricular activities.

OPTION ENROLLMENT/STUDENT DISCIPLINE

LB 653 (Murman) Change provisions relating to acceptance of students under the enrollment option program and discipline of students under the Student Discipline Act. AM adopted removed mandated option enrollment acceptance. Now mandates acceptance of siblings of option accepted students.

What LB 653 does and how/if it impacts districts: Districts will now be required to accept siblings of option students regardless of capacity. An exception for violent behavior to the K-12 suspension prohibition also was added. Will require a change in student discipline and option policies.

PINK POSTCARDS

LB 384 (Storer) Require the county assessor and one voting member of the governing bodies of participating political subdivisions to attend joint public hearings under the Property Tax Request Act

LB 803 (Revenue) Adopt the First-Time Home Buyer Savings Account Act and change provisions relating to the Sports Arena Facility Financing Assistance Act, the Property Tax Growth Limitation Act, the Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Service Providers Tax Credit Act, property tax valuation and levy procedures, homestead exemptions, and income taxes. LB 575 (Hallstrom) Change provisions relating to the Property Tax Request Act and property tax levy limits, was amended into LB 803.

What the bills do and how/if it impacts districts: There are no changes to the "pink postcard" meeting for 2026, other than the requirement that a voting member of the board attend. For 2027, the meeting will be moved to July 1-15 and will be more informational about the budget process. The voting threshold for tax levy increases is two-thirds majority. (No change for a six member board. Seven member boards are exempt from the two-thirds requirement. Look for additional guidance.

Retirement

LB 820 from Retirement. Change retirement provisions relating to approved identification documents, participation in certain retirement systems, state contributions, ex officio members of the Nebraska Investment Council, contributions by school districts, computation of tax withholdings, retirement allowances, cost-of-living adjustments, and the Nebraska State Patrol and change the title of the executive director of the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems. LB 1102 and LB 1166 are also now within 820 as AM's. LB 1102 (Ballard) Provide requirements for monthly payments of retirement allowances and



2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAP

Leadership

Innovation

Vision

Engagement

#liveNASB

<https://members.nasbonline.org/government-relations>



change when certain cost-of-living adjustments occur under the Class V School Employees Retirement Act. LB 1166 (Juarez) Change applicability of the employee contribution rate under the School Employees Retirement Act

What LB 820 does and how/if it impacts districts: OPS has some changes to their COLA program as a result of the bill. The date of the contribution rate calculation for educators is changing from July 1 to September 1.

LB 824 (Lonowski) Change provisions relating to termination of employment under the School Employees Retirement Act and the Class V School Employees Retirement Act

What LB 824 does and how/if it impacts districts: "Bona fide separation" period for retiring educators is changing from 180 to 120 days. This means retired educators are able to substitute teach 60 days sooner.

OPEN MEETINGS ACT

LB 596 (Sanders) Change requirements for legal publications and notices required by law, provisions of the Open Meetings Act, county inventories, warrants, and discharge records, storage requirements for certain records, petitions to change names, marriage license and record fees, reports of abandoned property, and the Nebraska Hall of Fame and eliminate a penalty for certain public officials and provisions relating to the registration of farm, ranch, or home names

What LB 596 does and how/if it impacts districts: The Open Meetings Act requires schools/ESUs to publish in a local newspaper the time of the "regular" board meeting, the schedule, the location, and the method designated by the public body to provide reasonable advanced publicized notice four times a year. It shall be given by publication in a legal newspaper of general circulation within the public body's jurisdiction. Failure to comply with this shall not cause any motion resolution, rule, regulation, ordinance, or formal action of a public body made or taken at a meeting to be void or voidable. **New method of notice: Reasonable advance publicized notice of the time and place of each meeting by a method designated by each public body and recorded in its minutes. Board will need a policy saying how to provide notice.**

OTHER

LB 304 (DeBoer) Eliminate a sunset date for the federal Child Care Subsidy program and state intent regarding funding. What LB 304 does and how/if it impacts districts: Childcare subsidies are extended which is positive for qualifying families who were using it.

LB 429 (Murman) Provide requirements and restrictions for school boards relating to professional employees' organizations. **What LB 429 does and how/if it impacts districts:** Clarifies definition of professional employees' organizations. A school board shall grant access upon a request to the physical or electronic mailbox of any certified employee. If a professional employees' organization is allowed to create and post signage or materials in a school any other professional employees' organization shall also be granted permission. Will require an examination of policy.

LB 940 (Murman) Prohibit certain color additives in school meals. **What LB 940 does and how/if it impacts districts:** A variety of "dyes" in processed food are now disallowed as a result of the passage of this bill. Nutrition and food service staff will need to be made aware of the banned dyes. Hopefully, the federal government will take action banning the manufacturing of the dyes which will impact manufacturers as opposed to consumers.

LB 966 (Cavanaugh, M.) Adopt the Hunger-Free Schools Act and provide for an appropriation. What LB 966 does and how/if it impacts districts: Amended to be a pilot grant, funded with private dollars, for public and private schools. Schools will have to apply to NDE for grant funds.



2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAP

Leadership

Innovation

Vision

Engagement


#liveNASB

<https://members.nasbonline.org/government-relations>



LB 1022 (Murman) Eliminate the human relations training requirement for obtaining a Nebraska substitute teacher's certificate. **What LB 1022 does and how/if it impacts districts:** Passage of this bill will hopefully increase the pool of substitute teachers through the removal of this requirement.




 **LR 422 (Rountree) Urge Congress and the President of the United States to enact legislation to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. What the bill does and how/if it impacts districts:** We were pleased to see this pass with broad bi-partisan support and will be sharing it with our federal delegation.



WHAT DIDN'T PASS

As you can see from the list below, this session was largely defined on what DID NOT pass. Some added significant cost to already stretched budgets through mandates. Some reduced the ability of a district to access funds through caps or voting thresholds. Some bills infringed on local control through statewide mandates better left to local districts.




 **LB 463 (Ballard) ... Debated in 2026. Require school districts to develop a cardiac emergency response plan under the School Safety and Security Reporting Act and provide for grants for such plans from the Medicaid Managed Care Excess Profit Fund**




LB 468 (Clements) Change provisions relating to inheritance taxes, change certain fee and tax provisions, and eliminate a sales tax exemption relating to data centers. **We made sure LB 714, which would have reduced the motor vehicle tax to schools by 20% was not amended on.**

 **LB 507 (Hunt) ... Attempted to amend it to LB 937. Change provisions relating to school transportation expenses for children with disabilities**




 **LB 765 (Holdcroft) Change provisions relating to school district bonds and bonds issued by a joint entity that includes a Nebraska school district or educational service unit**



 **LB 841 (Rountree) ... Attempted to amend it to LB 937. Change provisions relating to special education services, parental consent, and hearings**

 **LB 960 (McKinney) Provide a requirement to include nonvoting student members on school boards**



 **LB 1024 (Murman) Require school districts and the State Board of Education to provide for instruction on the history of communism**

 **LB 1050 (Murman) Provide requirements for dyslexia screening and limit advancement to grade four under the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act**


 **LB 1097 (Conrad) Adopt the State and Political Subdivisions Sexual Abuse Liability Act**



 **LB 1112 (McKinney) Adopt the Statewide Standardized Grading System Act**

 **LB 1182 (Lippincott) Provide for a base salary for certified teachers and state intent relating to changes to the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act and a new form of block grant funding**



 **LB 1219 / LR 317 CA (Brandt) Limit the amount of property taxes that may be levied by a political subdivision**

2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAP

Leadership

Innovation

Vision

Engagement

#liveNASB

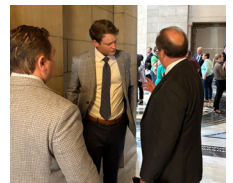
<https://members.nasbonline.org/government-relations>



LR 292 CA (Andersen) Constitutional amendment to provide a new method of valuing real property for property tax purposes, provide a limit on property tax increases, provide certain exceptions, provide requirements for declared emergencies, provide for emergency bond levies, and eliminate conflicting constitutional provisions.



The \$7 mil / \$3.5 mil in the budget for non-public "gap funding"



LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS (PARTIAL LIST)

The interim will see some studies referenced to the Education Committee. These will be great opportunities for further engagement on important K-12 issues.

LR 406 (Hughes) Interim study to examine the special fund for sites and buildings that public school boards or public boards of education may establish within their school district

LR 440 (Hughes) Interim study to examine the identification, evaluation, and effectiveness of reading screeners approved by the State Department of Education and utilized by school districts, and to examine whether improvements to screening practices should precede consideration of student retention at the third-grade level

LR 465 (Murman) Interim study relating to school policies on student surveys and the involvement of parents, guardians, and educational decisionmakers

COLBY'S TAKE ...

As you view the few bills that passed and MANY that didn't pass, you might think it was a session of conflict. Some days it felt that way. Attacks on local control and a district's ability to govern itself continue. It would be easy to say, "Well ... it could have been worse!" And you would be right. But I choose to see the wins. **The amount of engagement from our membership this session was a WIN and reflected here.** We saw some low profile, but significant victories. Public notice requirements are more reasonable, substitute teachers will be more accessible, and schools may get some assistance feeding hungry students. Option programs were preserved, bond elections were unchanged, and there is a recognition that cybersecurity is a real issue for districts.

As I look ahead, I remain optimistic and energized by the willingness of school board members to let their voices be heard. I see progress in lowering the temperature on "pink postcards", a focus on literacy, and more partnership with our federal delegation. My attention now shifts to relationship building. Some to be mended, others to be enhanced, and many to be started. 2027 will see at least 13 new faces. The election could usher in as many as 10 more. 2027 advocacy has already started and I look forward to working with all of you.

