

ONE HUNDRED FIRST LEGISLATURE

SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 486

Introduced by McGill, 26.

PURPOSE: To examine the issues of health, safety, and working conditions of Nebraska meat and poultry workers and to identify opportunities to strengthen Nebraska law related to ensuring safe and dignified working conditions. Nebraska's meat industries are some of the most important industries in the state. For this reason, and because safe food comes from a safe workplace, we have a public interest in ensuring that working conditions live up to basic community standards. Unfortunately, federal data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2007 indicates that injury rates in meatpacking are more than double that of United States manufacturing as a whole. Furthermore, the United States Government Accountability Office reports that these numbers underreport actual injury rates. Nebraska was a leader in addressing the health, safety, and conditions of its workforce by passing a first-of-its-kind state law, the Nebraska Meatpacking Industry Workers Bill of Rights. Because data indicates that conditions are not sufficiently improved almost a decade later, it is time to revisit this issue. The study should include, but is not limited to:

(1) A review of current health, safety, and working conditions, including: Injury rates; work speed, including line

speed and maintenance of full staffing; ability to use the bathroom; the right to choose one's own doctor when injured; payment for all time worked; safety training and equipment; verbal supervisory abuse; sexual harassment and abuse; and positive health and safety policies and practices that seem to be making a difference; and

(2) Identifying opportunities to strengthen Nebraska's health, safety, and wage enforcement oversight, workers' compensation laws, and other Nebraska laws and regulations related to ensuring safe and dignified working conditions.

The study should hear from a variety of stakeholders, most importantly Nebraska workers in settings where they can speak freely without company management or supervisors present, but also including workers' compensation attorneys, community and health organizations, union representatives, company management, and government agencies.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, SECOND SESSION:

1. That the Business and Labor Committee of the Legislature shall be designated to conduct an interim study to carry out the purposes of this resolution.

2. That the committee shall upon the conclusion of its study make a report of its findings, together with its recommendations, to the Legislative Council or Legislature.