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Cc: Reuss, Alex
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Commodity	Delivery	Price	Basis	Date (as of)
CORN	Apr 2022	7.43	-10.00	08:24
CORN	Oct 2022	6.81	-30.00	08:23
SOYBEANS	Apr 2022	15.68	-70.00	08:23
SOYBEANS	Nov 2022	14.35	-40.00	08:23
WHEAT	Apr 2022	10.06	-75.00	07:59
WHEAT	Jul 2022	10.06	-75.00	07:59
MILO	Apr 2022	7.08	-45.00	08:24
MILO	Oct 2022	6.61	-50.00	08:23

TV and Radio

KLKN: 'Biggest tax cut bill' in Nebraska history passed by Legislature
KETV: Nebraska lawmakers unanimously pass historic $900 million tax cut package
NTV: Legislature overrides almost all of Ricketts' budget vetoes
WOWT: Nebraska legislature overrides budget vetoes including prison programs, MoPac trail
NPM: Tax Cuts, ARPA Spending, Veto Overrides Approved
NPM: The Nebraska Legislature Didn't Ban Abortion. Advocates, Opponents Say the Fight Will Continue
NPM: DEA Warns Mass Fentanyl Overdoses Could be Deadly for Nebraskans
NTV: UPDATE: Mandatory evacuation order extended, 27 agencies continue to battle fire

Governor

OWH: Nebraska lawmakers override nearly all of Ricketts' budget vetoes
AP: Nebraska lawmakers override most of Ricketts' budget vetoes
Nebraska Examiner: Nebraska lawmakers vote to override Gov. Pete Ricketts' budget vetoes
LJS: Governor hails major state tax reduction bill approved by Legislature
OWH: Nebraska lawmakers pass $900 million tax cut package, Ricketts expected to sign
AP: Nebraska lawmakers approve $900 million tax cut measure
Nebraska Examiner: Praise, worries greet final-round approval of Nebraska's $900-million tax cut package
Nebraska Examiner: Governor would get 'quick action fund' to close deals under bill advanced Thursday
NP Telegraph: Legislature approves COVID-19 funds for Sustainable Beef

Kearney Hub: Legislature approves funding for UNK-UNMC Rural Health Complex at Kearney
GII: Evnen refutes election fraud claims, speaks on Ukraine
Nasdaq: This State Just Turned Down $120 Million in Federal Rental Assistance Funds
Nebraska Examiner: NSEA endorses Blood and Lindstrom, spurring questions in Nebraska GOP governor's race

Legislature
OWH: Nebraska lawmakers advance two major education bills
OWH: Trigger bill to ban abortions fails in Nebraska Legislature
AP: Abortion rights backers block 'trigger' law in Nebraska
LJS: Pillen targets two senators for their abortion votes

University
LJS: College of Engineering beginning to see payoff on investments into people, facilities

State, Local and Regional
OWH: Wildfire forces residents of south-central Nebraska village to evacuate
Nebraska Examiner: Omaha tiny-house village aims to be final step out of homelessness

Opinion
OWH Public Pulse

1. LB 1077
2. Campaign ads
3. Game changers?
4. Concealed firearms
5. Well-regulated militia
6. Property tax solution
7. Candidate support
8. Onus on schools
9. Successful students
10. Sanctions mean nothing

LJS Editorial, 4/8: Making Lincoln more welcoming makes it better, too
LJS Letters

1. Tax cuts won't keep folks here
2. Do candidates not get it?

National/Federal
AP: Bird flu's grisly question: how to kill millions of poultry
AP: Iowa to close long-troubled center for disabled people

OWH: Nebraska lawmakers override nearly all of Ricketts' budget vetoes

LINCOLN — Nebraska lawmakers voted to override almost all of Gov. Pete Ricketts' vetoes on the state budget, restoring more than $172 million in expenditures.
Lawmakers passed all three motions to override the governor's line-item vetoes with broad support. All three motions received well above the 30 votes needed to pass each override. Three senators voted against two motions and five opposed the third.

The only line-item veto lawmakers preserved will leave $14 million in the governor's emergency fund, instead of moving it into the state's cash reserve fund.
Ricketts' vetoes chiefly targeted increased payments for providers caring for vulnerable Nebraskans, affordable urban housing development, and vocational and life skills programs to help inmates succeed outside of prison.
In his veto message to lawmakers this week, Ricketts said he wanted to limit excess spending to prioritize tax relief.
At the time, the Legislature had already given first-round approval to a massive tax cut package that would amount to nearly $900 million once fully implemented. Lawmakers gave final approval to the tax cuts just before voting on the veto overrides Thursday morning.
They followed up the override votes by passing Legislative Bill 1014, which directs how Nebraska will use its $1.04 billion of federal pandemic recovery funds. The measure passed on a 40-4 vote, with four senators abstaining and one absent.
In response to the Legislature's overrides, Ricketts praised lawmakers' efforts toward tax relief in an emailed statement.
"As responsible stewards of taxpayer money, we must strike a balance between spending and returning excess revenue to the people," Ricketts said. "While this budget package spends more than what we have done historically, the Legislature has also delivered significant tax relief for Nebraskans."
This was the first time in five years that Ricketts vetoed any part of the budget, said State Sen. John Stinner of Gering, chair of the Appropriations Committee. He criticized Ricketts' logic as "weak" because the governor has acknowledged the impact of COVID-19 on health care providers, yet chose to cut funding for them.
During Thursday's debate, this was the topic most senators took issue with regarding Ricketts' vetoes. Lawmakers argued that Nebraska has a nursing home crisis, brought on by inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic. Sen. John Arch of La Vista said increasing rates was critical for providers to recruit and retain staff.
Sen. Curt Friesen of Henderson, who voted yes on one of the three override motions, said he voted yes only because it would restore funding for nursing homes. However, he said he was disappointed that the same motion also included funding for middle-income workforce housing and recreational trails.
"We throw junk in there that doesn't belong there," Friesen said.
Sen. Steve Erdman of Bayard, who voted yes on two of the three override motions, also argued that the state shouldn't build housing or include funding for trails. He called out Sen. Steve Lathrop of Omaha for leading a filibuster on the budget bills earlier in the session to debate criminal justice reform. The Legislature later rejected Lathrop's proposal for reform.
Because of Lathrop's filibuster, Erdman said, lawmakers were unable to consider other budget amendments that may have prevented Ricketts vetoing line items in the first place.
"Wasting those 50-some hours brought us to this point," Erdman said.
The bill allocating American Rescue Plan Act dollars would provide funds to some 40 projects and initiatives across the state. Among them: replacing aging rural ambulances, boosting health and human services provider payment rates, repairing wastewater systems in state parks, and funding nonprofit construction projects that were interrupted by the pandemic.
Others include: developing rural and urban low-income housing, updating a climate change study, building a rural health complex at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, and repairing an irrigation

canal that runs from Fort Laramie, Wyoming, to Gering.
Lawmakers also provided for a grant program to start or expand child care centers, expanded mental health treatment, scholarships and loan repayments for health care providers and a program providing education and preventative medication to people at high risk of getting HIV.
The package now heads to the governor.
The line-item budget vetoes were not the first time Ricketts, who is in his final year as governor due to term limits, has used his veto pen this year. He rejected a bill that would have required him to apply for federal rental assistance. An attempt to override that veto came up short in the Legislature earlier this week.
By Erin Bamer and Martha Stoddard

AP: Nebraska lawmakers override most of Ricketts' budget vetoes

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska lawmakers on Thursday overrode nearly all of Gov. Pete Ricketts' line-item budget vetoes, restoring more than $172 million in expenditures.
Lawmakers voted in favor of all three motions to override the Republican governor, who had raised concerns about some of the spending items that they previously approved.
Ricketts' vetoes had scaled back spending increases for providers who care for vulnerable Nebraskans, affordable housing in urban areas and a planned bike trail to connect existing routes between Omaha and Lincoln, among other items.
Lawmakers chose not to override a veto that will leave $14 million in the governor's emergency fund. Lawmakers had voted to transfer that money out of the fund.
Ricketts said in a letter to lawmakers that the vetoes were intended to strike a balance between paying for government functions and setting aside excess revenue to lower taxes.

Nebraska Examiner: Nebraska lawmakers vote to override Gov. Pete Ricketts' budget vetoes

LINCOLN — Nebraska lawmakers voted overwhelmingly Thursday to override Gov. Pete Ricketts' budget vetoes.
The governor had cut funding for a hike in provider rates, community corrections programs, urban housing and completion of a bike-hike trail, saying funds needed to be preserved for tax cuts.
State Sen. John Stinner of Gering, who heads the budget-writing Appropriations Committee, argued in favor of restoring the spending. His primary focus was restoring $52 million to increase pay for private providers of services to the elderly, developmentally disabled and those needing mental health care.
Wage inflation
Wage inflation, Stinner said, has led to workers in nursing homes and care centers leaving for higher paying jobs, creating vacancies and a decline in access to care. Nursing homes in Mullen, Valentine and Arapahoe have closed, he added.
Meanwhile, the senator said, the state has provided salary hikes of 20% to 30% to ensure staffing at state veterans homes, prisons and other 24/7 facilities.
"Suddenly we have enough staff to accommodate patient loads at (the veterans home in) Kearney, imagine that," Stinner said.
He added that the state's budget was crafted with a 15% increase in private provider rates so that

nursing homes and other facilities can start to refill vacancies that had reached 30% in some agencies.

'Significant trifecta'

The Speaker of the Legislature, Lincoln Sen. Mike Hilgers, also urged senators to override the governor's vetoes, saying lawmakers have a chance to accomplish a "significant trifecta," by passing the largest tax cuts in state history, building the cash reserve fund to $1.3 billion and funding important priorities, such as the provider rate increases.

The votes on the three override bills drew, respectively, 42, 42 and 41 "yes" votes in the 49-member Unicameral. It takes 30 votes to override a gubernatorial veto.

Several lawmakers, earlier in the week, struck an agreement not to block the advancement of the tax-cut proposal, Legislative Bill 873, in exchange for approving the veto overrides. LB 873 won final approval Thursday.

The third veto override bill, which drew five "no" votes, will provide $8.3 million to complete a hike-bike trail linking Omaha and Lincoln and will grant $20 million to middle-income housing in urban areas.

Trail spending questioned

Bayard Sen. Steve Erdman questioned how it could cost $8.3 million to complete eight miles of trail when a four-lane highway in his district is costing about $1 million a mile.

Omaha Sen. Robert Hilkemann, an avid biker, made completing the trail a priority this year.

It has been a longtime dream to link the state's two largest cities with a recreation trail, but the final link had met hurdles in finding a route acceptable to local residents.

By Paul Hammel

LJS: Governor hails major state tax reduction bill approved by Legislature

After months of formulating a tax reduction package and weeks of argument over how it should be shaped, the Legislature on Thursday gave 43-0 final approval to a major tax cut bill that will sharply reduce future anticipated state revenue.

The proposal (LB873) will reduce the state's top income tax rate for individuals and corporations, expand state income tax credits for property taxpayers and accelerate the previously approved phased elimination of state income taxation of Social Security income.

The resulting reduction of anticipated state revenue estimated by the Nebraska Department of Revenue would grow from $213.8 million in the 2023-24 fiscal year to $867.2 million in fiscal 2026-27.

A largely unanticipated surge in state revenue and the resulting growth of the state's cash reserve, dubbed the rainy day fund, helped fuel support for the large tax reduction.

Under terms of the bill, the top individual and corporate income tax rates would be reduced to 5.84% over a five-year period.

The top individual rate currently is 6.84%; the top corporate rate is 7.5%, but already is scheduled to slide to 7% next year.

The bill includes a new refundable income tax credit for residents applied to a portion of the property taxes they pay to support community colleges.

The scheduled phase-out of state income taxation of Social Security benefits will be implemented over four years.

Thursday's vote marked a major legislative victory for Sen. Lou Ann Linehan of Elkhorn, chairwoman

of the Legislature's Revenue Committee, who led the way in shaping and defending the tax package during floor debate, and Sen. Tom Briese of Albion, a committee member who championed the additional property tax reduction.
Gov. Pete Ricketts celebrated enactment of the package on Facebook and Twitter.
"Over the past eight years, the NELeg and I have worked to control government spending. It's enabled the passage of the largest tax cut in Nebraska's history," the governor tweeted.
"I look forward to signing LB873 to return money to the hardworking people of Nebraska."
The Nebraska Farm Bureau hailed passage of the bill, describing it as bold action that will be "transformative for farmers and ranchers and all Nebraskans across the state."
"When fully implemented over the next five years," Farm Bureau President Mark McHargue of Central City said, the Legislature's tax cut package "will save Nebraskans an estimated $886 million in property taxes per year."
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce President Bryan Slone of Omaha said "we appreciate the work of our state leaders in helping us build a game-changing strategy for growth" in the state.
"You get less of what you tax and Nebraskans need more right now — more in their pockets to support their families, more private investment, more innovation, more high-tech jobs," Slone said.
"A dynamic, growing economy with lots to do and cutting-edge job opportunities is critical to attracting and retaining more people in Nebraska, especially our talented, young generations entering the workforce," he said.
OpenSky Policy Institute, a nonpartisan policy think tank, had a sharply different view, warning that "these tax cuts are bad news for most Nebraskans."
"The wealthy and out-of-state corporations will come out way ahead," OpenSky executive director Rebecca Firestone said.
"In time, everyday Nebraskans will likely end up footing the bill by way of cuts to services they need or increases in other taxes or fees once the federal funds that are currently bolstering our economy stop flowing."
By Don Walton

OWH: Nebraska lawmakers pass $900 million tax cut package, Ricketts expected to sign

LINCOLN — Nebraska lawmakers passed a tax cut package Thursday worth close to $900 million when fully implemented.
The package, which one supporter described as “transformative,” would cut the top income tax rates on corporations and individuals, end income taxes on Social Security benefits and boost property tax relief.
Legislative Bill 873 passed on a 43-0 vote, with six senators absent, representing a quiet end for a package that generated plenty of controversy along the way.
The measure is expected to be signed by Gov. Pete Ricketts, who made tax cuts a priority this year and vetoed money from the state budget bills earlier this week to make room for tax cuts.
State Sen. Curt Friesen of Henderson originally introduced LB 873 to eliminate community college property tax levies. But it became the vehicle for a tax package negotiated by Sen. Lou Ann Linehan of Elkhorn, the Revenue Committee chairwoman, and other committee members after two other attempts to advance the package failed.
Linehan called passage of the tax package part of “a historic time” in the Legislature. She said it represents the latest in a series of tax cut measures and passed along with a budget preserving

record-high cash reserves to provide stability in fiscal downturns.
Under the bill as passed, the top individual and corporate tax rates would ratchet down to 5.84% over five years, ending in 2027. The top individual rate is 6.84% now. The top corporate rate is 7.5% for this year and, under legislation passed last year, was slated to drop to 7% next year.
For property owners, the package would create a new refundable income tax credit equal to a portion of what they pay in community college property taxes. The community college credit program would start at $50 million this year and ramp up to $195 million by 2026.
The new credit program would be similar to the LB 1107 program created two years ago, which offsets a portion of school property taxes. That program will provide $548 million worth of credits this year.
The tax package would set the size of that program at $560.7 million for 2023, then allow the amount to grow as property valuations grow. The new community college credit program also would grow as property valuations grow, after reaching the $195 million level.
The final piece of the package would phase out income taxes on Social Security benefits in four annual steps, with taxes being eliminated in 2025.
Supporters argued that the changes were needed to keep Nebraskans from leaving the state and to attract new residents and businesses. They also pointed to the record-high cash reserve fund and robust state tax revenue as evidence that the state was collecting too much money from taxpayers.
Mark McHargue, president of the Nebraska Farm Bureau, praised the Legislature for taking "bold action" in passing one of the largest tax cuts in state history. He particularly noted the property tax offsets.
"This tax relief bill is transformative for farmers and ranchers and all Nebraskans across the state," he said. "The successes we saw from the refundable income tax credits passed in 2020 were outstanding, and to be able to secure those successes and ensure even further property tax relief for Nebraskans is a windfall."
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Bryan Slone also hailed the package as part of a "game-changing strategy for growth" in the state.
Critics pointed out that LB 873 would not cut taxes for large numbers of Nebraskans. Those left out would include people who do not own property, do not get Social Security benefits and whose incomes fall below $40,676 for singles or $81,352 for married filers.
They also raised concerns about whether the reduction in future state revenue would put Nebraska in a fiscal squeeze down the road.
Revenue Department officials estimated the tax package would reduce state revenues more than $863 million in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, the final year of implementation. That equals about 14.5% of the amount of state revenue expected for the current fiscal year, which ends June 30, 2023.
"These tax cuts are bad news for most Nebraskans," said Rebecca Firestone, executive director for the OpenSky Policy Institute. "The wealthy and out-of-state corporations will come out way ahead while in time, everyday Nebraskans will likely end up footing the bill by way of cuts to services they need or increases in other taxes and fees, once the federal funds that are currently bolstering our economy stop flowing."
By Martha Stoddard

AP: Nebraska lawmakers approve $900 million tax cut measure

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska lawmakers approved a nearly $900 million income and property tax cut package on Thursday and sent it to Gov. Pete Ricketts, who's expected to sign it.
The measure that won final approval in the Legislature would drop the top individual and corporate income tax rates to 5.84% by 2027. The top individual rate is currently 6.84% and the top corporate rate is 7.5%.
It also would provide a refundable tax credit to reimburse property owners for some of the taxes they pay to local community colleges, and speed up the implementation of a law that will phase out Nebraska's tax on Social Security income.
The measure passed after several setbacks in the Legislature and concerns from some senators about the package's long-term impact on the budget.
The corporate income tax cut was especially contentious, with supporters portraying it as necessary to attract businesses and opponents arguing that it would mostly benefit out-of-state corporations that would have done business in Nebraska regardless. Critics also noted that high-income-earners will get far bigger benefits from the individual income tax cut.

Nebraska Examiner: Praise, worries greet final-round approval of Nebraska's $900-million tax cut package

LINCOLN — What's billed as the largest tax cut in state history received final approval Thursday by state lawmakers, amid praise and worries.
Legislative Bill 873, which phases in cuts in state individual and corporate tax rates, increases state property tax credits and eliminates certain state taxes by 2025, got third-round approval on a 43-0 vote.
The package, which would deliver nearly $900 million in cuts when fully implemented, now awaits a signature from Gov. Pete Ricketts, who has voiced support for it.

AARP praises bill

Praise for LB 873 came from the Nebraska AARP because of the eventual elimination of state taxes on Social Security income. Thanks also came from the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Nebraska Farm Bureau.
Reducing state income taxes has been a longtime goal of the State Chamber and other business groups. They maintain that lowering individual and corporate income taxes is critical in attracting new businesses and workers.
"A dynamic, growing economy with lots to do and cutting-edge job opportunities is critical to attracting and retaining more people in Nebraska, especially our talented, young generations," said Bryan Slone, president of the State Chamber.
In a compromise to gather more rural support, additional increases in state income tax credits were attached to LB 873 for property taxes paid for K-12 schools and community colleges.

Raises property tax relief

The Farm Bureau estimated Thursday that the provisions of LB 873 combined with a previous bill setting up the income tax credits would add up to $886 million in property tax savings a year within five years.
"Thrilled," was the reaction from Farm Bureau President Mark McHargue.
But warnings came from an Omaha state senator and a Lincoln-based think tank.
State Sen. John Cavanaugh said he would have voted "no" had he been present for the morning vote. He said the bill is way too costly, and will provide income tax cuts mostly to high income

Nebraskans.

$70 million to millionaires

"There has to be a better way to get tax relief to the middle class than giving $70 million in tax breaks to millionaires," Cavanaugh said.

The Open Sky Policy Institute called the bill "bad news for most Nebraskans" and said it will eventually require cuts in state services, such as education and roads.

"The wealthy and out-of-state corporations will come out way ahead, while in time, everyday Nebraskans will likely end up footing the bill," said Rebecca Firestone of Open Sky.

Tax receipts padded

OpenSky has argued that Nebraska's healthy tax receipts in recent months have been artificially padded by federal COVID-19 aid and that state lawmakers should have exercised caution when making such deep cuts in state revenue.

But State Sen. John Stinner of Gering, who heads the Legislature's budget-writing Appropriations Committee, has said the state can afford the tax cuts. He did win approval for a clause that would limit increases in the income tax credits to no more than 5% a year as a way to control costs.

Lincoln Sen. Mike Hilgers, the Speaker of the Legislature, called LB 873 the largest tax cut in state history. He praised state lawmakers for passing the tax cut package, while also increasing the state's cash reserve and financing several state priorities.

Three attempts to advance

LB 873 took a circuitous course to passage. It was initially introduced by Omaha Sen. Lou Ann Linehan as LB 939 and only contained the income and property tax cuts.

When that bill stalled, an attempt was made to incorporate LB 939 into a hugely popular Social Security tax reduction bill, sponsored by Omaha Sen. Brett Lindstrom.

But that attempt was also blocked, so the provisions of LB 939 and LB 825, Lindstrom's bill, were placed into LB 873, which overcame filibusters during first- and second-round debate before winning final approval Thursday.

Elements of amended LB 873, the comprehensive tax cut bill

- Cuts the state's top income tax rate from 6.84% to 5.84% over five years.
- Cuts the state's top corporate income tax rate from 7.81% to 5.84%, also by tax year 2027.
- Speeds up the phase-out of state income taxes on Social Security payments, with a total exemption by tax year 2025.
- Adds a new refundable income tax credit for property taxes paid to support community colleges. The credit begins with $50 million in tax year 2022 and rises to $195 million by 2026. After that, the credit could rise by no more than 5% a year.
- Adds provisions of LB 723, which avoids a $200 million drop in state income tax credits for property taxes paid for K-12 schools. The credit for tax year 2022 is $548 million and will be $561 million for tax year 2023. It could rise by no more than 5% a year after that.

By Paul Hammel

Nebraska Examiner: Governor would get 'quick action fund' to close deals under bill advanced Thursday

LINCOLN — A Nebraska governor would have a "quick action" fund to help close deals on new "high impact" businesses or expansions of companies under a bill given narrow, first-round approval Thursday.

State Sen. Brett Lindstrom of Omaha sponsored the idea, telling colleagues that in Oklahoma, the governor has used its "quick action closing fund" to wrap up multimillion-dollar business deals.

About $14 million has been awarded to seven companies over the past decade, according to the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. That included $3 million that helped convince General Electric to build a $125 million research center and $2 million to Boeing that went toward a $80 million facility near Tinker Air Force Base.

Lindstrom said giving the governor a closing fund in Nebraska provides another tool to expand and recruit businesses.

"We have no other way to close the deal," he said.

No funding in bill

His proposal, Legislative Bill 729, would set up the program, but it would take a future Legislature to decide whether it should be funded.

Some senators criticized the idea as political (Lindstrom is running for the Republican nomination for governor) and said such a fund would give a governor a chance to hand out political favors.

"Giving this discretion to the governor really turns this into a political football," said Henderson Sen. Curt Friesen.

Friesen added that there appeared to be no oversight over how the governor could spend the money.

Lindstrom, along with Elkhorn Sen. Lou Ann Linehan, defended the idea. Linehan, who chairs the Legislature's Revenue Committee, said the news media and other senators would closely watch how the money was spent.

She said it would also give a governor some flexibility to close a deal when the Legislature was not in session.

Fiserv got help

Last year, lawmakers approved a $40 million incentive to convince Fiserv, which employs 4,000 workers in Omaha, to remain in the state. But Linehan said that was possible only because the legislature was in session at the time.

Under LB 729, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development would conduct an impact study of a business in terms of job growth and investment before the governor could provide funds for infrastructure or other needs.

An award would have to be a "determining factor" in a project, according to the bill, and a company would have to agree to meet certain conditions to get an award.

The bill advanced from first-round debate on a 27-10 vote. Twenty-five votes are needed to advance a bill.

By Paul Hammel

NP Telegraph: Legislature approves COVID-19 funds for Sustainable Beef

State senators gave 40-4 final approval Thursday to applying federal COVID-19 aid toward North Platte's Sustainable Beef LLC project and permanent repairs to a key Goshen/Gering-Fort Laramie Canal tunnel.

Among western Nebraska's half-dozen lawmakers, only Bayard Sen. Steve Erdman voted against passing Legislative Bill 1014.

Sens. Mike Jacobson of North Platte, John Stinner of Gering, Tom Brewer of Gordon, Dan Hughes of Venango and Matt Williams of Gothenburg all backed the bill to allocate Nebraska's $1.04 billion share of American Relief Plan Act funds.

Gov. Pete Ricketts now will decide whether to sign LB 1014, the last of four Unicameral budget bills

tapping either pandemic aid or flush state coffers for a wide variety of purposes statewide.
Before passing LB 1014, senators restored a $51.8 million boost in Medicaid payment rates for providers serving vulnerable Nebraskans as they overrode Ricketts line-item vetoes to the other budget bills.
Half of the reinstated funds will go to nursing homes, the ranks of which have shrunk in rural Nebraska with recent closures in Mullen, Valentine, Arapahoe, Ravenna and Tecumseh.
Lawmakers' override votes on LBs 1011, 1012 and 1013 also restored intended payment-rate increases for providers of child welfare, behavioral health and developmental disabilities services.
None of Ricketts' line-item reductions impacted those three bills' $50 million boost in industrial "rail park" matching funds; $30 million in additional Rural Workforce Housing Fund dollars; $53.5 million to plan revival of the 1894 Perkins County Canal; and $80 million toward statewide water projects including a new 100-slip marina at Lake McConaughy.
While the trio of "mainline" budget bills involved regular state revenues, LB 1014 is confined to uses of the ARPA aid that Congress approved in March 2021.
Sustainable Beef CEO David Briggs of Alliance welcomed passage of the bill and its $20 million toward costs of the planned meatpacking plant's onsite wastewater treatment system.
"I would like to thank Gov. Ricketts for supporting the Nebraska beef industry by including Sustainable Beef" in his ARPA spending requests, Briggs said.
"Today's approval of LB 1014 brings us one step closer to our next milestone of groundbreaking" on the $325 million plant at Newberry Access and Golden Road.
Briggs also hailed Sustainable Beef's "strong support from the North Platte community," including State Capitol efforts by former District 42 Sen. Mike Groene and appointed successor Sen. Mike Jacobson.
"At the end of the day, it's been a long struggle" to secure the ARPA aid for the beef plant, said Jacobson, whom Ricketts named to succeed Groene Feb. 23.
LB 1014's final vote had been held up for several days by filibusters against the regular budget bills and now-defeated measures to restrict abortion and reform criminal sentencing practices.
"Of all the bills, the ARPA bill was the one I was most worried about because the politics got thick in here," Jacobson said. But "everybody seems to be in a better mood today."
Thursday's vote should be the last major hurdle for the state's contribution to building the beef plant, said Gary Person, president and CEO of the North Platte Area Chamber & Development Corp.
Ricketts has "been supportive all the way along," he said. "Good gosh, he helped brainchild the whole thing."
McPherson County rancher Rusty Kemp, one of Sustainable Beef's organizers, has often linked the project's conception to his conversations with Ricketts during a Vietnam trade mission in 2019.
Person joined Briggs in thanking senators for assisting the project with COVID-19 aid. The ARPA funds can be used for water, sewer or broadband projects or to alleviate other problems raised by the pandemic.
"Now we've got to work like the dickens on housing," Person said. "That's going to be our big challenge going forward."
Sustainable Beef and related supporting businesses are expected to add nearly 2,000 jobs. Even before the project's March 2021 announcement, a 2018 housing study called for a Lincoln County-wide push to build new housing and rehabilitate older homes.
LB 1014 allocates $23.5 million in ARPA aid to help permanently fix the middle of three tunnels on the Goshen/Gering-Fort Laramie canal, which runs from the North Platte River through Wyoming's

Goshen County and into Scotts Bluff County.
The 1917 canal's Tunnel No. 2, located east of Fort Laramie, Wyoming, collapsed on July 17, 2019. The disaster triggered additional damage above the tunnel and cut off canal customers' irrigation water for six weeks while temporary repairs were made.
Engineers with HDR Inc. have recommended three options to the Goshen and Gering-Fort Laramie canal boards. All would replace Tunnel 1, also in Goshen County, as well as Tunnel 2.
Combined cost estimates range from $25 million to $80 million depending on the option, according to a University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources account of a Feb. 9 public meeting in Gering.
The state of Wyoming also is expected to contribute toward the canal's permanent repair costs.
In issuing his line-item vetoes to the regular budget bills Monday, Ricketts said his original January budget proposal already increased reimbursements for Medicaid service providers. His vetoes would have left $3.2 million for that purpose.
On top of that, LB 1014 would send $47.5 million in ARPA funds apiece to nursing homes and developmental disability service providers, the governor said.
But those providers and especially nursing homes need even more help to recover from staff shortages that COVID-19 only made worse, said Stinner, chairman of the budget-writing Appropriations Committee.
Jacobson agreed. Though "I really applaud the governor for the work he's done since he's been here," he said, "we have a (nursing-home) crisis, especially in rural Nebraska."
Stinner said Appropriations Committee members overwhelmingly recommended overrides of all but $14 million of Ricketts' $186 million in line-item vetoes.
All six western Nebraska senators voted "yes" as the full Legislature voted 42-3 to back the committee's override motions on LBs 1011 and 1012.
Overrides to LB 1013, which covers cash-reserve transfers, were approved on a 41-5 vote.
One of the dissenters was Erdman, also an Appropriations Committee member. He backed the LB 1011 and LB 1012 overrides in committee but voted there against doing the same with LB 1013.
Erdman agreed with Ricketts' veto of half the bill's $8.3 million for completing the unpaved MoPac hiking-biking trail between Omaha and Lincoln.
The full cost, he said, nearly equals the $8 million bill to four-lane the 9 miles of Nebraska Highway L-62A past his Morrill County property as part of the Heartland Expressway.
The District 47 lawmaker also objected to LB 1013's $20 million transfer to the state's Middle Income Workforce Investment Fund, the urban counterpart to the Rural Workforce Housing Fund.
"It's not a secret to anyone here, or anyone watching at home, (that) I am opposed to the government building housing," he said.
Erdman similarly spoke last week against LB 1069, which would extend the life of the rural housing fund. A $30 million boost in its funding was included in the main budget package and escaped Ricketts' vetoes.
Williams, sponsor of LB 1069 and the 2017 law that created the rural housing fund, won second-round approval of his latest bill on a voice vote later Thursday.
By Todd von Kampen

Kearney Hub: Legislature approves funding for UNK-UNMC Rural Health Complex at Kearney

LINCOLN – State senators on Thursday gave final approval to legislation allocating Nebraska's share of federal American Rescue Plan funds, including $60 million for a proposed Rural Health Complex that would expand health care programs on the University of Nebraska at Kearney campus.

The bill, LB1014, now moves to Gov. Pete Ricketts' desk for consideration. The governor has until Wednesday to sign or line-item veto the package.

Building on the successful collaboration between UNK and the University of Nebraska Medical Center, the new Rural Health Complex would significantly expand capacity for students to train in Kearney and remain in rural Nebraska after graduation to practice health care. The complex aims to close the gap in rural Nebraskans' access to quality health care caused by significant workforce shortages. Currently, 14 Nebraska counties lack a primary care physician, for example, and demand is high for more nurses, dentists, allied health professionals and mental health professionals.

University of Nebraska System President Ted Carter thanked the numerous elected leaders who have been strong advocates for investing in expanded health care education and workforce development in rural Nebraska. Legislation for the Rural Health Complex was initially sponsored by Sen. Robert Hilkemann of Omaha, with Sen. John Lowe of Kearney as a co-sponsor.

"The UNK-UNMC Rural Health Complex is an opportunity to change the trajectory for rural Nebraska for generations to come," Carter said. "We're grateful to Senator Hilkemann for bringing this legislation forward; to Chairman Stinner, Vice Chairwoman Wishart and the Appropriations Committee for their support; and to the full Legislature for its approval today, particularly Senator Lowe for championing this critical investment in Kearney.

"UNK and UNMC have a proven record of working together to address our state's needs. The Rural Health Complex is a bold new opportunity to expand access to health care, build the rural workforce and improve the quality of life for all Nebraskans."

The Rural Health Complex would grow the state's talent pipeline by expanding existing UNMC programs offered in Kearney and bringing new options to the UNK campus, including medical nutrition, genetic counseling and respiratory care – all high-need areas in rural Nebraska.

For the first time, the UNMC College of Medicine would educate physicians in rural Nebraska, and a Master of Health Administration would be added to complement UNK's undergraduate program. Discussion is also underway for the UNMC College of Pharmacy to offer a joint degree program with UNK, which will enhance its undergraduate curriculum to ensure future UNMC students have the highest quality of preparation for rural health service.

The partner institutions opened a $19 million Health Science Education Complex on UNK's west campus in 2015, and that facility quickly filled to capacity. More than 300 students are currently pursuing degrees there in over a dozen professional programs. About 85% of the students who graduate from this building start their careers in Nebraska.

The Rural Health Complex would be located directly north of the existing health science building, creating a hub for health education in rural Nebraska that serves current and future health care workers and supports collaborative research initiatives. It could be completed as early as 2025.

The $60 million included in LB1014 would go toward construction and start-up costs, with an additional $25 million expected to come from private funds. A companion bill introduced by Lowe, LB792, would provide ongoing programmatic funding. That bill awaits final passage by the Legislature.

The Rural Health Complex was among a slate of proposals the University of Nebraska System brought to state leaders for recovery funding consideration. In February, Carter was joined by UNK Chancellor Doug Kristensen, UNMC Chancellor Jeffrey Gold, student leaders and others in testifying

before the Appropriations Committee in support of the Rural Health Complex and other proposals.

GII: Evnen refutes election fraud claims, speaks on Ukraine

Nebraska Secretary of State Bob Evnen spoke on election fraud claims and the impact of the Ukraine invasion on Nebraska, among other topics, as guest of Grand Island's Noon Rotary Club on Tuesday. Evnen has served in the role since 2019. Among his duties, he oversees rules and regulations, elections, records management, licensing and international relations.

Election Fraud Claims

Evnen spoke on election security, refuting claims of possible election tampering at the state level.

"I've looked into this. One of the things being said is, I haven't looked, I haven't investigated, I don't care, I'm not paying attention. None of that is true," he said. "I've looked into everything that's been brought to me and many things that were not brought to me, but that I heard about and understood. I run them to ground, and they just don't pan out."

A page on the Nebraska Secretary of State website has questions and answers to address the concerns raised by Nebraska voters and what has been found.

"You can see for yourself and consider for yourself what you think of it," he said.

The problem, Evnen said, is "there's a group of people who want to count the ballots by hand."

"If the Legislature wants us to count the ballots by hand, that's what we'll do. But if you're asking me: Is that justified? The answer is no. There's no justification for doing that."

The machines are not the problem, Evnen said, emphasizing that they are not connected to the internet.

"The machines are never connected to the internet. The system is designed that way," he said. "It's not like we didn't see this coming. Our counting systems, the systems that compile our results, they're never connected to the internet. This obsessive focus on the machines is taking your eye off the ball."

The real security concern, Evnen said, is early voting.

There is an "increased representation of early voting now," he said.

Evnen is a supporter of voter IDs.

"I just think it's common sense," he said. "There's a petition out now for that. If it's successful it will be on the ballot, so Nebraskans can decide for themselves whether they want voter IDs."

Ukraine Invasion

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, ongoing since February, has affected Nebraska's agricultural economy, Evnen said.

Evnen described Ukraine as "the breadbasket of Eastern Europe."

"Ukraine isn't going to have a harvest this season, of anything," he said.

This is driving up prices in Europe, as well as the cost of inputs, Evnen said.

"Ukraine is one of the foremost producers of fertilizer, and all that's come to a close," he said.

This pressure puts pressure on Nebraska producers, but also creates opportunities for those countries that rely on Ukraine, said Evnen.

Coping with refugees from Ukraine now and still from Afghanistan remain a challenge for the Secretary of State's office.

"You have to deal with people asking, can you help us get our dear ones out?" said Evnen. "It's been extremely difficult, and I can tell you the U.S. State Department has not helped."

State Board of Education

Evnen addressed the State Board of Education sex education standards controversy, speaking about his time previously serving on the board.
"We were invited to adopt sex education standards at the state level, and our board said, 'No, we're not going to do that. That's for parents,'" he said. "It's not for us sitting in Lincoln to dictate to the rest of the state. That's for parents and for local boards because local boards are more accountable to the parents whose children are in these schools."
In June, Gov. Pete Ricketts spoke against new sex education standards being proposed by the Nebraska Department of Education, which many Nebraska communities opposed.
The proposed changes since have been halted.
For more information on the Nebraska Secretary of State's office, visit www.sos.ne.gov.
By Brandon Summers

Nasdaq: This State Just Turned Down $120 Million in Federal Rental Assistance Funds

Millions of Americans lost their jobs early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, when local restrictions forced many businesses to close their doors on a temporary basis. Many people who suffered income loss at the time and didn't have savings to fall back on got behind on their rent payments. Lawmakers put a federal eviction ban in place in 2020 to prevent a homelessness crisis. But that ban expired last year, and since then, tenants have been scrambling to catch up on past-due rent.
The last two stimulus packages signed into law allocated a combined $46 billion in federal rental assistance funds to help tenants catch up on rent and avoid eviction. That money was then distributed to states, which were tasked with distributing it individually.
At this point, many states have depleted their share of that $46 billion pot. And while some are still processing existing rent relief applications, they aren't open to taking new ones.
That said, there is additional rent relief money available to some states -- but only if they opt in. And one state recently made the decision to pass up that additional funding, much to the dismay of housing advocates.

Nebraska says no to additional aid

The $46 billion that was designated to states for rent relief purposes was split into two allocations. The first $25 billion allocated was known as ERA1 and the second $21.5 billion was known as ERA2. At this point, many states have spent down their ERA1 funds, and even their ERA2 funds. But some states are still entitled to rent relief money under the latter.
Nebraska is one of them. The state had the potential to access an additional $120 million in federal rent relief funds. But Republican Governor Pete Ricketts expressly does not want that money, and so he turned down the option to take it.
The logic behind that decision, as per Ricketts, is that the state has already received and given out an unprecedented amount of federal funding to help struggling Nebraska tenants get caught up on rent. But now, he says, those handouts should stop since the storm has passed.
Specifically, Ricketts doesn't want Nebraska residents to be incentivized not to work, thinking they'll be bailed out by federal aid. But housing advocates in the state warn the decision to turn down $120 million in rent relief funds will leave many vulnerable tenants in a situation where they risk losing their homes. This especially applies to tenants residing in rural parts of the state, as they tend to have access to fewer resources to begin with.

A matter of debate

Last month, Nebraska lawmakers passed a bill requiring the state to apply for more rent relief funds.

But Ricketts vetoed that bill. And unless lawmakers manage to override that veto, Nebraska will lose out on that funding.
The silver lining is that the money Nebraska passes on could be allocated to other states in need of additional rent relief funds. But that doesn't help Nebraska tenants who still need a lifeline.
By Maurie Backman

Nebraska Examiner: NSEA endorses Blood and Lindstrom, spurring questions in Nebraska GOP governor's race

OMAHA — State Sen. Brett Lindstrom, an Omaha Republican facing a new round of dark money TV ads attacking his record as being centrist, was endorsed Thursday by the Nebraska teachers union, which risks reinforcing the ads' message to GOP voters.
The Nebraska State Education Association endorsed Lindstrom in the Republican primary election and Carol Blood in the Democratic primary race.
Jenni Benson, the NSEA president, said the union had worked well with both Blood and Lindstrom and said both earned their recommendation.
"Education is not, nor should it be, a partisan issue," Benson said.
The complication for Lindstrom is timing. A new dark money group, Say No to RINOs, started running TV ads this week in Scottsbluff, Lincoln and Grand Island attacking Lindstrom's record. The group lists former State Sen. Andrew La Grone as its treasurer.
The ads hammer Lindstrom's 2019 vote to increase the gas tax by six cents over Gov. Pete Ricketts' veto. The bill was expected to raise about $75 million a year to repair and maintain roads and bridges across the state.
La Grone, a frequent ally of Ricketts' during his legislative tenure, did not immediately return a call seeking comment. Ricketts has said he is not funding dark money ads against Lindstrom. He has acknowledged that he is funding ads against Charles Herbster in the governor's race.
The Lindstrom campaign called the attacks on him "desperate and dishonest." The campaign said others are upset because Lindstrom has a record of cutting taxes, including helping to pass the latest tax relief package the Legislature approved on Thursday.
"Voters know Brett is Nebraska's top tax slasher, and they like it," Lindstrom spokesman Pat Trueman said. "Brett's positive and optimistic message stands out in this increasingly negative environment and is resonating with voters."
The NSEA represents 25,000 Nebraska teachers, professors and school support staff in communities large and small. Lindstrom's team had no immediate comment about the endorsement.
Blood said she was pleased to have the teachers' support.
But she questioned why the union also backed Lindstrom, who she said has supported school vouchers and did not vote to approve an amendment she offered to legislation that would have given teachers additional retention pay for sticking with teaching during the pandemic.
"As an enthusiastic supporter of public education and a firm believer that public dollars are meant for public schools, I was surprised by a dual endorsement," Blood said.
Lindstrom's top opponents in the GOP race also criticized the NSEA endorsement.
Herbster's campaign issued a statement: "The liberal teachers union endorsing Omaha State Senator Brett Lindstrom comes at no surprise to us. We have always known that he's a RINO," or a Republican in name only.
University of Nebraska Regent Jim Pillen said in a statement, "Lindstrom has a liberal voting record

and now the support of the liberal NSEA, a left-wing Nebraska organization. … No conservative should accept the endorsement of the NSEA."
Former State Sen. Theresa Thibodeau of Omaha tweeted out that she was "honored" not to have earned the union's support, calling the NSEA the "largest, most liberal lobbying organization in Nebraska."
Benson, the union's president, responded Thursday afternoon: "NSEA'S 25,000 members include registered Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. This Association has worked in support of public education for 154 years, and our members will continue to advocate for teachers, education support professionals and students, regardless of name-calling and false attacks from some politicians."
Historically, Democrats have been elated to receive the NSEA's endorsement, said John Hibbing, a political science professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Republicans face a more mixed response from voters to the union's backing, he said.
Some of the most fervent Republicans who vote in primaries, including those who believe in school choice and private education, might make the argument that being endorsed by the NSEA is a bad thing, Hibbing explained.
Lindstrom and Blood, however, should benefit from the reality that teachers are spread across the state, Hibbing said, and that they have relationships in the communities they serve.
"I'm not sure how much this would change the basic dynamics of the Republican primary race," Hibbing said of the NSEA endorsement. "Lindstrom was already viewed as a little less conservative than Pillen and Herbster. He's got his lane. The question is: Will there be enough moderate Republicans who support him?"
By Aaron Sanderford

OWH: Nebraska lawmakers advance two major education bills

LINCOLN — Nebraska lawmakers advanced two bills Thursday aimed at altering the state's education system — one to change the curriculum, and the other to add incentives to recruit new teachers.
Legislative Bill 888 cleared the second of three rounds of debate after being amended twice. As advanced earlier, the measure would require education about "the Holocaust and other acts of genocide" to be included in Nebraska's social studies standards.
Legislative Bill 1218 cleared the first of three rounds of debate, and was also amended twice. The bill aims to provide financial incentives for new teachers, and would ease testing requirements for teachers in training.
State Sen. Jen Day of Omaha, who introduced LB 888, has said she did so to ensure that future generations learn the lessons of the Holocaust and the potential outcomes of unchecked hate. The Holocaust refers to the organized killing of about 6 million European Jews and millions of other people by the Nazis and their allies during World War II.
On Thursday, lawmakers added an amendment spelling out that the other acts of genocide to be covered would be those recognized by the United States government or the United Nations as of Jan. 1, 2022.
Among those events would be the killings of Tutsi people in Rwanda in 1994, Bosnian people in Srebrenica in 1993 and Armenian people in Turkey in 1915. Sen. Bruce Bostelman of Brainard offered the amendment as a guide to schools.
Sen. Justin Wayne of Omaha offered a second amendment that would require education about

“slavery, lynching and racial massacres in the United States.” He said he supports the idea of Holocaust education but believes schools should also acknowledge the massacres that have happened closer to home.

Examples could include events such as the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921, when White mobs killed as many as 300 Black residents of what was known as Black Wall Street, and the Trail of Tears, when hundreds of thousands of Native Americans were forcibly removed from their eastern homelands and thousands died during the journey to territory west of the Mississippi River.

LB 1218 would create the Teach in Nebraska Today Program, which would provide first-year educators up to $5,000 a year for up to five years, and would provide teachers in training with up to $1,000 of student loan forgiveness after they complete student teaching programs.

The bill is one of the Education Committee’s priorities this year, as lawmakers look to address the state’s teacher shortage.

The original bill also intended to ease requirements around the basic skills test prospective teachers must take before getting hired, but an amendment by Sen. Steve Erdman of Bayard removed that from the legislation.

Erdman’s amendment will require new teachers to pass a basic skills test — the Praxis test — before they receive their teacher certification. This is technically already state law, but due to a discrepancy with the State Board of Education, it is not the same process most new teachers in Nebraska currently follow.

An Education Committee staff member confirmed that a 2003 bill changed state law to reflect Erdman’s amendment, but the State Board of Education never changed its rules and regulations. This means that new teachers are required to pass the Praxis test halfway through their college education before they can enter teacher college.

LB 1218 includes language requiring that the State Board of Education change its rules and regulations.

Sen. Lynne Walz of Fremont, the Education Committee chair, ultimately supported Erdman’s amendment but said she wasn’t “excited about it.” She, along with several other senators, said the Praxis test is a major barrier to educators entering the profession, and she said she would prefer the state offer other avenues for teachers to get certified.

“We’ve got to eliminate these barriers,” said Sen. Mike Jacobson of North Platte.

Walz said she supported Erdman’s amendment because she wants LB 1218 to pass so the state can provide financial aid to new teachers as soon as possible. However, she vowed to continue working on easing regulations on entrance barriers.

“We didn’t want to pass up that opportunity,” Walz said.

By Martha Stoddard and Erin Bamer

OWH: Trigger bill to ban abortions fails in Nebraska Legislature

LINCOLN — A bill that would have primed Nebraska to ban all abortions died on the floor of the Legislature Wednesday.

Legislative Bill 933 failed to receive the 33 votes it needed to end an eight-hour filibuster, which effectively renders the bill dead with no other way to move forward. The final vote was 31-15, with three senators excused.

The bill’s failure, which was celebrated by abortion-rights proponents, leaves anti-abortion lawmakers with few options to restrict access during the final six days of the legislative session.

"Today, a small but mighty group of state senators stood strongly in support of gender equity to ensure that abortion access remains safe and legal in Nebraska," Jo Giles, executive director of the Women's Fund of Omaha said in a statement.

LB 933 would have banned all abortions in Nebraska if the U.S. Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade, or if the U.S. Constitution or federal law is amended to give control over abortion to individual states. Such measures are referred to as trigger bills.

The Supreme Court could decide the fate of Roe v. Wade later this year. State Sen. Joni Albrecht of Thurston said she introduced LB 933 so the Legislature could avoid a special session if the trigger event happens before the next regular session.

Protesters gathered at the Nebraska Capitol Wednesday to watch the debate from the Legislature's balcony. A group of about 50 people wearing pink shirts collected in the rotunda while the Legislature was in recess during lunch to advocate against the bill.

After it failed Wednesday, Albrecht said she hopes voters remember who voted against the bill the next time they are up for election. She said she has no other efforts to restrict abortions this session.

Sen. Megan Hunt of Omaha, who led the eight-hour filibuster, described LB 933 as "a church bill" brought by "Christian religious extremists." While senators criticized Hunt for taking time away from discussing other amendments, Hunt said that was her intent.

"You're going to wait eight hours, because I'm driving this ship, and it's an eight-hour cruise," Hunt said.

LB 933, along with two other abortion-restricting bills, stalled in the Judiciary Committee in March, but was pulled out of committee through a majority vote in the Legislature.

If triggered, LB 933 would have made it a felony for anyone to provide any medication or undertake any procedure with the intent of ending the life of an unborn child, starting at fertilization. The woman undergoing an abortion, however, could not be charged.

Opponents pointed to this aspect of the bill, arguing that the language would not effectively ban all abortions but instead make it impossible for women to receive abortions safely. Lawmakers said women may instead seek out "back alley abortions" or other rumored methods that would endanger their lives.

"Abortion needs to be protected, or otherwise it will go underground," said Sen. John McCollister of Omaha.

Opponents also criticized the bill for putting the penalty on doctors or other professionals who administer an abortion. LB 933 would not have provided exemptions, including for rape or incest, but would have allowed licensed physicians charged under the law to use as a defense that the abortion was necessary to prevent the woman’s death or serious, permanent impairment of a life-sustaining organ.

Though supporters framed this as a feature that would protect doctors, other lawmakers said the doctors would still need to be charged with a felony in order to use this as a defense.

Sen. Robert Hilkemann of Omaha, who previously said he always supports anti-abortion bills, said he was concerned this aspect would cost physicians thousands of dollars, and could hinder doctors' chances of continuing their profession.

Hilkemann proposed an amendment that would remove the felony penalty for physicians. Instead, abortions would be reported to the Board of Medicine and Surgery. The Legislature did not consider Hilkemann's amendment Wednesday, but Hilkemann still voted to end debate.

Supporters argued that doctors would also be protected by language in the bill that specifies that it

is only a felony if there is an intent to kill the unborn child. Sen. Mike Flood of Norfolk said no physicians have been prosecuted since the 2010 passage of legislation banning abortion in Nebraska beyond 20 weeks of conception.

However, Sen. Jen Day of Omaha argued that the language in LB 933 was vague. Even in a scenario where a doctor is performing an abortion to save a woman's life, Day said they are still intentionally ending the fetus' life.

"We're creating a whole new area of gray here," Day said.

Supporters continually brought back the same argument: That life begins at fertilization.

"We need to recognize the stages inside the womb, and protect these human beings," said Sen. John Arch of La Vista.

However, opponents said this definition creates other issues, and could unintentionally ban some forms of contraception and in vitro fertilization, or IVF. Albrecht and other supporters denied this.

Opponents continually criticized the bill's lack of exception for rape or incest cases. Supporters countered by arguing there are plenty of non-abortion options, such as adoption, for women who don't want to keep their children. Albrecht said Nebraska has more than 20 privately funded centers that help pregnant women.

"I am pro-woman," said Sen. John Lowe of Kearney. "I am also pro-child. What we're talking about here is the murder of a child."

Sandy Danek, executive director of Nebraska Right to Life, said the group would not be deterred by the defeat of LB 933, which Danek called "historic legislation."

"We believe that a mother and her child are worthy of love and support," she said in a press release. "We will continue our work with education, legislative efforts and political action until every life is protected and honored in our state."

The two other bills that stalled in the Judiciary Committee last month would ban abortions after a certain period. LB 1086 would ban chemical abortions after seven weeks. LB 781 would ban abortions after a so-called fetal heartbeat can be detected — usually at about six weeks gestation, before most women are aware that they are pregnant.

Under current rulings, abortion is legal until the point a fetus can survive outside the womb, which is usually around 24 weeks.

That could change this summer when the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule on a proposed 15-week abortion ban in Mississippi. The case could end the national right to abortion enshrined by Roe v. Wade and leave the question up to states.

With a ruling likely this summer, a number of Republican-led states have passed aggressive anti-abortion legislation.

On Tuesday the Oklahoma House approved a bill that would make performing an abortion a felony, punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

In March, lawmakers in Arizona and Florida passed 15-week abortion bans.

How they voted

Yes (31): Aguilar, Albrecht, Arch, Bostelman, Brandt, Brewer, Briese, Clements, Dorn, Erdman, Flood, Friesen, Geist, Gragert, Halloran, B. Hansen, Hilgers, Hilkemann, Hughes, Jacobson, Kolterman, Lindstrom, Linehan, Lowe, McDonnell, Moser, Murman, Sanders, Slama, Stinner, Williams

No (15): Blood, Bostar, J. Cavanaugh, M. Cavanaugh, Day, DeBoer, M. Hansen, Hunt, McCollister, McKinney, Morfeld, Pansing-Brooks, Vargas, Walz, Wishart

Excused (3): Lathrop, Pahls, Wayne

By Erin Bamer

AP: Abortion rights backers block 'trigger' law in Nebraska

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Abortion rights proponents scored a surprising victory in Nebraska by derailing a bill that would have automatically outlawed abortion if the U.S. Supreme Court ever overturns its 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling that legalized the procedure throughout the country.

The vote on Wednesday frustrated abortion rights opponents, who usually win fights over the issue in the conservative Legislature. More than a dozen other conservative states have passed similar measures already, but abortion rights backers in Nebraska managed to block it using a filibuster in the single-chamber Legislature.

The bill's supporters fell two votes short of the 33 they needed to end the filibuster and force a vote. The 31-15 vote left the proposal essentially dead for the rest of the year, even though a majority of lawmakers supported it. The vote largely fell along party lines in the ostensibly nonpartisan Legislature.

In 2010, Nebraska became the first state to ban abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy, and the state outlawed a second-trimester abortion procedure in 2020 despite fervent protests from abortion rights supporters.

The latest bill, however, faced a tougher path because of the current makeup of the Legislature, where Republicans are one seat short of the supermajority needed to overcome filibusters. One Republican and Democrat each crossed party lines, effectively canceling the other's vote. One Republican and two Democrats were absent.

Supporters argued that the majority of Nebraska voters oppose abortion, based on who the state consistently elects.

"We envision a Nebraska where every life is celebrated and protected," said state Sen. Joni Albrecht, the bill's sponsor.

Opponents assailed it as an intrusion on women's autonomy and vowed not to budge in their opposition.

"In state by state, legislatures are taking a sledgehammer to women's freedom," said state Sen. Anna Wishart, of Lincoln.

The debate turned personal at times, with abortion rights supporters railing against the bill's backers for supporting it even though it doesn't include exceptions for rape or incest.

"Proponents of this bill have no shame left," said state Sen. Megan Hunt, of Omaha, adding that she was offended as both a mother and a sexual assault survivor. "I will cherish the time that I have worked here forever, but when I am term limited (out of office), I will probably not talk to most of you ever again."

The debate came ahead of an expected June ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, which concerns a Mississippi law that bans abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

Both sides have told the court there's no middle ground in the case. In anticipation of the ruling, 13 states have passed so-called trigger laws to automatically ban abortions if the court sides with abortion opponents. Ohio and Oklahoma approved their trigger laws last year.

On Thursday, Michigan's Democratic governor, Gretchen Whitmer, filed a lawsuit asking a court to recognize the right to get an abortion under the state constitution and to overturn the state's 176-year-old ban, which might take effect again if Roe v. Wade ruling is vacated.

The Roe v. Wade ruling allows states to regulate but not ban abortions up to the point of fetal

viability, which is around the 24th week of a pregnancy. Justices reaffirmed the decision in 1992.
The Nebraska vote drew promises of political retribution against some elected officials. Jim Pillen, a top Republican candidate for governor, said Thursday that he would work to unseat some lawmakers who are up for reelection and who voted to block the bill.
“Last night, the Legislature failed the people of Nebraska in voting to keep abortion legal,” Pillen said. “Abortion is murder, and as a pro-life state, the majority of Nebraskans realize we need to outlaw it.”

LJS: Pillen targets two senators for their abortion votes

Republican gubernatorial candidate Jim Pillen said Thursday that he "will work with pro-life voters" to attempt to defeat state Sens. Machaela Cavanaugh of Omaha and Wendy DeBoer of Bennington in their reelection bids since they both voted this week in opposition to a proposal that would ban abortion in Nebraska if and when the U.S. Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade.
The court is expected to reconsider the 1973 landmark decision that protected a woman's right to choose when it ruled that unduly restrictive state regulation of abortion is unconstitutional.
The Legislature on Wednesday night scuttled a bill (LB933) that would have triggered a ban on abortions in Nebraska if the court acted to overturn Roe v. Wade.
Supporters of the proposal fell two votes short of the 33 votes needed to overcome a filibuster by opponents. Both Cavanaugh and DeBoer voted against the motion to end debate.
Responding to Pillen's statement, DeBoer invited him to "a public debate on the issues anytime after April 20," the date when the Legislature is expected to adjourn for the year.
"I'm curious to know Jim Pillen's thoughts on the middle-class tax cut that the Legislature denied to over 50% of Nebraska families this week," she said.
DeBoer attempted to include such a tax cut in comprehensive tax reduction legislation enacted by the Legislature, but her motion was defeated on a 26-18 vote.
"I will continue to fight for Legislative District 10 by focusing on job creation, access to affordable health care and tax relief for the middle class," DeBoer said.
Pillen said voters in the legislative districts represented by Cavanaugh and DeBoer should "vote them out of office this November."
"The Legislature failed the people of Nebraska in voting to keep abortion legal," Pillen said.
How they voted
Senators voted 31-15 on a motion to stop a filibuster on LB933 on Wednesday, but needed 33 votes. The failed motion meant the abortion-related bill died for the year.
Voting yes (31): Aguilar, Albrecht, Arch, Bostelman, Brandt, Brewer, Briese, Clements, Dorn, Erdman, Flood, Friesen, Geist, Gragert, Halloran, B. Hansen, Hilgers, Hilkemann, Hughes, Jacobson, Kolterman, Lindstrom, Linehan, Lowe, McDonnell, Moser, Murman, Sanders, Slama, Stinner, Williams.
Voting no (15): Blood, Bostar, J. Cavanaugh, M. Cavanaugh, Day, DeBoer, M. Hansen, Hunt, McCollister, McKinney, Morfeld, Pansing Brooks, Vargas, Walz, Wishart.
Excused, not voting (3): Lathrop, Pahls, Wayne.
By Don Walton

LJS: College of Engineering beginning to see payoff on investments into people, facilities

The empty lot that became a big hole in the ground on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's campus is beginning to transform again.

As steel beams begin to stretch skyward, outlining what will become Kiewit Hall, a $115 million facility funded through private donations, UNL's College of Engineering is working to transform alongside it.

"We're going to transform the student experience," Lance Pérez, the college dean, told the NU Board of Regents on Thursday during a campus tour.

Regents also toured and spoke throughout the day with personnel at the UNL College of Education and Human Sciences, the College of Journalism and Mass Communications, the Johnny Carson Center for Emerging Media Arts and the College of Law.

Many of the presentations allowed regents to see the results of the board's investments made in faculty, facilities and new programs over the last few years.

In addition to building a new facility — Kiewit Corp. in Omaha made the lead gift of $25 million — the College of Engineering is also expanding its faculty and financial support for students.

Forty new engineering faculty have been hired over the last three years, Pérez said, with many moving into the 87,000 square feet of newly renovated space known as the Engineering Research Center.

Many of those individuals come to UNL with National Science Foundation career awards, or an equivalent award, which brings research funding along with it, and the chance for undergraduate and graduate students to get valuable hands-on experience.

UNL is also undertaking a professional development program aimed at shifting its engineering curriculum toward more active and collaborative learning, the dean said.

The interactions that kind of learning will foster, between instructors and students and between students and students, and instructors and instructors across disciplines, may lead to new academic programs.

Every first-year student entering the college this fall will enroll in the Complete Engineer program, which teaches non-technical skills such as communication, leadership, teamwork, professional ethics, and civic and social responsibility alongside the engineering education.

Those competencies will be included on the students' transcripts when they graduate, Pérez said.

UNL is also partnering with Kiewit Corp. and the Peter Kiewit Foundation to support students in ways Pérez said is making a College of Engineering education more accessible for Nebraska students.

A second cohort of 10 Kiewit Scholars, whose cost of education is paid for by executives at Kiewit Corp., will enter UNL in the fall. The first cohort of 10 students has earned an average 3.8 GPA and had opportunities to visit projects across the country and meet business leaders.

Starting this fall, the Peter Kiewit Foundation Scholars will pay the cost of education — including tuition, room and board and books — for 40 students.

The $5 million annual program, which is focused on Nebraska students, as well as those with demonstrated need, received hundreds of applications, Pérez said.

"We're really doing everything we can to make sure that every Nebraskan has an opportunity to study engineering and preserve that access to students across the state," he told regents.

Pérez said the massive investments from the state, university and private sector are beginning to show results.

After peaking at 3,117 students in the 2017-18 school year — roughly corresponding to record enrollment across the NU system — the College of Engineering experienced three consecutive years of enrollment losses.

Enrollment jumped to 3,023 students last fall, however, and the number of students who have been accepted is also on the rise.
A total of 435 students have placed enrollment deposits for the fall 2022 semester, Pérez said — a nearly 22% increase over the number of enrollment deposits last year at this time.
"If that comes to fruition," Pérez said, referring to students who have been admitted and paid a deposit showing up for fall classes, "we'll really start to see the growth we're talking about."
This year's enrollment deposits are 9% higher than the 398 students who had been admitted to the College of Engineering at this point in 2019 before the pandemic, when enrollments plummeted across the country.
Pérez credited the leadership of NU President Ted Carter, UNL Chancellor Ronnie Green and the state in pushing to keep the university open last year, when many institutions remained closed because of COVID-19.
"We were aggressive in understanding the value of in-person education, while also learning lessons of remote learning and access, so we are entering this fall poised in a position of strength compared to many other institutions," he said.
Pérez said as the College of Engineering watches Kiewit Hall continue to take shape, it will also keep close tabs on how students it educates and trains take shape as well.
"I feel confident every one of those students will get an offer from a Nebraska company," he said. "Whether or not they take it, that's their decision, of course, but there is plenty of opportunity in the state right now across engineering, computing and construction."
During Thursday's tour, Green pointed out to regents a space across Vine Street to the south of Kiewit Hall where he envisions a future School of Computing building.
UNL proposed the creation of a School of Computing that operates under the College of Engineering in February 2020; the Board of Regents approved the idea in August 2021.
The proposed $80 million facility, which will be a part of a future fundraising effort launched by the University of Nebraska Foundation, will be home to future degree programs in data science, artificial intelligence and other high-tech fields.
"We don't do vocational training — we educate students for the future because they are going to be doing jobs we haven't thought of yet," Pérez said.
By Chris Dunker

OWH: Wildfire forces residents of south-central Nebraska village to evacuate

The village of Edison, about 45 miles southwest of Kearney, is under a mandatory evacuation order due to a large grass fire, according to the Nebraska State Patrol.
The patrol, local law enforcement agencies and emergency management staff are assisting with the evacuation in the Furnas County village.
Earlier Thursday, both U.S. Highway 283 between Elwood and Arapahoe and U.S. Highway 6 between Arapahoe and the intersection of Nebraska Highway 46 were closed due to the fire, the Nebraska Department of Transportation reported.
The rapid, uncontrolled spread of the blaze through Furnas and Gosper Counties has been fanned by high winds in south-central Nebraska.
The region will fall under a red flag warning at noon Friday, meaning it is at risk of "extreme fire danger" due to gusty north winds and low humidity, the National Weather Service reported. The warning remains in effect through 9 p.m. Friday.

By Bennet Goldstein

Nebraska Examiner: Omaha tiny-house village aims to be final step out of homelessness

Nebraska's first modern-day tiny house village — soon to start sprouting in north downtown Omaha — is expected to do more than add affordable-rent dwellings to the trendy urban core.

The 50 stand-alone homes, each about 250 square feet, serve a humanitarian purpose: They're to be occupied by former homeless people who have thrived in other shelter programs and who are ready to take the next step toward independence.

In addition, the $8.2 million project provides a training ground for students: Seven of the houses are being built by budding construction trades workers enrolled at Metropolitan Community College.

"We're just really excited," said Linda Twomey of the Siena Francis House, which will manage and own the residential development. "It's innovative. It's a huge neighborhood improvement. It's going to provide a home — a place to grill out, to have plants and a dog."

In the planning stages since 2018, "the Cottages" initiative officially breaks ground next week at a 2.4-acre former industrial site near 17th and Charles Streets.

'Prototype project'

The gated village — with a community center, gardens, common laundry facilities and offices for on-site managers — is slated to open in 2023.

Financing comes primarily from the federal low-income housing tax credit program administered by the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority and earmarked for residents with special needs, such as the homeless population.

NIFA's Shannon Harner said the Cottages is the state's first tiny house community made possible with low-income tax credits. She anticipates that the project could pave the path for similar Nebraska ventures in the future.

"We're hoping this is a prototype project," Harner said.

While located only a half-block from the Siena Francis House campus — and therefore close to transportation, counseling and other shelter services — the Cottages are intended to create an independent lifestyle for previously homeless residents.

Twomey, executive director of Siena Francis shelters, said about 1,400 people a year experience homelessness in Omaha.

Bragging rights for students

Many who will be eligible and chosen to reside in the small houses likely will have found success in one of the more support-intensive Siena Francis programs and are ready for that next step out of chronic homelessness, she said.

An on-site case manager will be available to help connect residents to community or support services, including job or rental assistance. Twomey said residents will be responsible for rent and likely will qualify for government subsidies or vouchers where they pay 30% of their income for rent.

Each of the tiny houses will include a kitchen, bedroom-living area and covered porch.

Trevor Secora, an instructor at Metro's Fort Omaha campus who is overseeing the students' construction of seven of the tiny houses, said the Cottages developer, Arch Icon, provides materials, and the students assemble the shell to be transported to the site after completion.

It's a win-win situation, he said, that offers hands-on and practical training for young construction workers, who will be able to drive by afterward with family and friends and showcase their work.

"These are real-world projects that are going to be delivered back to the community," said Secora, a

member of Metro's Construction and Building Science faculty.

Students stepping up their game

He said the students are putting in an extra effort, knowing that the structures will actually be used instead of torn down after completion, as some other practice projects are.

"So their effort and craftsmanship is going to be stepped up a bit," he said.

Clearing the north downtown site for the Cottages also helped clean up Kellom Greenbelt Park and some other rough spots, Twomey said.

City officials have said the development should provide a boost to the geographical pocket and perhaps lure more private investment to the area, which is not far from the trendy and growing Millwork Commons neighborhood.

Darin Smith of developer Arch Icon said his company has done numerous affordable and other housing projects, but the Cottages is his team's first to focus on the homeless population.

Other partners include the City of Omaha, Midwest Housing Equity Group, Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture and American National Bank.

"It's kind of cool, the way we've worked with Metro Community College, Siena Francis and other partners to bring it all together," Smith said. "We can't wait to see the finished project and the benefits to the community."

By Cindy Gonzalez

LJS Editorial, 4/8: Making Lincoln more welcoming makes it better, too

In the 1980s, Lincoln became a designated refugee resettlement site and resettled more than 5,500 refugees, most of them from Vietnam. By 1993, Lincoln was accepting more than 1,200 refugees a year.

Today, Lincoln is home to more than 30,000 immigrants and refugees from 150 countries, numbers that have continued to grow even after the Trump Administration's four-year crackdown on legal immigration.

Far from being a drain on the economy, as critics baselessly contend, in 2019, immigrants in the Lincoln region held $455.7 million in spending power and paid $89 million in federal taxes and some $60 million in state and local taxes.

That year, immigrants represented 21.1% of manufacturing workers, 11.8% of hospitality workers, 11.7% of education workers and 11.7% of STEM workers. Plus, the American Immigration Council says immigrants helped preserve or create more than 1,200 local jobs that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere.

And, importantly, immigrants are far more likely to be of working age than those born in the U.S., which means that newcomers to the country can be one of the few solutions for the chronic need for workers in Nebraska, which now has some 50,000 open jobs.

That litany of statistics makes a strong case beyond simply that it's the right thing to do, for the Welcoming & Belonging Strategic Plan that has been proposed for Lincoln and Lancaster County.

That plan, created with technical and research assistance from two national advocacy organizations, includes creating a brick-and-mortar welcoming center and hiring a welcoming coordinator for the city and county.

It also recommends expanding existing programs, such as one that connects professionals from other countries with mentors in their field, increasing funding for naturalization programs and legal resources, creating avenues for adults to get high school equivalency certificates and increasing the

number of trained interpreters to help new immigrants.
Each of those recommendations would benefit both immigrants and the broader community, from improving communication for non-English speakers to getting them incorporated into jobs and the local economy and helping them on the path to citizenship.
The plan, which was presented to the Lincoln City Council last month, also touches on civic engagement, safety and health, affordable housing as well as education and economic opportunity.
All of the above need to be considered and implemented for Lincoln to become a community that truly welcomes and assists the immigrants and refugees, as the statistics show, are key to the economic and cultural future of the city, which needs them as much as they need a place to settle and make “the good life” for themselves.

LJS: Tax cuts won't keep folks here

If I hear, "We need to lower taxes to keep young people in the state," from legislators again I might scream.
The fact is over the past decade, according to the U.S. Census, the state of Nebraska increased its population from 1,826,305 people to 1,934,408.
Lincoln went from 258,379 to 289,102. Omaha gained population over the decade from 408,958 to 478,192.
Looks like living in Nebraska is popular. Mainly, the people clamoring for tax cuts are older wealthy people, not young people who don't own property or have a lot of wealth.
What's off-putting to younger people is how Nebraska is ruled by one particular party, the Republican Party, and whose priorities are set by the governor of the state, Pete Ricketts, who is not shy about using his family's wealth to fund death penalty implementation and a push for voter suppression via ID laws.
If the state does in the future lose population I'd chalk it up to frustration from young people regarding one party rule in Nebraska as being unfriendly to them.
Ricky Fulton, Omaha

AP: Bird flu's grisly question: how to kill millions of poultry

The spread of a bird flu that is deadly to poultry raises the grisly question of how farms manage to quickly kill and dispose of millions of chickens and turkeys.
It's a chore that farms across the country are increasingly facing as the number of poultry killed in the past two months has climbed to nearly 24 million, with outbreaks reported nearly every day.
Some farms have had to kill more than 5 million chickens at a single site with a goal of destroying the birds within 24 hours to limit the spread of the disease and prevent animals from suffering.
“The faster we can get on site and depopulate the birds that remain on site, the better,” Minnesota State Veterinarian Beth Thompson said.
The outbreak is the biggest since 2015, when producers had to kill more than 50 million birds. So far this year, there have been cases in 24 states, with Iowa the hardest hit with about 13 million chickens and turkeys killed. Other states with sizable outbreaks include Minnesota, Wisconsin, South Dakota and Indiana.
Farms faced with the need to kill so many birds turn to recommendations by the American Veterinary Medical Association. Even as it has developed methods to kill the poultry quickly, the

association acknowledges its techniques “may not guarantee that the deaths the animals face are painless and distress-free.” Veterinarians and U.S. Department of Agriculture officials also typically oversee the process.

One of the preferred methods is to spray water-based firefighting foam over birds as they roam around the ground inside a barn. That foam kills the animals by cutting off their air supply.

When foam won't work because birds are in cages above the ground or it's too cold, the USDA recommends sealing up barns and piping carbon dioxide inside, first rendering the birds unconscious and ultimately killing them.

If one of those methods won't work because equipment or workers aren't available, or when the size of a flock is too large, the association said a last resort is a technique called ventilation shutdown. In that scenario, farmers stop airflow into barns, which raises temperatures to levels at which the animals die. The USDA and the veterinary association recommend that farmers add additional heat or carbon dioxide to barns to speed up the process and limit suffering by the animals.

Mike Stepien, a spokesman for the USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said the techniques are the best options when it's necessary to quickly kill so many birds.

“State animal health officials and producers carefully weigh the different options to determine the best option for humane depopulation and do not make such decisions lightly,” Stepien said.

Not everyone agrees.

Animal welfare groups argue that all these methods for quickly killing birds are inhumane, though they are particularly opposed to ventilation shutdown, which they note can take hours and is akin to leaving a dog in a hot car. Animal rights groups delivered a petition last year signed by 3,577 people involved in caring for animals, including nearly 1,600 veterinarians, that urged the veterinary association to stop recommending ventilation shutdown as an option.

“We have to do better. None of these are acceptable in any way,” said Sara Shields, director of farm animal welfare science at Humane Society International.

Opponents of the standard techniques said firefighting foam uses harmful chemicals and it essentially drowns birds, causing chickens and turkeys to suffer convulsions and cardiac arrest as they die. They say carbon dioxide is painful to inhale and detectible by the birds, prompting them to try to flee the gas.

Karen Davis, of the nonprofit group United Poultry Concerns, urged the veterinary association to stop recommending all of its three main options.

“They’re all ways that I would not chose to die, and I would not choose anybody else to die regardless of what species they belong to,” Davis said.

Shields said there are more humane alternatives, such as using nitrogen gas, but those options tend to be more expensive and could have logistical challenges.

Sam Krouse, vice president of Indiana-based MPS Egg Farms, said farmers feel miserable about using any of the options.

“We pour our lives and livelihoods into taking care of those birds, and it’s just devastating when we lose any of those birds,” Krouse said. “Everything that we’re doing every day is focused on keeping the disease out and making sure that we’re keeping our hens as safe as possible.”

Officials emphasize that the virus that’s spread primarily through the droppings of infected wild birds doesn’t threaten food safety or represent a significant public health threat. Sick birds aren’t allowed into the food supply and properly cooking poultry and eggs kills any viruses that might be present. And health officials say no human cases of bird flu have been found in the United States during this current outbreak.

Once poultry are dead, farmers must quickly dispose of the birds. They usually don't want to risk the chance of spreading the virus by transporting the carcasses to landfills, so crews typically pile the birds up into huge rows inside barns and combine them with other materials, such as ground up corn stalks and sawdust to create a compost pile.

After a couple weeks of decomposition, the carcasses are converted into a material that can be spread on cropland to help fertilize crops. In some cases, carcasses are buried in trenches on the farm or incinerated.

By Josh Funk

AP: Iowa to close long-troubled center for disabled people

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — An Iowa center for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities that has been the subject of persistent criticism and federal investigations will close, Gov. Kim Reynolds said Thursday.

The Glenwood Resource Center, which has treated vulnerable people since the early 1900s, will close by June 30, 2024. The facility, about 115 miles (185 kilometers) southwest of Des Moines, has 152 patients and a staff of about 650.

The state will begin moving patients out in July by sending about 60 to another state-run facility in Woodward and 10 others into community housing facilities. Over the next year, transitions will continue until the center is closed, with plans to sell the facility by July 1, 2024.

Reynolds announced the closure months after the U.S. Department of Justice issued a strong condemnation of the way Iowa treats people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

A letter and report sent to the state in December by Justice Department officials indicated that Iowa was needlessly institutionalizing people with intellectual disabilities and that the state's treatment likely violated the federal Americans with Disabilities Act by failing to provide services that integrate patients into their communities.

“Iowans with intellectual and developmental disabilities deserve quality care that aligns with the expectations of the DOJ. Our best path forward to achieve those standards is closing GRC and reinvesting in a community-based care continuum that offers a broad array of services," Reynolds said in a statement.

Her statement also included comments from Republican legislative leaders in support of the decision.

Democratic leaders Sen. Zach Wahls and Rep. Jennifer Konfrst said in a statement that the decision was inevitable “because of years of indifference and neglect shown to the Glenwood community by Governor Reynolds and Republican lawmakers.”

The DOJ report said Iowa officials have known for years that community-based support for people with complex medical and behavioral needs is insufficient and have acknowledged they have failed to meaningfully assess the capacity of the community service system.

Federal officials said Iowa has one of the nation's highest percentages of residents with intellectual disabilities who live in institutions.

A 2002 DOJ investigation found that conditions at Glenwood and Woodward were constitutionally deficient. An agreement was reached then for the state to “encourage and assist people to move to the most integrated settings.”

The state got a grant in 2007 to help overcome its approach that favored institutionalizing people, but the December 2021 report said the state had failed to adequately develop community services

and support including crisis intervention.
On Nov. 21, 2019, the DOJ notified Iowa of a new investigation, and in a December 2020 report, federal officials said the Glenwood center likely violated the constitutional rights of residents by subjecting them to human experiments, including sexual arousal research. Some of the experiments were deemed dangerous by federal investigators.
Reynolds promised a smooth transition for the residents, assistance in helping state workers find other jobs and help in identifying alternative uses for the Glenwood campus after it closes.

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