

Sine Die Address
Governor Dave Heineman
101st Legislature – 1st Session
May 29, 2009

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislature, Distinguished Guests, and Fellow Nebraskans:

I want to congratulate you on an exceptionally productive session. As I reflect on this session, it is readily apparent that the new ideas and the new enthusiasm of this body contributed to a successful legislative year.

Working together, we have made progress on a number of key issues. This was a very important session due to the economic challenges we face.

We enacted a balanced budget that contained no tax increases, prioritized education funding and maintained a strong cash reserve. Additionally, this budget includes increased funding for the developmentally disabled by allocating approximately \$100 million for the Beatrice State Developmental Center and expanded community-based services. Senator Heidemann, thank you for your leadership of the Appropriations Committee. This budget reflects the fiscal discipline and the fiscal responsibility that Nebraskans expect from us.

Two years ago, we restrained spending which put us in the position to weather the upcoming fiscal storm. This budget takes another step forward in preparing our state for the potentially difficult economic challenges that lie ahead.

I am very concerned about how the national economic slowdown is beginning to impact on our receipts. If this trend continues, Nebraska state government may have to restrain spending even further. By delaying the passage of several bills with fiscal impact, several legislators helped ensure our state budget would remain in check. Thank you Senators Hadley, Gay, Mello, Sullivan, and Heidemann.

Another essential component of our strong budget was the work of Senator Adams. Thank you for your leadership in revising the state aid formula. This was a difficult task and I appreciate the work of you and your fellow committee members. Now we can turn our attention to the critical education issues of academic excellence, closing the academic achievement gap, early childhood, assessments, and teacher quality.

Also related to the budget was the work on retirement issues led by Senator Pankonin. Senator, thank you. This helped us to resolve our budget challenges this year.

At the beginning of this session, we had another very important issue that needed to be addressed. It was a topic on the minds of many Nebraskans as I traveled our state. Nebraska had a death penalty, but lacked a legal means of execution. It is clear that there is strong support for the death penalty in our state and you represented your constituents in sending me a lethal

injection bill. Lethal injection is now the law of the land. The debate on this difficult issue was serious and thoughtful. Senator Flood, thank you for your leadership.

Another issue on the minds of our constituents that was addressed in this session was immigration reform that was made possible by the efforts of Senator Karpisek, Senator Friend and Senator Ashford.

This is fundamentally a fairness issue. As a state, we focused on one area where our efforts could make a difference at the state level. The step we took this year will help address one aspect of the much larger and more complex immigration issue.

Important progress was accomplished with behavioral health reform. Senator Gay and Senator Howard: thank you for your work to incorporate five bills into a single, comprehensive package to help address children's behavioral health challenges. Your work ensures Nebraska will now have a statewide hotline providing professionals trained in mental health assessment to connect families with the help they need. You have given us the tools to provide the peer support that will help families navigate the range of behavioral health services in our state and you created new family, post-adoption services.

I also want to acknowledge the senators who were part of the LB 603 compromise. Thank you Senators Avery, Dubas, McGill, and Nordquist.

With the passage of LB 561, Nebraska continues to move forward in the development of wind energy. This is important legislation and I intend to work very hard to ensure that Nebraska becomes a national leader in the development of wind energy.

The potential for wind energy growth in the next few years will be expanded because of your efforts. Thank you Senators Lathrop, Langemeier and members of the Natural Resources Committee.

In this session, you also passed anti-crime legislation that will help larger communities, and those across our state, address gang violence and boost crime prevention efforts. Thank you Senators Ashford, Friend and Council.

Again, I want to commend you on an exceptionally productive session. Working together, we are making progress on Nebraska's economic future.

On a personal note, I know the sacrifice required for public service. As part-time legislators, the time spent here and traveling between home and office is time away from your family and from your career.

You recognize that this is a full-time commitment, and I have great respect for your diligent work in this session and throughout the year. I also want to thank the staff of the Legislature. We enjoy working with you.

As I close, I want to emphasize that the work of the Legislature makes a difference. Your continued service to our great state and the people of Nebraska is appreciated. Thank you.