

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA  
ONE HUNDRED FOURTH LEGISLATURE  
FIRST SESSION

**LEGISLATIVE BILL 562**

Introduced by Morfeld, 46; Stinner, 48.

Read first time January 21, 2015

Committee: Government, Military and Veterans Affairs

- 1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to tourism; to amend section 81-3711, Reissue
- 2 Revised Statutes of Nebraska; to adopt the Nebraska Treasures Act;
- 3 to harmonize provisions; and to repeal the original section.
- 4 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 Section 1. Section 81-3711, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
2 amended to read:

3 81-3711 The commission shall:

4 (1) Administer the Nebraska Treasures Act and the Nebraska Visitors  
5 Development Act;

6 (2) Prepare and approve a budget;

7 (3) Elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson;

8 (4) Procure and evaluate data and information necessary for the  
9 proper administration of the act;

10 (5) Appoint an executive director to conduct the day-to-day  
11 operations of the commission;

12 (6) Employ personnel and contract for services which are necessary  
13 for the proper operation of the commission;

14 (7) Establish a means by which any interested person has the  
15 opportunity at least annually to offer his or her ideas and suggestions  
16 relative to the commission's duties for the upcoming year;

17 (8) Authorize the expenditure of funds and contracting of  
18 expenditures to carry out the act;

19 (9) Keep minutes of its meetings and other books and records which  
20 clearly reflect all of the actions and transactions of the commission and  
21 keep such records open to examination during normal business hours; and

22 (10) Prohibit any funds appropriated to the commission from being  
23 expended directly or indirectly to promote or oppose any candidate for  
24 public office or to influence state or federal legislation.

25 Sec. 2. Sections 2 to 6 of this act shall be known and may be cited  
26 as the Nebraska Treasures Act.

27 Sec. 3. (1) The Legislature finds and declares that:

28 (a) Tourism is a growing source of employment, income, and tax  
29 revenue in this state and the expansion of the tourism industry is vital  
30 to the growth of the state's economy;

31 (b) The tourism industry is important to the state, not only because

1 of the number of people it serves and the human, financial, and physical  
2 resources it employs, but also because of the educational benefits  
3 tourism and related activities confer on individuals and society as a  
4 whole;

5 (c) Promotion of tourism is funded primarily at the local level with  
6 lodging taxes and investment of state resources in a limited number of  
7 tourism sites is needed to develop and provide an effective means of  
8 marketing Nebraska's tourism sites as treasures and to give emphasis to  
9 attractions that have the greatest potential to benefit the state;

10 (d) Coordination of existing tourism resources at the state and  
11 local government levels with the private sector will maximize the  
12 economic and employment benefits of the tourism industry; and

13 (e) Development of Nebraska's tourism sites during the celebration  
14 of Nebraska's sesquicentennial anniversary will provide vitality,  
15 enrichment, and expansion to the state's tourism industry.

16 (2) Through the Nebraska Treasures Act, it is the intent of the  
17 Legislature to encourage the following:

18 (a) A commitment to fostering the economic activity inherent in  
19 tourism promotion by focusing on construction or enhancement of  
20 attractions that have maximum potential;

21 (b) Development of a means to promote and market Nebraska tourism  
22 sites as destinations for visitors from the entire nation;

23 (c) Recognition of historic, natural, and scenic environments and  
24 the development of cultural and heritage tourism programs; and

25 (d) Implementation of the Nebraska Treasures Act to celebrate  
26 Nebraska's sesquicentennial anniversary.

27 Sec. 4. The Nebraska Tourism Commission shall approve as eligible  
28 for a grant, after consultation with the Nebraska Sesquicentennial  
29 Commission, four existing or potential tourism sites in Nebraska that  
30 when properly developed have the greatest potential to attract visitors  
31 from outside the state. To be eligible for a grant, a political

1 subdivision or nonprofit organization shall either wholly or partially  
2 own, or have a property interest in, that portion of the tourism site to  
3 be funded with a grant. The Nebraska Tourism Commission shall consider  
4 tourism sites that will draw national visitors and may include sites that  
5 may take several years to fully develop. The Nebraska Tourism Commission  
6 may seek or obtain input from local community leaders, local and national  
7 tourism representatives, or the public through inquiry or requests for  
8 information or proposals.

9       Sec. 5. (1) The Nebraska Treasures Fund is created. It is the  
10 intent of the Legislature to appropriate four million dollars annually  
11 from the General Fund for FY2015-16 and each fiscal year thereafter to  
12 the Nebraska Treasures Fund until such time as the Legislature determines  
13 the tourism sites approved for grants under section 4 of this act are  
14 fully developed and operationally stable. Any money in the fund available  
15 for investment shall be invested by the state investment officer pursuant  
16 to the Nebraska Capital Expansion Act and the Nebraska State Funds  
17 Investment Act.

18       (2) The Nebraska Tourism Commission shall award for FY2015-16 four  
19 grants of one million dollars each no later than March 15, 2016. For each  
20 subsequent fiscal year, the commission shall continue to award four  
21 grants of one million dollars each to the same tourism sites no later  
22 than January 1 of each fiscal year until such time as the Legislature  
23 determines the tourism sites are fully developed and operationally  
24 stable. The grants may be utilized to finance acquisition,  
25 infrastructure, design, development, construction, expansion,  
26 improvements, and endowments for operations.

27       (3) Each fiscal year the Nebraska Tourism Commission shall award one  
28 grant to a tourism site located in the first congressional district, one  
29 grant to a tourism site located in the second congressional district, and  
30 two grants to separate tourism sites located in the third congressional  
31 district. If the commission is unable to locate and approve a suitable

1 tourism site within a particular congressional district, it shall report  
2 such determination to the Legislature. No grant funding apportioned to  
3 such congressional district shall be added to the other grants awarded.

4       Sec. 6. The Nebraska Tourism Commission shall adopt and promulgate  
5 rules and regulations necessary to carry out the grant process under the  
6 Nebraska Treasures Act.

7       Sec. 7. Original section 81-3711, Reissue Revised Statutes of  
8 Nebraska, is repealed.