

Engaging with the Nebraska Unicameral



What Is Advocacy?

Advocacy is education—telling law makers about a need, about what you do to meet this need, and sharing the stories of the people effected by this need. There is no limit on advocacy.

Examples: Inviting lawmakers to tour your facility, attending a legislative kickoff and asking a question about a broad issue, inviting a lawmaker to attend an event at your organization

How is Advocacy Different from Lobbying?

Lobbying refers to expressing an opinion in communication with law makers about specific legislation. For example, asking a member of Congress to vote for or against a particular bill, and asking a member of your state legislature to introduce a bill to further your cause.

501(c) 3 Nonprofit Organizations are legally able to lobby.

- Can not be a “substantial” portion of their activities, can be measured through financial expenses
- Can not endorse political candidates
- Can endorse or oppose political appointees
- Can endorse or oppose legislation

“While all lobbying is advocacy, not all advocacy is lobbying. Advocacy is any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others. It includes public education, regulatory work, litigation, and work before administrative bodies, lobbying, nonpartisan voter registration, nonpartisan voter education, and more.” – Alliance for Justice

For more information:

Coalition for Strong Nebraska – www.strongnebraska.org

National Council of Nonprofits - [https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/taking-the-501h-](https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/taking-the-501h-election) election

A Quick Review of the Nebraska Unicameral

- **Nebraska is the only Unicameral in the nation**

- Nebraska citizens are considered the state's second house. This means...
 - Every bill receives a public hearing.
 - No Conference Committee is required to resolve differences that arise from a bicameral system.

- **Consisting of 49 senators**

- **Senators have term limits.**
 - One term is 4 years. They can only serve for 2 consecutive terms.
 - They may run for election again after sitting out a 2 year cycle.

- **The Nebraska Legislature runs on a 2 year cycle.**

- The [Nebraska Legislature](#) meets once each year in a regular session beginning on the first Wednesday of January.
 - Odd-numbered years this runs 90 days.
 - Even-numbered years it lasts 60 days.
- Sometimes, senators are called back to the Capitol in Lincoln for a special session. The governor is given the power to call special sessions between regular sessions in order to handle emergencies, i.e. property tax relief or redistricting.

Finding and Tracking Legislation in the Unicameral

- Senators introduce bills during the first 10 days of session.
- Each bill is given a number.
 - Bills that propose to create, change or delete laws are listed as LB.
 - Bills that seek to make a formal expression of opinion, intent or recognition; amend the state or federal constitution; or authorize a study are listed with LR.
- Once appointed to a committee, all bills receive a [public hearing](#).
- To find information on proposed bills visit nebraskalegislature.gov
- For more information on bills introduced that you may be interested in you can contact the following organizations:
 - Nonprofit Association of the Midlands
 - Nebraska Civic Engagement Table
 - Coalition for a Strong Nebraska
 - Nebraska Appleseed
 - <https://www.nebraska.gov/billtracker/> (can sign up to receive emails about 10 bills)

I am Interested in a Bill, Now What?

There are 3 main ways to lobby for legislation in Nebraska:

- 1) Testify during a committee hearing
- 2) Write a letter to your state senator (could also be email)
- 3) Speak to your state senator in person

Testify: You must testify in person during the committee hearing.

- Show up on the designated day and time in the conference hearing room at the capital building.
- Sign in to testify
- They will call for proponent testimony first, then opponent testimony, then neutral testimony.
- You will state your name and where you live.
- You have 5 minutes to give your testimony.
- *Currently, there is a place on the bills website to provide written comment. These comments are not necessarily placed in the record. It is dependent upon the rules of the session.

Written Communication: This can be email or written letter

- Start by introducing yourself – name, where you live
- Next, specify what bill you are contacting them about and what your position is on this bill
- Then tell them why you have this stance on the bill.
 - Personal stories are IMPORTANT! Facts are great, but they will probably receive the data from many different organizations. So use your personal stories
 - Conclude the letter thanking them for their time and providing contact information if they would like to speak further.

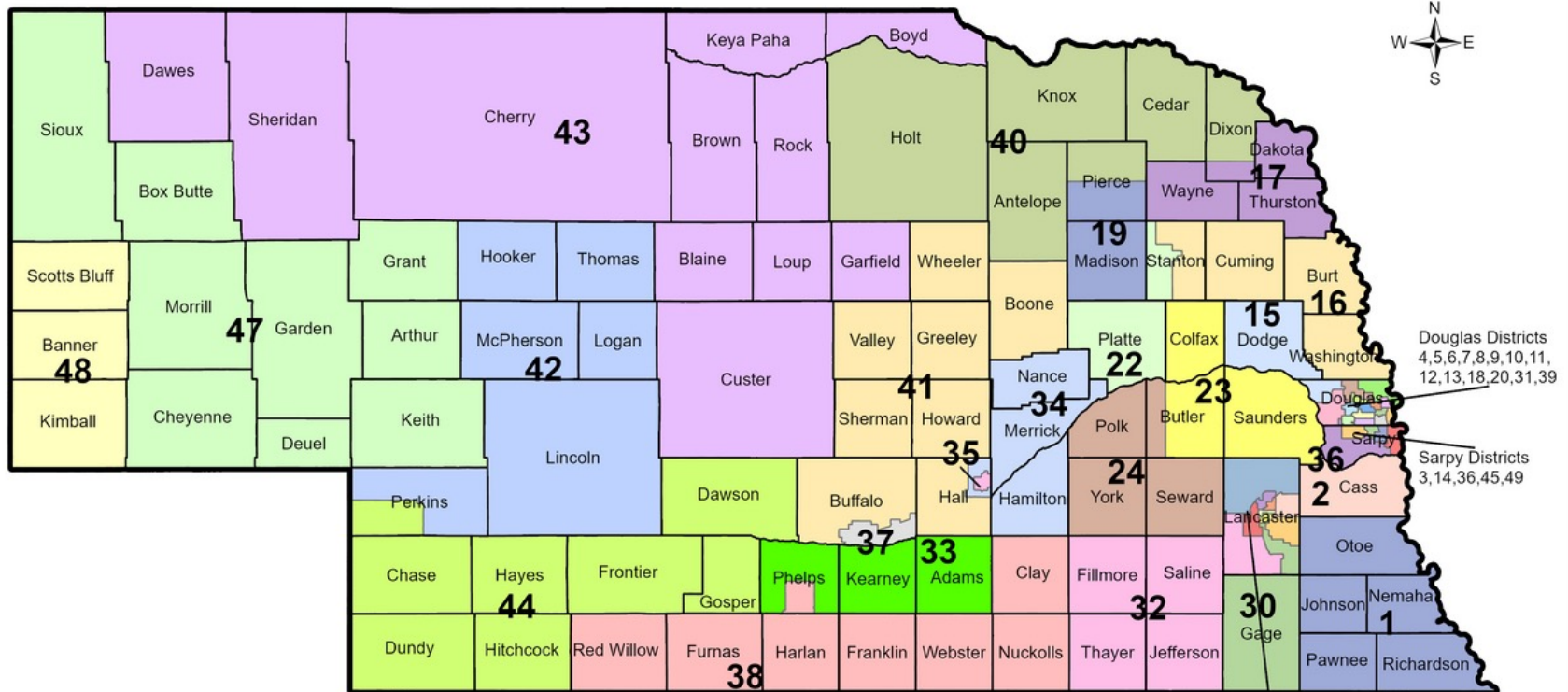
I am Interested in a Bill, Now What?

Speak with your state senator in person:

- No matter what how you would like to speak with them (via phone or in person) you will contact their legislative office. You will speak with an aid. Tell this aid your name, your city, and why you would like to speak with the State Senator. Then ask for either a call back from the state senator or an appointment to speak with the senator in person.
- During the legislative session, you will need to go to Lincoln to speak with your state senator in person.
- If you are speaking with them in person, take materials to leave behind. This can be letters from others, data on the bill, etc.
- **LEGISLATIVE AIDS ARE YOUR FRIEND.** While you want to talk with your state senator, legislative aids do the legwork for them.
- Follow up your conversation with a thank you note.
- Floor Pulls are another way to speak with your state senator during the legislative session. You put in a request at the chamber door to speak with your senator, and then they come off the floor and speak with you. This ideal to do when a bill is on the unicameral floor.

Who is My State Senator?

(Districts took effect September 30, 2021)





Brian Hardin (48)



Beau Ballard (21)



**John
Fredrickson (20)**



Ben Hansen(16)



Glen Meyer (17)



**Dan Quick
(35)**



Merv Riepe (12)

**2025
HHS
Committee**



Resources

Coalition for a Strong Nebraska

<https://strongnebraska.org/resources/>

Nonprofit Association of the Midlands

<https://www.nonprofitam.org/page/advocacy>

Nebraska Civic Engagement Table

<https://www.nebraskatable.org/leadership-development/nonprofit-resources-training.html>

Open Sky Policy Institute

openskypolicy.org

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