

April 12, 2019

With only one legislative bill involving extended debate during the past week, lawmakers were able to process a significant number of priority bills. With only 31 days remaining in the legislative session, just under 50 percent of the bills designated as priorities have advanced beyond the first stage of debate.

Speaker Jim Scheer (Norfolk) has released a schedule of “late night sessions,” in which floor debate generally continues until 9 p.m. or later to allow sufficient time for lawmakers to process the state budget and remaining priority bills. Late-night sessions have been scheduled for the following dates:

Monday, April 29
Tuesday, April 30
Wednesday, May 1
Tuesday, May 7
Wednesday, May 8
Thursday, May 9
Monday, May 13
Tuesday, May 14
Wednesday, May 15

Tuesday, May 21
Wednesday, May 22
Thursday, May 23
Tuesday, May 28
Wednesday, May 29
Thursday, May 30
Monday, June 3 and
Tuesday, June 4

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF MEASURE BEING FORMULATED

The Revenue Committee met once again in an Executive Session on Wednesday evening to continue formulating its plan for property tax relief. While no votes have been taken to date, the property tax relief package unveiled in a presentation to the committee by Chairman Lou Ann Linehan (Elkhorn) and Senator Mike Groene (North Platte) contains the following provisions:

Tax Increases

- increase the sales tax rate by at least .5 percent, to as much as one cent
- remove the sales tax exemption on pop and candy and plumbing and moving services
- increase the tax on cigarettes

Real Estate Property Tax Valuations

- reduce the valuation of agricultural land for property taxes from 75 percent to 65 percent
- reduce the valuation of commercial and residential property for property taxes from 100 percent to 90 percent

State Aid to Education

- provide foundation aid, per-pupil aid, to school districts through the school funding formula to provide state aid to a broader range of schools

The proposal would also designate revenues derived from the collection of sales taxes on Internet purchases for the property tax relief package and utilize the current \$224 million annual allocation to the Property Tax Credit Cash Fund to help offset costs associated with providing property tax relief.

Since the proposal contains provisions that have not received public input, a joint public hearing on the ultimate property tax relief proposal has been scheduled for hearing before the Revenue Committee, Education Committee and Retirement Committee on April 18 at 1 p.m.

TIF EXPANSION BILL ADVANCES

The legislature briefly debated and gave second-round approval on Wednesday to LR 14CA, a 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.” Prior to advancing the bill, the legislature adopted an amendment specifying that areas eligible for the extended TIF repayment period include those with “a high rate of unemployment combined with a high poverty rate as determined by law.”