

April 5, 2019

The point in the legislative session in which “late night sessions” will be conducted is rapidly approaching. Speaker Jim Scheer (Norfolk) has announced that the “late night session” schedule will be unveiled on April 11. Late night session debate generally runs until 8:30 pm or later to allow sufficient time to process priority bills and to finalize the state budget.

TIF EXPANSION BILL ADVANCES

After enduring three hours of General File debate late last week, and having the measure pulled from the legislative agenda, LR 14CA resurfaced Thursday morning. The legislature briefly debated and gave first-round approval to the proposed constitutional amendment, introduced by Senator Justin Wayne (Omaha), that would, if approved by the legislature and Nebraska voters, extend tax increment financing (TIF) benefits from 15 to 20 years if more than 50 percent of the project area is designated as “extremely blighted.” Under current law, an “extremely blighted” area is defined as a census tract with an average unemployment rate that is at least 200 percent of the state unemployment rate and an average poverty rate of more than 20 percent.

HEMP LEGALIZATION BILL MOVES FORWARD

Nebraska farmers would be authorized to grow industrial hemp under LB 657, which has been advanced to General File by the Agriculture Committee. Hemp, and one of its chemical derivatives, cannabidiol, also referred to as CBD, would be legalized if the legislation passes. Introduced by Senator Wayne, LB 657 would allow for the cultivation, harvesting, handling, marketing and processing of hemp, as permitted by the recently adopted federal farm bill. The measure defines industrial hemp as strains of the cannabis plant with less than 0.3 percent tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC.

The bill calls for the state plan established by LB 657 for the monitoring and regulation of hemp production in compliance with the Federal Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, to be submitted to the United States Secretary of Agriculture for approval within 30 days after the effective date of the Act.

AG LAND VALUATION BILL STALLS

A measure (LB 483), introduced by Senator Steve Erdman (Bayard), that would change the valuation of agricultural land productivity-based system was debated for three hours on Thursday and pulled from the legislative agenda. While Senator Erdman indicated that the bill was designed to be “revenue neutral,” and not for the purpose of providing property tax relief,

skeptics of the proposal raised concerns regarding the impact that the measure would have on other taxpayers and on school funding.

Pursuant to legislative protocol, supporters of LB 483 will need to demonstrate sufficient support (33 votes) for a cloture motion prior to the bill being placed back on the legislative agenda.