

## Summary of Our AAUW-NE Legislative Priorities

By: Liz Rea, Public Policy Chair

September 9, 2015

We had 33 bills designated as AAUW-NE legislative priorities during the 2015 Unicameral session. Periodic “Bill Watch Updates” have kept you informed about the progress of each of these priority bills. Please check the “AAUW-NE Final Bill Watch Update 9-8-15” on the state web site, [www.aauw-ne.aauw.net](http://www.aauw-ne.aauw.net) for a complete description of the current status of each priority. The first session of the 104<sup>th</sup> Legislature adjourned sine die May 29, 2015, the 89<sup>th</sup> day of the scheduled 90-day session.

As you review the 2015 Final Bill Watch Update, please note significant developments on five priority bills. In the category of “Public Education”, you will notice that Senator Tanya Cook’s LB509, a bill we supported, was amended into LB525 that changed provisions relating to public education. Note also Governor Pete Ricketts signed LB525 into law two days before LB509 was amended into it. I suspect the governor signed LB525 with the understanding that he was agreeable to AM1347 to make LB509 part of LB525 when he signed it into law. Please notice the same thing happened on an education bill we monitored, LB589.

Significant developments occurred on three “Social and Economic Justice” bills we supported as well. LB89, Senator Kathy Campbell’s bill, was amended into LB607 and signed by the governor. Governor Ricketts also signed LB294 that made the Human Trafficking Victims Civil Remedy Act the law of the state. Senator Jeremy Nordquist’s LB623 created some excitement in the final phases of the legislative process. Governor Ricketts vetoed the bill, but senators voted to override the veto by a vote of 34-10-5 on May 28<sup>th</sup>. Thirty votes were needed for the override.

Two things to watch for this fall and once the 2016 Unicameral session begins are the following. During the coming weeks, there should be news of the results and recommendations of a study authorized by LR306. The purpose of the resolution is to study various ways by which Medicaid expansion could be implemented in Nebraska under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). The Unicameral’s Health and Human Services Committee is charged with carrying out the study during this interim period as well as reporting its findings and recommendations.

LB472, the Medicaid Redesign Act sponsored by Senator Kathy Campbell, that we supported during the 2015 session was bracketed. This means that debate on the bill was halted for the remainder of the session. LB472 would have implemented Medicaid expansion under the PPACA. AAUW-NE has been steadfast in its support of Senator Campbell’s efforts to expand Medicaid over the past three years in spite of stiff opposition from Governors Heineman and Ricketts. Stay tuned regarding developments having to do with efforts to expand Medicaid during the 2016 session based on recommendations of the current interim study.

New this summer is AAUW-NE’s membership in the Redistricting Reform Coalition organized by Common Cause Nebraska. The coalition is an informal group of like-minded organizations that works to make elections fairer and more representative of the voters who reside in each voting

district. It is likely the coalition will give serious consideration to whether or not it can support LB580, Senator John Murante's bill to adopt the Redistricting Act.

LB580 would establish an independent redistricting commission similar to that used successfully in Iowa since 1981. The system takes the politics out of reconfiguring political maps after each decennial census. To date, about 21 states use some form of a commission to redraw the boundary lines on their political maps. Senator Murante, a Republican, has been working with Senator Heath Mello, a Democrat from Omaha, to adjust the proposal for debate by the full Unicameral during the 2016 session. Stay tuned for further developments concerning the progress of LB580.

Thank you for all you do to be actively involved in supporting our annual AAUW-NE legislative priorities. I remain convinced that by working together we can and do make a positive difference for Nebraska's women, girls and families.